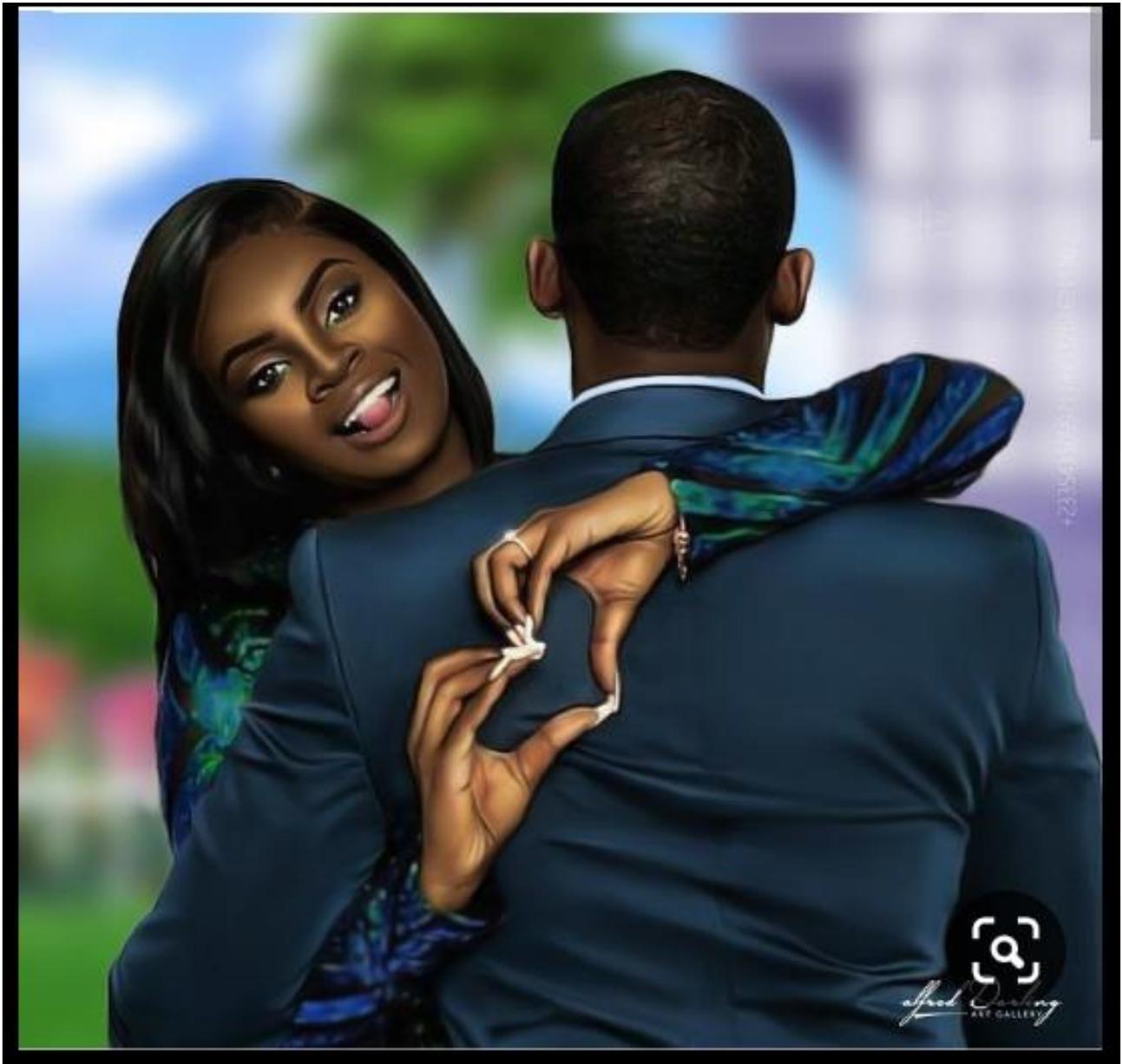


GRACEFULLY BROKEN



Introduction

They say even broken crayons colour. I guess that is the story of my life. I am broken but here i am still standing. Standing here in this office watching the hustle and bustle of Johannesburg is something I never thought i could experience, but lo and behold i am here.

My name is Landokuhle Avumile Shongwe, but you can call me Lando. I am 24 years old, a Chartered Accountant and currently I am working for one of

the biggest Holding Companies in Africa, Biyela Holdings.

The owner, Mr Busani Biyela has his hands in many different pies, oil, diamonds, platinum, property and even advertising, Biyela holdings just brings all that together under one roof, which makes it easy to control and know what's happening in each one of them.

I have a mother, a stepdad and two younger sisters. I don't know who my father is but mum says he died when i was still a baby, although i am using his surname i still wish i knew who he was. But

there's no use crying over spilt milk right? So here's my story.

Insert 1

Landokuhle

Joburg, the city of Gold. I was lucky enough to design my own office when i got here 3 years ago. All i wanted was floor to ceiling glass all around so i can watch the big city lights of Joburg.

After watching the city for close to an hour i finally decide to go home. I gather my handbag and laptop bag, i throw my phone into

my bag and leave. I am the last to leave i think. Or maybe not.

Theres an office with lights still on, i decide to check it out.

The door is slightly open so I just walk in. I just see a head peeking out from the chair, but its facing the other direction, must be mesmerised by the city too.

"They are amazing aren't they?"
I say.

I think i scared him because he turned around so quick.

"Hi. What can I do for you?" He asks looking irritated.

"Oh nothing, i was just passing by and I saw the lights on....."

before i could even finish talking.

Him: "Are you a security guard?"

Me: "No. I just....."

Him: "You just decide to walk into peoples offices without even knocking."

Me: "I am sorry I was just...."

Him: "Yeah whatever can you please just leave." He turns around and goes back to his view.

I decide to just quietly walk out with my tail between my legs. I don't know who he is and its late, maybe Nicki can tell me something about him tomorrow.

I get to the parking and there are two cars parked there, one is

mine and the other must be his. Its a Maserati Quattroporte GTS GranSport, I know it because its on my vision board. A girl is allowed to dream right 😁. I stand there just mesmerised by this beast before me. I can even imagine myself driving one. I am brought back to earth when I hear his voice behind me.

Him: "I don't think you can afford this one."

I just roll my eyes. I turn around and i find him standing there looking all sorts of gorgeous with his hands in his pockets.

Me: "Never underestimate the

power of vision and ambition."

He chuckles. I am distracted by footsteps behind him. It's a woman. She is wearing a long-sleeve off-shoulder dress that hugs her in all the right places. It is black and long with a slit that exposes her whole thigh. She has on a long curly weave and her makeup is on point, basically she is perfect.

She walks over and puts her arm on his shoulder. They look like they just stepped out of a GQ cover.

Her: "honey you can have as much ambition as you want but you are never going to own a car like

that."

She kisses him on the cheek. He wraps his arm around her waist and leads her to the passenger side and opens the door for her before getting in too.

He starts the car, he drives out and as they pass by me the girl blows me a kiss.

I decide to take my BMW x5 and leave.

By the time i get to my place its almost 8 o'clock so i just make some hot chocolate and i warm up some muffins and switch on the tv.

I am not even sure what is

playing on tv. My mind keeps replaying what happened today. After a while of torturing myself i decide to go and sleep.

My alarm goes off at six. Today is friday so i am looking forward to the weekend. I need my rest, i have been working outside the office for the last two weeks and its been hectic.

I walk into the bathroom and take a shower. When i am done i lotion my body and walk to the closet. The joys of living alone, I can walk around in my birthday suit and no one will bother me. I pick out black jeans, a black

bodysuit and a white blazer and i end my look with black stilleto pumps. I decide to tie my braids in a bun, i shape my eyebrows and put on some mascara and red lipstick and i am ready to go.

I decide to grab an apple on my way out. When i get to the office i greet the receptionist before making my way to the lift then going up to my office. I find Nicki, my PA already at her desk.

Me: "Goodmorning Nicki."

Nicki: "Goodmorning Miss

Shongwe. We are in a good mood this morning, did we get some last night."

Me: "I thought you were on a drink water and mind your business diet this month."

Nicki: "I am. But i am curious."

Me: "And you know what they say about curiosity, it killed a cat."

Nicki: "fine. But i will find the truth. I always do." I laughed.

She probably will find "the truth". The way she is so good at finding out stuff you would think she was in the FBI.

Nicki: "by the way, Mr Biyela senior wants to see you in his office."

Me: "when."

Nicki: "10 minutes ago." She has a

smirk on her face.

Me: "really Nicki..... geez." I have been waiting here for almost ten minutes, mxm. I quickly rush to my office to leave my stuff and make my way to Mr Biyela's office. I knock and he tells me to come in.

I walk in and he is not alone. Mr Rudeboy is also here. I decide to focus on Mr Biyela.

Mr B: "Landokuhle, I am glad you could make it. Please have a sit."

I sit down next to Mr rudeboy on the double couch. Mr Biyela is on the single couch. So maybe this is not a formal meeting so I relax a

bit.

Mr B: "Landokuhle since you were not in the office the past few weeks I didn't get the chance to introduce you to my son, this is Philani Biyela, my first born.

Philani this is Landokuhle our accountant and soon to be COO."

The soon to be COO took me by surprise but I decided to focus on the introduction at hand. I gave him my hand to shake.

Me: "Nice to meet you Mr Biyela."

He takes my hand and shakes it.

I look upto his eyes and i swear if looks could kill i would be dead right now. I divert my attention

back to Mr Biyela senior.

Him: "Dad what do you mean soon to be COO? I thought Sihle would be the COO."

I decide to keep my mouth shut and let them sort out their family issues.

Mr B: "Philani i wasn't done yet. Now in a few months i plan on announcing my retirement. Of course as my eldest son you will take over. Your brothers and sister will also get shares in the company but you will have controlling shares obviously."

Philani: "Thanks dad, I promise I won't disappoint you."

Mr B: "I Know you won't son. I have a condition though."

Philani: "Anything dad."

Mr B: "Good, because I want you to marry Landokuhle."

Insert 2

Philani

"I want you to marry Landokuhle."

My fathers words were still ringing in my ear. I laughed.

Me: "dad i think you need to stick to your day job because comedy is definitely not for you."

I looked at my dad and he is still

looking serious. I stopped laughing and looked at Landokuhle, her head was bowed and she was playing with her hands.

Me: "dad you can't be serious right now."

Dad: "I am very serious son."

He leaned back on the couch and threw one leg over his knee.

I turned to Lando and she was still playing with her hands.

Me: "why are you quiet? Say something, why are you acting like this doesn't involve you too. Say something damnit." I didn't even realize I was now shouting. She

turned to me still as calm as a cucumber.

Lando: "firstly please stop shouting at me i am not your child. Secondly i think you need to sort this out between the two of you."

She got up and turned to my dad.

Lando: "Mr Biyela I have a meeting I need to attend so please excuse me." She walked out.

My father stood up and poured himself some whiskey, then leaned against his desk.

Me: "Dad I don't know what is going on here but this will not work."

Dad: "of course it will. Landokuhle is a good girl, she works hard and she knows business. She is quite capable of helping you grow this business, and I think she will make an even better."

I stood up and went to him.

Me: "When did you start making decisions for us dad. Ever since we turned 18 you always said we were adults and we can make our own decisions. So what has changed?"

Dad: "And look where that has led us Philani. Your mother died while you were all busy hopping from one country to the next. Your

sister went and married a psycho despite my reservations about it. Your brothers sleep with women like sex is going out of fashion. While i was busy taking care of your mother your uncle tried to take over this company." I could see his eyes turning red, he was getting emotional.

Me: "Dad I understand that this is hard for you, especially with mum gone but that doesn't give you the right to decide my future for me."

Dad: "I am trying to protect you."

Me: "FROM WHAT DAD?"

Dad: "From yourself. Do you think

I don't know about the things you do Philani. You smuggle drugs into the country and you run a prostitution ring. Tell me how long will it take before the law catches up with you? How long before you are behind bars? Is that the future you want?" He takes a deep breath.

Dad: "I gave you everything but look at how you turned out. Was I wrong for wanting you to have an easier life?"

I look down, ashamed. I didn't think my dad knew about what I did. I always thought he cared

more about this company than us.
Was I wrong?

Lando

I have been standing here for almost 30 minutes just watching the hustle and bustle of Joburg. Its crazy how this calms me down. I heard the door opened and footsteps coming towards me. I turned around to find Philani standing behind me. His eyes were red. Maybe he was crying.

Philani: "name your price."

Me: "excuse me!"

Philani: "you heard me. Tell me how much its going to cost me to

get you out of our lives." I laughed. I heard him the first time, I was just hoping I heard wrong.

Me: "the fact that you think I can be bought is laughable."

Philani: "Everyone has a price Landokuhle, so what's yours?"

Okay so he is serious.

Me: "have you spoken to your father?"

Philani: he chuckles "you think because my father likes you then this will be an easy ride for you. I am sorry to disappoint you but that will never happen."

Me: "okay."

Philani: "So what is your plan exactly. You think you can jump from my fathers bed to mine." To say i am shocked would be a joke. He cant possibly think..... No! I refuse shem.

Philani: "what now, cat got your tongue. I know girls like you Landokuhle, girls who sleep their way to the top when they don't deserve to be there. For all we know even your qualifications are fake. So the only thing working for you is your pu**y. Your pu**y must be real good for my father to....." I was so angry I don't know how my palm made contact

with his cheek.

Me: "You don't know me Philani. And from the looks of it I don't think you know your father either. So unless you have something better to talk about do not ever again walk into my office unannounced." He is angry. I can see his jaws clenching. His eyes are spitting fire. But i refuse to back down.

Me: "Now do me a favour and get the fuck out of my office." He takes a step towards me. "GET OUT PHILANI!" He turns around and leaves.

My knees have turned to jelly, I

think i am about to fall. I make it to my chair in time. I turn to the door and Mr Biyela senior is standing with his hands in his pockets and his shoulder on the door, his feet are crossed.

Me: "Mr B." Oh dear Lord I hope he did not see what just happened.

Mr B: "I don't think my son has ever been slapped before, let alone by a woman."

Me: "Mr B I am so sorry I didn't mean....."

Mr B: "don't be. I am actually impressed. Maybe this marriage will work afterall."

He turns around and walks away. I can hear him whistle as he moves down the passage.

I sat there for an hour just waiting for my heart to slow down. Eventually i decide to call it a day. Its not even lunch time yet but i am tired already.

I decide to take my things and just go home. I get in my car and start the engine. My hands are shaking but I need to get out of here. My phone rings as I drive out of the parking garage. It's my best friend Bulelwa. We call her Buli.

Me: "hello."

Buli: "Are you at the office? I am on my way."

Me: "I am on my way out so meet me at my place. And please bring wine."

Buli: "Isn't it a bit early to be drinking wine?"

Me: "its happy hour somewhere in the world."

Buli: "okay moghel, azishe ke." She hung up.

Bulelwa

Hi my name is Bulelwa Zwane I am 25, a lawyer and Lando's best friend. I have known Lando since high school.

I know by the sound of her voice

she is stressed. I decide to turn around and find a mall since i was almost at her office when i called her.

I find a mall and go straight to woolies. I buy five bottles. Don't judge its friday after all. I get into my car and drive off. Its gonna be a long day.

INSERT 3

LANDO

I got home 20 minutes ago and Buli is still not here. I have been pacing up and down my living room. My heart is still beating very

fast. I've taken off my blazer but somehow I still feel hot.

Eventually i get a call from Buli saying she is at the gate so I buzz her in. She walks into the house after some minutes and places four bottles of wine on the kitchen counter.

I take one bottle, open it and just gulp down the wine. Buli has a shocked look on her face but i don't care. I need to calm my nerves.

When the bottle is half empty I take another one and go to sit on

the couch. Buli follows with two wine glasses.

Buli: "so will you tell me whats going on."

Me: "Friend I have never done anything like this in my entire life."

Buli: "what did you do."

Me: "I slapped someone." Buli seems unfazed by this.

Buli: "relax that is standard procedure for a bad bitch. So who did you slap and why?" She takes a sip of her wine.

Me: "Philani Biyela!" She spits the wine out so fast it splatters all over my face and shirt. And then

she burst out laughing.

Me: "its not funny Bulelwa."

Buli: "friend you not even married to the man but you are already abusing him" she says while laughing.

Mxm Buli can be nuts sometimes.

Buli: "Okay, so tell me what happened from the beginning."

She says after she is done laughing. I tell her everything.

It feels good sharing this with

someone, so if i die tomorrow

atleast someone will know why i

died. You never know what Philani

is planning. Ok maybe I am

exaggerating but still.

We spend the day talking and drinking. By 4 o'clock i am already tipsy. My phone rings and its a landline number.

Me: "hello"

Guy: "Are you busy?"

Me: "Nothing I can't get out off. What do you need."

Guy: "You!"

Me: "I will see you in 30 minutes."
I hang up.

Buli: "Who was that?"

Me: "Work. I need to go there's a meeting."

Buli: "Bitch please, a dick appointment does not count as a work meeting."

Lol. She knows me better than I thought. I run upstairs and change into a mini black dress that hugs me just right. I put on red lipstick and let my braids down, I put on some mascara and shape my brows. I put on my long red coat coz its getting chilli outside, winter is near. I finish my look off with some black thigh high boots. I look good even if I say so myself. I walk out. I see Buli standing at the bottom of the stairs as I walk down, her mouth is wide open.

Buli: "Bitch you look so good, I would be a Lesbian just for that

look."

Me: "thank you babe." I take my bag from the table and we walk out and get into our cars and drive out.

I drive into SunMed Private Hospital and the parking lot is almost empty. I park, get out of the car and walk into the reception area. There's a nurse there but I walk past her.

Nurse: "Excuse me" she shouts but I keep walking. I hear footsteps running towards me.

She passes me and stops in front of me, blocking my way. I stop.

Nurse: "Ma'am where do you think

you are going?"

Me: "I am here to see Doctor Dlamini."

Nurse: "You couldn't tell me that at Reception. I had to run after you."

Me: "Sorry."

Nurse: "Thank you. Now do you have an appointment?" She says as she goes through the tablet in her hands.

Me: "Yes actually I do."

Nurse: "According to this you don't so please kindly turn around and leave."

Sigh. I take out my phone and make a call.

Me: "your receptionist is blocking my way.....Okay." I hang up.

Me: "Doctor Dlamini wants me to tell you that if I am not in his office in the next 90 seconds you can kiss your job goodbye." She swallows. "Now can I go through?"

Nurse: "Firstly I am not a receptionist I am a Nurse, please put some respect on my profession. Secondly just cause you have a dick appointment with Dr Dlamini doesn't make you queen of the castle. You are not the first woman to walk through those doors for the same appointment.

So go right ahead."

She walks back to her post with her 3 inch heels clicking on the floor. Savage much!

I walk into the office and he is sitting at his desk with a glass of whiskey.

NGCEBO

My name is Ngcebo Dlamini, I am 29 years old and a doctor by profession. I have known Lando for almost 7 years now. We met through my baby sister Faith.

Although Faith still has no idea about our little arrangement, she would freak out if she found out, she said her friends were off-

limits for me but this one, I just couldn't resist.

She walks into my office and locks the door behind her. I get a boner just looking at her. She takes off her coat and damn she looks good.

Her black mini dress hugs her hips just right. Her thigh high boots go all the way to her mid thigh and thanks to the length of her dress I can see just a bit of her caramel thigh. Her spaghetti strap dress holds her perky medium boobs and I can see her nipples over her dress.

She catwalks over to me and straddles me and her dress pulls up. She takes my glass and gulps down the contents before placing the glass on the desk. My hands are already fondling her butt.

She places her lips on mine and spills the whiskey into my mouth. I cough after swallowing the whiskey. She smiles.

Lando: "you are getting weak Dr Dlamini. You can't handle your whiskey no more."

Me: "well you did surprise me with that and you know I hate surprises."

Lando: "I know." She says as she

places a kiss on my cheek and goes down my neck.

I move my hand all the way to her sweet haven and i can feel her moistness. I move her lace underwear aside and rub her clit. She moans in my neck and she starts grinding my hand as two of my fingers make their way inside her.

She moves her upper body back and rests on the desk with her eyes closed while i finger her.

I unzip her dress with my other hand and let the straps fall revealing her perky boobs. I kiss her boobs one after the other.

Her moans get louder and I know she is about to cum so I go faster and within seconds she releases her juices all over my hand.

I pull my fingers out and put them in my mouth tasting her sweetness as she watches with a smile on her face. I lift her up and place her on top of the desk. I remove her thong and drag the chair closer to the desk before burying my mouth in her cooch. I muff her and she screams louder and louder. Its a good thing this office is soundproof otherwise the whole hospital

would come to a standstill.

I unbuckle my belt and unzip my pants before getting a condom from my drawer. I get up and let my pants fall to the floor together with my briefs.

I put the condom and enter her. She moans as I make my way in inch by inch until I am fully in. I move in and out of her as she holds on to the edge of the desk. After a while i pull her off the desk and turn her around before entering her from behind. The sounds she is making are music to my ears. I feel myself nearing the edge so I pull out. I sit back on

the chair and she straddles me and her hand slowly directs my shaft into her. She rides me so hard and so fast that we end up releasing at the same time.

I pull out and go to the mini bathroom to clean myself and bring a towel for her too.

Her phone beeps and she picks it up. Its a message.

Lando: "I have to go." I help her zip up her dress.

Me: "Where to?"

Lando: "dinner with the girls."

Me: "Ok. So when am i seeing you again."

Lando: "I don't know, we will see."

She picks up her coat, puts it on and she blows me a kiss before she leaves.

PHILANI

I have been waiting here for almost 30 minutes and Ayanda still hasn't showed up for our date. She is lucky I had some phonecalls to make otherwise I would have left already.

My name is Philani Biyela, I am 30 years old, I am a businessman. This morning I woke up thinking I was about to takeover Biyela Holdings until my father put a spanner in the works and now I have to marry Landokuhle. Mxm.

Truth is I don't trust that girl. Something about her does not sit well with me. This morning she slapped the shit out of me my cheek still stings a bit. I don't even know why I find it hot though.

I am lost in thought when Ayanda finally shows up together with my best friend Lindani and his girlfriend for the night.

Ayanda: "earth to Philani." She snaps her fingers in my face.

"What were you thinking about?"

Philani: "Nothing. Just work." I get up and give her a hug before pulling out a chair for her. I fist

bump Lindani and shake his dates hand. Her name is Pearl, she is your typical Joburg slay queen, Lindani's favourites.

Lindani: "Have you ordered bro?"

Me: "not yet i didn't know you were coming."

Lindani: "yeah we just ran into Ayanda outside so we decided to join you."

Me: "cool. Lets order then."

I call the waiter over and we make our order. Conversation is flowing we are laughing and enjoying ourselves. Our food finally comes and we dig in.

Me: "Who wants dessert?"

Ayanda: "Not me. I am on a diet, so no sweet stuff for me."

Pearl: "I would love dessert but I am full so I will pass. Thank you."

Lindani is busy on his phone so I don't think he even heard me. I call the waiter over and order a chocolate cake. The ladies get up and go to the toilet.

Me: "Lindani!"

Lindani: "Mhmmm"

Me: "Dude." I grab the phone from him. "Whats going on?"

Lindani: "Its work bra."

Me: "stop lying. Tell me whats going on."

Lindani: "ok. I just got a text from someone saying she's pregnant."

Me: "Ok, who?"

Lindani: "Thats the thing I have no idea. I have been trying to remember who I smashed raw and I can't come up with anyone." I laugh. "Dude its not funny."

Me: "That is why I always tell you get one girl and stick to her and you won't be having such problems." He doesn't answer me. Instead i notice he is looking over my shoulder at something or someone. I turn around to look and there's a woman with her

back to us. She just took off her coat and revealed a mini black dress that hugs her tight. I look back at him and his eyes are still glued to her.

Me: "See what I am talking about. You have one problem and you want to create another."

Lindani: "You are right. I should get her and stick to her. Man the things I would do to her."

I laugh, Lindani is such a man whore honestly. I turn around to look at this girl and she is sitting down. Her head turns and our eyes meet.

Me: "No ways."

Lindani: "What?"

I don't answer him. I just get up and walk over to her table. I pull out a chair and sit down. She is ignoring me cause she has her eyes glued to the menu.

Me: "What are you doing here?"

She closes the menu, puts it on the table and folds her arms over it.

Lando: "Sawubona nawe (hello to you too) Mr Biyela junior. How are you this evening."

Me: "Don't fuck with me

Landokuhle, what are you doing here and why are you dressed like that?"

Lando: "Its a restaurant so take a guess what I am doing. As for my clothes, what is wrong with them?"

Me: "You are dressed like a whore."

Lando: "Well you did call me a golddigger so maybe I am just living up to your expectations."

Me: "You need to go home now."

Just then two girls show up.

They both sit down.

Girl 1: "Mr Biyela sawubona."

Me: "Mxm." I get up to leave. I overhear their conversation as i leave.

Girl 1: "was it something I said?"

Lando: "of course not babe, he is a natural born jackass. Its got nothing to do with you." I feel my jaw clench.

Girl 2: "And you are about to marry him?"

Lando: "its a hard job but somebodys gotta do it." They burst out laughing.

I get back to the table and the girls are back.

Ayanda: "Who was that?"

Me: "No one important."

Ayanda: "Really?"

Me: "Ayanda not now please. Its time to go." I call the waiter and pay the bill. We get up and leave.

I notice Lando and her friends as we leave looking at us and as we walk out the door they burst out laughing.

Its been less than 24 hours since I was introduced to this girl and already she is driving me nuts.

We get into the car and I go over to Ayandas place to drop her off.

She is so busy on her phone she doesn't even realise we are here.

Me: "Ayanda, we are here."

Ayanda: "okay." She looks up and sees where we are. "I thought we were going to your place."

Me: "I have some work to do so maybe next time."

Ayanda: "Is this about that girl? Who is she and why were you so worked up when you came back from her table? You didn't even eat your cake."

Me: "Ayanda please I am tired I just need to sleep so please."

Ayanda: "I thought you had to work! Babe please tell me whats going on."

I reach over to her side and open the door for her.

Me: "Ayanda get out."

Ayanda: "Really Philani, you are going to treat me like this because of some whore...."

Me: "GET OUT!!!!" She quickly

grabs her bag and gets out. I close the door and leave her standing there. I decide to call my IT guy Sbu.

Sbu: "bozza yam."

Me: "yeah I need you to do a background check on someone."

Sbu: "sure boss, who is it."

Me: "her name is Landokuhle Shongwe. She is the CFO at Biyela Holdings."

Sbu: "ngphez'kwayo boss" (i am on it)

I hang up. Its time to find out who this girl is and why my father likes her so much.

INSERT 4

PHILANI

Its 5 am and I am already up, fuck Lando for running through my mind the whole night, I only got two hours of sleep. Mxm.

I get up and make my way to the en-suite bathroom, I wash my face then brush my teeth. I get out and go into the walk-in closet and take out some sweats and a vest. I decided to go down to the gym to let some steam off.

At 7 am I decided to go make myself some breakfast. Yep I was in the gym for almost 2

hours but I still couldn't get Lando out of my head.

As I made my way to the kitchen I was met by a tantalizing smell. Someone was in the kitchen. I peeked in and it was my sister Qhawekazi, my parents only daughter, 27 years old, a qualified bcom graduate who prefers to travel the world, dad's favourite, basically a spoilt brat.

I stood in the doorway and watched her as she moved around the kitchen with headsets on and singing out loud to Justin Timberlake. She doesn't have the

best voice but you can't tell her that.

She spins around and she finally notices me. She laughs as she takes her headsets off and runs over to me to give me a hug. I missed her.

Kazi: "Hey."

Me: "its too early for you to be in my house Kazi."

Kazi: "Why aren't you at your apartment? Did you move out."

She says going back to her pots. I sit on the high chair and watch her finish cooking.

Me: "Nah I just wanted to be far from everybody while I cleared my

head." She places a plate in front of me with fried eggs, toast, sausages and some tomatoes.

"When did you get back?"

Kazi: "I landed around 4, went to your apartment but you weren't there so I came here." She sits down next to me with her own plate and starts eating.

Me: "I should not have told you about this place."

Kazi: "If you hadn't told me you would not be having a delicious breakfast right now."

Me: "You do know I can cook right?"

Kazi: "mhm whatever. So dad tells

me you are taking over the company soon."

Me: "Did he also tell you that there is a condition attached to that takeover."

Kazi: "What condition is that?"

Me: "I have to get married first."
I pick up the plates and place them in the sink.

Kazi: "That's hectic bra. But then again you have been with Ayanda for almost a year now. Maybe its time you make an honest woman out of her."

Me: "Dad has a bride waiting already."

Kazi: "What? Who?"

Me: "Landokuhle something. She's the company CFO."

Kazi: "Wow bra, is she nice?"

Me: "Mxm she is full of herself. Thinks the world revolves around her and she dresses like a whore. Also she is abusive."

Kazi: "Abusive how exactly?"

Me: "She slapped me." Silence. And then she burst out laughing. "Its not funny Kazi." She won't stop laughing.

Kazi: "Bhuti wami I think I love this girl already. Please marry her, she'll have you on the straight and narrow in no time."

Me: "Ok Trevor Noah hold your

horses. I am not marrying her, not now not ever."

Kazi: "So what will you tell dad?"

Me: "Nothing yet. I have someone looking into her, once I find what I am looking for then I will show it to dad and this lil golddigger will be out of our lives."

Kazi: "And if you don't find anything?"

Mhmm okay so I haven't thought that far yet but my gut tells me she is hiding something and my gut is never wrong.

Me: "I will cross that bridge when I get to it."

Kazi: "Okay. Good luck with that."

Me, I need a bath and sleep so..."

Me: "You are leaving?"

Kazi: "haha funny. See you later."

She rushes up the stairs. Its good to have her back in SA. I missed talking to her, she's nuts but she is the most sensible of my siblings.

She was right too, what if I don't find anything? Am i ready to be someones husband, let alone her husband? And why was I so concerned about her dress code last night. Honestly this girl is driving me nuts without doing anything. I really hope Sbu finds

something on her otherwise I am screwed.



LANDOKUHLE

I am woken up by a throbbing pain in my head. I have a bhabhalaz from hell I tell you. It feels like my head is in a war with gravity, everytime I try and lift it up gravity pulls it back. I am tempted to lay in this bed the whole day but my bladder is not having it, I need to pee.

I force myself to get up and walk to the en-suite bathroom and sit on the toilet seat. You know that

feeling of just letting go, yep if it wasn't for this headache I would be enjoying that feeling now.

I finish and get up, even that is a struggle, I swear I am quitting alcohol. I take some pain blocks from the bathroom cabinet and down four all in one go.

Hopefully they will make me sleep again.

I brush my teeth, wash my face and drag myself back to bed, hopefully nobody comes by. I lay in bed for about 15 minutes before I feel the pain blocks starting to work. I feel sleep coming and I am enjoying this Zen moment

before Shesha geza starts blasting on my phone, mental note I need to change my ringtone.

Me: "Joburg Motuary how can we help you."

Caller: "What the fuck?" Hangs up.

Good now I hope they don't call back so I can go back to sleep, but luck left me a long time ago coz they call back.

Me: "Joburg Mortu....."

Caller: "Lando futsek man come open the gate." They hang up again. I look at the caller ID and its Faith, I could ignore her but she never gives up this one, she

might even jump over the fence. I drag myself downstairs and buzz her in and unlock the door. I walk to the lounge and throw myself on the couch.

After a few minutes she walks in and finds me face down on the couch.

Faith: "here!"

I look up and she hands me a smoothie.

Faith: "drink this if you want to cure that hangover."

I sit up and take a sip of the smoothie. I keep it in my mouth coz this thing not only smells bad it tastes just as bad.

Faith: "you can either swallow

that thing or i will force feed you."

I slowly swallow and i feel tears forming. Why anybody would drink this is beyond me.

Faith: "Good girl! Now we need to talk about last night." I close the bottle and place it on the coffee table.

Me: "What about last night?"

Faith: "Your future husband, I didn't like the way you were making fun of him."

Me: "Uh excuse my ignorance but weren't you there laughing too."

Faith: "I was drunk and I have been thinking about it, that

wasn't nice. You owe him an apology." What the fuck is she talking about? He started it when he called me a whore, but now I am the one who has to apologize? I think not!

Me: "Faith I know you mean well but....."

Faith: "Lando you are about to marry the man, the least you can do is show him a bit of respect. How is your marriage supposed to last if you can't respect your husband."

Someone please explain to me why people who have been married for two seconds all of a sudden think

they are experts at this marriage thing. Girl has yet to celebrate the 3 years anniversary but she's an expert already.

Honestly its too early for this.

Me: "Faith baby I know you mean well but you and I both know that my "marriage" is not normal. Also I AM NOT MARRIED YET PLEASE STOP."

Faith: "There is no such thing as normal when it comes to love."

Me: "Love! What are you talking about, there's no love here, this is purely business and loyalty to a man I have way too much respect for. Love is not part of

this equation." She smiles, moves over to my side and puts her arm around my shoulders.

Faith: "you don't know what the future holds Lala. You could fall in love with Philani and he could fall in love with you. We don't plan love, it just happens."

Yep, she is the romantic type alright, she lives on cloud 9 80 percent of the time, I wish she could come back to earth.

Me: "Faith here is my plan, I will marry Philani because I respect his father, as for love that is an overrated load of BS. And I am not planning on loving nobody but

me. Got it!"

She laughs.

Faith: "You know what they say, when we make plans God laughs."

She gives me a peck on the cheek and waltzes off. This needs to be in Disney land where all things are roses and rainbows.

To think she disturbed my sleep for this, argh I am too lazy to go back up those stairs so I just lay on the couch and off I go to lala land.

♡♡♡♡♡♡♡♡

I wake up after a good rest, but my neck hurts, I should have just

gone upstairs. I open my eyes and i am facing the back of the couch. The tv is on but i don't remember switching it on.

I am also met by the smell of perfume, its expensive and it smells good. I turn around and the first thing I see are some nike sneakers on the coffee table. I decide to sit up and he is sitting on my couch with the remote in hand flipping through channels.

Philani: "I would say goodmorning but....." he looks at his watch.

"Its already afternoon so Goodafternoon."

Me: "what are you doing in my house and who the fuck let you in?"

Philani: "Hows the hangover?" My hangover is fine thanks to Faiths stinking remedy, but I ain't telling him that. Besides how did he know that? Mxm.

Me: "That is not what I asked."

Philani: "oh i have my ways, but you shoulf learn to lock your doors, anybody can walk in here."

Me: "You are a good example of that."

I get up and walk to the kitchen. I can feel his eyes on me and then

I remember, I am wearing bum short pjs and a tiny top.

I walk over to the fridge to find something to eat. Nothing! I turn around and he is leaning on the counter with his elbows.

I take my phone and order food from Uber Eats. I put my phone down once I am done and get some water to drink. He is still watching me, I would say he was undressing me but theres very little to undress.

Me: "Please stop drooling." He blushes.

Philani: "Uhm.... please put

something on."

Me: "Why? Are you uncomfortable with what I am wearing?"

Philani:.....

Me: "You still haven't told me why you are here."

Philani: "How do you my father? Besides working for him ofcourse, I want to know why my father trusts you so much he is willing to have you as part of our family."

Me: "I think this is a conversation you should be having with you father."

Philani: "Well I am marrying you not my father. Its only right that I get to know the future

Mrs Biyela."

Me: "Why are you asking me when you already have people working overtime to find dirt on me. I understand though because I also have my own files on you."

Philani: "What?"

Me: "I don't really like you very much but I owe my life to your father. If it wasn't for him I wouldn't be here right now. So if you want to know more, maybe you should wait on your guy to get you what you want."

The gate intercom buzzes and my food is here. I buzz the delivery guy in and I get my food.

I dish up for him and myself. He reluctantly takes the plate.

Me: "It's not poisoned." He chuckles. He's actually cute when he smiles.

I get to look at him as he eats, he is not bad, he has brown skin, not too tall, broad shoulders and I can see his muscles through his top. His beard just finishes everything off perfectly.

Me: "Why do you hate your dad?" He stops chewing and looks at me. Philani: "I don't hate my dad. We are just not that close. He's never been much of a father to us anyway."

Me: "Why?"

Philani: "Lets just say he is not the kind of father I would wish upon anybody."

Me: "If I had a father who loved me, protected me, provided for me and did all he could to make sure my life was just a tad bit easier, I would wish for every child to experience that. My dad died when I was little, well according to my mother anyway. I had a stepdad who is probably a direct descendant of satan himself. So I would say you had better than me. So I would take a father like yours anyday, anytime."

INSERT 5

"Even though it gets crazy
sometimes

I will, I will, I'll trust in you
When it feels like I've lost my
mind

I will, I will,
Go further, go smarter
I'll pray louder, go deeper
I will, I will trust in you"

The sounds of the choir singing
Todd Dulaney's song, accompanied
by the band vibrates through the
church. Some people are on their
feet with their hands in the air,

praising, some are on their knees deep in prayer.

After a while the choir ends the song and the pastor stands up and preaches. Its a short and precise sermon about allowing God to lead us to where we need to be, afterall He knew us before we were in our mothers wombs. Well I am not sure if I can ever let someone else be in control of my life. But i guess God doesn't count right?

Soon the sermon is done and we are allowed to leave. As we go past the door there are little baskets where we put our

offerings. Something else that I like about this church, offering is never part of the sermon, its a choice you make. I leave a little something and walk out.

I walk out into the blazing sun. Its really hot so I take off my blazer and I am left with just my sleeveless red lace dress that rests just above my knee, its really nice on its own but because its church, I had the blazer on. I look up and Philani is leaning on my car busy with his phone. I take a good look at him and he really looks hot. He has on black formal pants, a white shirt

tucked in but with two buttons opened at the top. He is wearing formal shoes, a black belt and a gold wristwatch that glimmers in the sun. The man is perfect, yes I can admit that.

I walk closer to him and some girls are standing by the car next to mine, they are giggling and I can tell they are trying to get his attention but brothers is just plain ignoring them, Lol church girls can surprise you.

I stand in front of him and he looks up and smiles. The girls disappear very fast.

Philani: "Nice service."

Me: "I didn't know you come to church."

Philani: "Well not usually, but I went to your place and you weren't there. Your neighbour told me you came to church so here I am."

Ok I know this dude is lying because I have stayed in that house for almost two years and I have never spoken to a single neighbour let alone tell them my whereabouts. Suburban life.

Me: "Which neighbour?" Yep he just went blank,

Philani: "Uhm..... the one..... the one who stays next door to

you."

Me: "You are lying but I will let it slide, this time. So what were you doing at my house?" I ask as I open the passenger door and throw in my blazer together with my bag and bible. He follows and stands behind me.

Philani: "I was hoping to take you out for lunch."

Me: "Don't you have a girlfriend?"

Philani: "I do, but I figured since we are about to get married its only right that I get to know you better."

Me: "Didn't your guy find enough info on me."

Philani: "Come to lunch with me and I will tell you all about it."

Me: "Fine. Lets go."

I go around and get into the drivers side and he gets on the passenger side. I look at him with questioning eyes and he notices.

Philani: "My car is not here. Someone dropped me off."

I don't have time to get into it with him so I just start the car and drive off. He directs me to a fancy hotel and we park in the underground parking and take the lift to the second floor. We walk to a private dining area that has

been elegantly set up. Its quite beautiful.

He pulls out my chair and I sit down. He takes a seat and a waiter immediately brings our drinks, whiskey on the rocks for him and a Strawberry daiquiri for me. I take a sip and its a virgin. This nigger! He looks at me and notices the pissed off look on my face.

Philani: "I Hope you like your drink."

Me: "I do, I just like it better with alcohol in it."

Philani: "Well I figured since you are going to work....." he shrugs.

Me: "Oh and you are not working?"

Philani: "I Am but after what I saw yesterday I am pretty certain I can handle my alcohol better than you can."

Mxm he is lucky its Sunday otherwise I would have ordered a whole bottle of wine just to spite him. But he is right, I need to be clear minded for work tomorrow. He tells the waiter to bring our food.

Philani: "I hope you don't mind I already ordered all our food before we came."

Me: "Thats scary."

Philani: "Why?"

Me: "What if you have bad taste in food? Please do not make me eat anything weird." He laughs.

Philani: "We will see."

The waiter comes over with our starter in two covered plates and places them in front of us.

Waiter: "Enjoy your meal."

He lifts the covers and leaves. I look down at the plate and I find chicken feet in soup. I couldn't hold it in so I just burst out laughing.

Me: "I was right you do have bad taste in food."

Philani: "Don't tell me you've never had these before."

Me: "I have, I just never expected to find them at a fancy place like this." I take one and eat. They are actually quite good.

Philani: "You won't find them here, but I did make a special request so they made them for me."

Me: "Lucky you."

We ate and the waiter came to take the plates away when we were done. Now I was curious what would be the main dish, I hope its not mopani worms, cause I cannot stomach those. We talk while waiting for the main. The waiter brings over two more plates and my heart starts

beating faster. I hold my breath as he opens the plates. I let out a sigh when I see Mogodu or Ulsu as Zulu people call it, with pap and chakalaka on the side. It's a favourite of mine. I look up to see him looking at me with a huge smile on his face.

Philani: "If you want something else we can get it for you."

Me: "No this is perfect."

I take a spoonful of the meat and it tastes exactly the way I like, boiled with salt and pepper, a bit of onion and chilli and I am in heaven. I put the spoon aside and just dig in. I am so engrossed in

my food that I don't see him watching me.

My attention is brought back to him when I hear him laugh.

Me: "What?"

Philani: "I have never seen anyone humming while eating ulusa. Is it that good?"

Me: "If you ate yours you would know, its so much better while its still hot you know."

He chuckles and digs in using his hands. We continue eating and talking. Then dessert is served and its chocolate cake, now he is the one humming. I guess he likes it.

When we are done eating we go and sit outside by the pool. Our clothes don't really fit into this place but who cares. We have spoken about a lot of things, mostly his childhood and his travels around the world. Turns out he has seen many of the places I want to go to someday, Mexico, Brazil, New York, Paris, Thailand and even Greece. Well I guess one day is one day.

Philani: "I have a question."

Me: "Yeah."

Philani: "How come you have never travelled before? Its not like you can't afford it."

Me: "Well growing up the way I did travelling always seemed like a distant fantasy and once I started making money I just preferred to save and invest most of it. I told myself I would start, I guess living when I turn 30, for now I just need to get my life in order and make sure I have enough money."

Philani: "I don't think you can ever have enough money though."

Me: "Easy for you to say, you grew up with money."

Philani: "Is that why you respect my father so much, cause he has money?"

Me: "Money doesn't make a man Philani, its nice to have but I don't respect people because of it, I respect people because they have earned it and your father..... he found me on the streets, gave me a roof over my head, clothes on my back, fed me and gave me an education. I will always be grateful for that.

Thats why I will always respect him, it takes a special kind of man to do what he did for me and not expect anything in return."

Philani: "But don't you think forcing you to marry me is him expecting something in return. He

is basically making you pay for all he did for you."

Me: "He is not forcing me to do anything, he gave me a choice, he asked me to do it and I said yes, mainly because I understood his reasons."

Philani: "And what are his reasons?"

Me: "You are gonna have to ask him about those." His phone beeps and he checks it.

Philani: "Okay then, I think its time to go. Can you drop me off at my dads."

Me: "Sure." I picked up my bag and we left.

The drive to his father's place was quiet, he seems to have been deep in thought. I dropped him off and left. I need a shower and sleep, and thanks to his lunch I won't have to cook when I get home.



PHILANI

Lando dropped me off at my dad's and the guards let me in. I was meeting Sbu later to find out what he found. I really hope it's something worthwhile.

I walk into the house and the maid tells me my dad is in the

study. Its not the same here without mom, it feels empty now. I wish dad could just sell this house and move somewhere else but knowing how stubborn he is I doubt he will.

I open the door and my dad is busy on his laptop. He closes it when he sees me walk in.

Dad: "Son, I am happy you came, can i get you anything to eat." He stands up to give me a hug. He leads me to the couch and we sit down.

Me: "No thanks, I just had lunch with Lando." He smiles, of course that would make him happy.

Dad: "Really? Does that mean you have considered my proposal." I don't think my dad knows the difference between a proposal and a demand.

Me: "I Have thought about it."

Dad: "Ok so have you made a decision?"

Me: "Why are you in such a hurry for this to happen anyway. Can't we wait for a while and allow me to court her like any normal person would."

Dad: "I don't have much time son."

Me: "Time for what?"

Dad: "I want to retire soon, and

I need to make sure that you two are happy and you can run the business together. With your leadership and Lando's guidance this company can really be the best."

Me: "Dad Biyela Holdings is one of the biggest companies in the world, how big do you want it to be?"

Dad: "I want my great great grandkids to find it and benefit from it, I want your great great grandkids to also benefit, we not just building a company son but we are creating generational wealth. I know this seems rather selfish

of me but I don't want my grandkids coming to my grave when I am dead bezophahla and asking for luck, I want them to get a bit of luck from the company and build from it what they wish, this comapny will ensure that they have choices tomorrow to do whatever they dream off, and find fulfillment from it, I want this company to be their roots that allows them to grow into whatever they wish to be. And when they come to my grave it will be to say thank you not to beg. Do you understand that?"

Me: "I Understand but....."

Dad: "Look son, I know I have failed you as a father but this is your legacy, and I need you to keep it going. I know this is a lot to ask of you but I am asking anyway."

Me: "Dad you are asking me to make a lifetime commitment to someone I might not even like let alone love."

Dad: "The fact that you took the liberty to spend time with her means something." He takes a deep breath. "Tell you what, give it two years, if its not working by then I will support your divorce

and whoever you choose to marry afterwards."

A deadline works for me, I doubt this marriage will work but a deadline means I can hopefully convince Ayanda to wait. She is not the patient type though.

Me: "Can I at least think about it?"

Dad: "Sure." We stand up and shake hands. "I need an answer by tomorrow though, your uncles are ready to go."

Me: "When do they want to go?"

Dad: "Next weekend." That does not give me much time.

Me: "Fine, dad I will do it. You can

send bomalume."

Dad: "Good decision son." He is happy, strict and hardcore as he is I think deep down he is a softie.

I leave him there and walk out. I decide to take one of his cars in the garage. I hope he won't mind. I take the Audi Q7 and drive out. I have a week to get as much dirt as I can on Landokuhle so I can put a stop to this whole thing.

I drive to my flat and I find Sbu's car already parked inside. I get in and park next to him, I walk into the house and this idiot

has his feet on the coffee table.
I pretend to cough and he quickly
removes his feet on the table.

Sbu: "Bozza yam."

I sit down on the couch across
from him, he puts a file on the
coffee table and tosses it to me,
I open it and theres nothing
much here.

Me: "Yin le Sbu?" (what is this?)

Sbu: "That is all I could find
mlungy, the lady is clean,
matriculated at 16, went to Wits
and graduated top of her class,
your dad paid for all that by the
way. No criminal record, she pays
taxes, basically she is a law

abiding citizen."

Me: "Ok Sbusiso how exactly is this supposed to help me, I need dirt here not this." I toss the file back on the table. And then I remember. "She said something about my father finding her on the streets, maybe you can start there."

Sbu: "Sure thing bozza." He gets up and leaves. No person can be this squeaky clean, I need something or else by the end of this week I will be someones husband.

INSERT 6

This week has gone by pretty fast. Today is Thursday and I am driving down to Mpumalanga. On Monday Mr Biyela senior told me that Philani had finally agreed to the wedding happening so I had to go home and let my family know that people were coming to pay Lobola.

My heart sank, not because I was getting married but because the idea of going home was just too much.

See I haven't seen my family in ten years. I left home after my grandmother died. She had been my pillar and safe haven, she had

protected me and vowed to keep on doing that when my own mother couldn't.

When I was 12 years old my stepfather Vusi started molesting me, he told me that if I told anybody that person would end up dead. Every night he would come into my room, at first he would tell me to play with his private parts, he would take my hand and use it to jerk himself off. No matter how many times I begged him to stop he wouldn't. As time went on he would force me to suck his penis, he would groan and enjoy it while I had

tears running down my face. All that eventually led to him raping me. I still remember the day he took my innocence like it was yesterday.

He had come into my room as always, he told me to suck him, I refused and he slapped me. I cried and he slapped me again, eventually I did what he told me to do, but that day was different, he told me to take off my clothes and lay on the bed.

He got on top of me and forced himself on me. I was in so much pain while he was enjoying himself. I tried to scream but he covered

my mouth with his hands. I cried till I had no tears left to cry. I was numb, he got off me and went back to his room. I got up and went to the bathroom. I tried to wash him off of me, I scrubbed myself so hard I ended up with blisters all over me. When I went back to my room I saw a pool of blood on my bed, I cried even more. I decided that I would tell my mum when she came back from her night shift at the hospital. I slept on the floor.

When my mother came back in the morning she found me sitting on the floor in my room with the

bloody sheets still on my bed. She looked at the bed and looked at me.

Mum: "Are you having your periods?"

Me: "No"

Mum: "So?" I started telling her what happened, with tears streaming down my face I told her everything her husband had done. I looked up and she had a blank stare on her face. She went out and came back a few minutes later with him.

Mum: "Tell him what you just told me." I looked at her and I looked at him, he had a smirk on his

face, I looked at my mum again and I knew he was right, no one would believe me. I looked down at my feet and weeped. "Khuluma Lando." (Talk)

Him: "I don't see the purpose of this conversation because I have told you what happened."

I looked up again and for the first time since she walked in here I saw the sjambok in her hand. She came closer to me and I felt the first stroke on my back. I screamed and begged but it all fell on deaf ears.

It turns out while I was sitting in my room waiting for her to

come home he had called her, told her i had snuck a boy into my room and he found us having sex, he couldn't see the boy cause he jumped out the window.

When she was done she told me to go wash the sheets and the whole neighbourhood knew what supposedly happened because he went to the tavern and told everyone who cared to listen.

Everytime i left the house to go to the shops I'd hear people gossiping and laughing behind my back.

When my grandmother came back from her church conference she

asked me what happened. I couldn't say anything I just cried. The fear of her not believing me was crippling, I just kept it inside and suffered alone. Poor woman tried to get me to talk but I just couldn't. I wish that could have been the end of it but it just gave him a safe passage to keep on hurting me.

I spent the rest of the year just getting by, I had to deal with the gossip and people calling me a whore, what hurt the most though was seeing my friends Lihle and Khabo join the bandwagon. I cried so much I

think at some point I ran out of tears. I was just..... broken.

A few months after my 13th birthday I went to visit my grandmother at her place, I wished I could stay with her forever but my mum would hear none of it. My grandmother had baked some scones so she made me tea.

I sat down on the chair in the kitchen, there was a knife on the table and my grandmother was closing windows because it had started raining. I put the sharp side of the knife on the vein in my hand. All I could think about was,

I just needed to open one vein and I would bleed to death, everything would be peaceful after that.

I was so focused on the knife and the vein i didn't hear my grandma come in. She just grabbed the knife from my hand and hugged me. I felt the tears I thought had dried out flow. She was now crying too.

She pulled a chair and sat in front of me, I told her everything and by the time i was done she was crying more than me. She hugged me again and continued crying.

Gogo: "I am so sorry mntfwanami

(my child) I am so so sorry."

Me: "You believe me gogo?"

Gogo: "Of course I believe you Lando. I believe you."

Those three simple words "I believe you." Hearing her say them was so soothing to my soul. For the first time in a long time I felt peace. Somebody believed me, that's all I wanted, someone to believe me.

The following day she called a family meeting, she called my maternal aunts, Ncobile and Nomzamo, my uncles Bahole and Bongumenzi as well as their wives Nkosazana and Lindiwe. They

drove all the way from Nelspruit and Barberton to Mbuzini after gogo called them late at night. I heard them while I sat in gogo's room as they came in. They were worried. Grandma sat them down and told them everything I had told them.

They decided to call my mother and stepfather to come and defend themselves. My heart started beating fast as I heard their voices when they came in. After a long while my mother's voice cut through the silence.

Mum: "I should have known that stupid child would come to you ma

and you would believe her."

Gogo: "Why would she lie Nelsiwe, she is a child what does she know about sex, why would she make up such a lie. This child is broken and she needs help."

Bahole: "Sbali you have been quiet, are you not going to defend yourself?"

Vusi: "I don't know what I can say sbali, I have tried being a good father to Lando but she just keeps defying us at every turn. If its not boys being snuck into the house at night its alcohol." Wait when did I start drinking alcohol?
"Ma is right this child needs help,

but its not because of anything I did to her its because she thinks because she is a teenager now she can do what she wants whenever she wants. She really needs help."

I sat there mortified at how this man can lie through his teeth, and to make matters worse he was adding more lies.

Mum: "See this child is a problem even at school her grades are going down coz ubusy up and down nebafana." (With Boys)

Lindiwe: "But skoni don't you think that is a sign. We all know Lando is a straight A student, maybe

this whole thing is affecting her."

Mum: "Awume ke wena (hold it right there) the only thing affecting her nglabafana labagcwele lanhloko yakhe (are the boys in her head.)

Bongmenzi: "So what do we do right now because now its his word against hers?"

Mum: "There is nothing to be done, that is my child and I am telling you she is lying. So please leave my family alone."

Gogo: "I am taking her to the police station tomorrow morning before I go to work. If your husband has nothing to hide then

lets allow the police to do their job."

Mum: "yemake are you hearing yourself right now, you want my husband to go to jail because of a useless child who only knows how to open her legs for the entire community and now because she is ashamed she'll blame my husband for it. Never shem. You are not taking her anywhere." She got up and marched to the bedroom and tried to open the door but it was locked. "Yewena sfebe vula lomnyango." (Open the door you whore)

Tears fell down my face as I sat

on the bed. My mum kept banging on the door. While the others tried to calm her down. She kept on banging till I couldn't take it anymore, I opened the door and I was met with a slap and my mother dragged me all the way home.

I don't know when my uncles and aunts left. When we got home my mother locked me in my room all night with no food. I was woken up by someone screaming outside, I listened carefully and heard my mother's voice, she was crying. I wondered what happened.

I tried opening the door and luckily it was opened. I walked out into the yard and more people had gathered around. I saw one of my neighbours and asked her what happened. She told me my grandmother was dead. Her friend had found her that morning, they were just waiting for the police to come.

I got up from the stoep and ran all the way to my grandmother's place, there were people already gathered there, including my stepfather. They tried to stop me but I forced my way in.

I saw her sleeping on the bed. She looked so peaceful, like she would wake up at any moment. I tiptoed closer to the bed and I called her.

Me: Gogo! Gogo vuka (wake up). Gogo."

I put my hands on her cheeks, they were ice cold. I broke out in a wail. I screamed for her to wake up but she wouldn't, I shook her, begged her but she just lay there.

Through my sobbing and heartache I heard my stepfather's voice.

Vusi: "She is dead! You killed her!

You should have kept your mouth shut."

I stayed with gogo till the police came and confirmed she was dead. I sat in the corner as they wrapped her and took her away. I had nobody now, I was all alone with no one to protect me, she was gone, my fighter and protector was gone.

The post mortem came back and they said she had a heart attack in her sleep. Everyone said at least she died peacefully but I knew better. I couldn't prove it but I knew he had killed her.

The day of her burial was hard for me. I watched her coffin being lowered and soil being thrown on top of it and all I wanted to do was to trade places with her. When everybody left the cemetery I stayed behind, I sat down next to her grave hoping that I would wake up and this would only be a dream, just a bad dream, but it wasn't. She was gone.

I got home and most people had left and most were still at grandmas. I went into my mothers room looking for gogo's jacket. It smelled like her. I

wrapped it around me. As I was walking out I tripped on a pile of blankets and they fell. Between the blankets I noticed an envelope. I opened it and there was money, I wanted to count it but I was scared someone would walk in so I took the whole envelope and went to my room.

The next morning I woke up at half past three and took a bath, I took my backpack and packed some clothes and the money. By four o'clock I snuck out the house, I got a taxi and it took me to the taxi rank. From there I took the first taxi to Joburg and I never

looked back. Hard as it was when I got there, it was still a better alternative to being home.

By the time I got to Mbuzini it was almost dark. I sat in my car outside my house, it was still the same as I had left it. Seeing it brought back every bitter memory I thought I had left behind. I sat for a while before I saw my mum walk out to the washing line and take down the dry clothes. She greeted one of the neighbours and was busy talking to her when a white Toyota van pulled up to the house. A girl ran out of the house

towards the car, I knew the moment I saw her face, that was Ntombikayise, my half sister. She must be at least 17 years old now. She seemed to be close to him.

I looked around hoping to see Gugulethu, my other sister, she was 4 years old when I left. I didn't see her. He got out of the car, he looked older, and he had grey hair. He wore brown chinos and a black shirt with some omega sandals, his favourites. He walked over to my mum and I assume he was asking about my car because he pointed towards it,

he started walking towards the gate and I knew he was coming to me. My heart started beating fast and I knew I had to go, I couldn't be here. I started the car and drove away before he could get to me.

On my way I called Buli. She picked up on the second ring.

Buli: "Hey, are you home already?"

Me: "I Just left, we are going with plan B."

Buli: "Are you sure?"

Me: "Yes, I can't go back there, I just can't. Seeing them just brought back a whole lot of things I would much rather

forget."

Buli: "No need to explain chomi, just find a guest house and rest, I will call babe Shongwe and tell him we are coming."

Me: "Thanks chom."

Buli: "You know I got your back right?"

Me: "I Know chomi. I know." I hung up.

Buli, Faith, Bab'Shongwe and Mr Biyela senior were the only people who knew my story.

Buli and Faith I met when Bab'Biyela sent me to their boarding school. It was mid year, they were already friends but

they welcomed me in and we got along like a house on fire. They never judged me, even though they come from well off families, they are the most down to earth people I knew. Crazy but down to earth. And I love the fact that they never pitied me, instead they supported me, they stayed up with me when I couldn't sleep because of nightmares, they were just a godsend. Friends like them are hard to come by.

Bab'Shongwe I also met at school, he was a cleaner there, we got along because of our last names, he treated me like a

daughter, I guess maybe the fact that he had no children of his own and his wife had died giving birth to their first child was the reason he cared so much. His son had died a few weeks after his wife, he had been born prematurely and I guess his little body couldn't fight anymore.

Bab'Biyela on the other hand I met while I was living on the streets. He says he saw me digging for food at a trash can on the corner of 3rd Avenue and 5th street in Mellville, turns out the money I had stolen was just four thousand rands. It had only

lasted a couple of months. I used to buy food once a day so it would last. I also decided to find shelters to sleep, and if I didn't find space that day I would sleep on the streets. I tried to find a job but no one wanted to hire a child. He turned around to come give me money but I was gone already. He says he looked for me for weeks but he couldn't find me. One fateful day, on my birthday I stole a cupcake from this bakery, I ran out as quickly as I could but the security were chasing me, I turned the corner and I saw him standing by his car on his

phone. He saw me and dropped the call. I guess he also saw the security guys behind me cause he quickly opened the back door of the car and told me to get in and lay down. He got into the drivers side and drove away.

Bab'Biyela: "Why are they chasing you.?" I sat up after a while, I just looked at him through the rearview mirror. I took out the cupcake from my bag.

Me: "Its my birthday, I just wanted to have something nice."

Bab'Biyela: "How old are you?"

Me: "fourteen."

Bab'Biyela: "Whats your name?"

Me: "Landokuhle."

Bab'Biyela: "Why are you not at school?" I just shrug my shoulders. He drove to Campus Square and told me to stay in the car.

He locked the doors and left. I sat there patiently waiting for him. Till this day I don't know what made me sit there and not panic or even run away. When he came back he had a cake and some balloons, and also a paperbag. He gave me everything and said happy birthday. Then he drove to an apartment building on the other side of town. We got out

and he led me to one of the flats there, he told me to stay put before he left.

It was a beautiful place, simple but beautiful. I looked around and found the bathroom. I took a quick shower. When I was done I went back to the lounge and sat on the couch, I opened the paperbag and found a brand new phone. I put it back in its box, I wasn't about to accept such a gift without knowing what he wanted in return, this was Joburg, there's nothing for mahala.

He came back a few hours later with plastic bags full of clothes and shoes. In one plastic bag there was a school uniform. I looked at him.

Bab'Biyela: "You are going to school next week."

Me: "Why?"

Bab'Biyela: "Because if you are going to be anything productive in society you need an education."

Me: "No I mean why are you helping me? You don't even know me. So what do I have to do to pay you back?"

Bab'Biyela: "I don't want payback, I have a daughter who

is 2 years older than you, living on the streets is hard enough for anybody but its a lot worse for a girl. So I am just trying to do my little bit to help."

Me: "So do you do this for all the girls on the streets or is this just for me."

Bab'Biyela: "I sponsor a rehab centre for girls, most of the girls we help are drug addicts so we take them straight there but you don't look like you are addicted to anything. Are you?"

Me: "No!"

Bab'Biyela: "Good. You start school next week. In the

meantime you will stay here, theres food in the fridge, you can make anything you like. I will bring you suitcases to pack tomorrow." He got up to leave.

Me: "I have a question. Two actually, one you said "we" help people so who is we? Also its the middle of the year how did you get me a school so quick?"

Bab'Biyela: "We is my wife and I. As for the school part, I know people." He shrugged and walked out.

I looked out the window and there was a rainbow, Gogo always said a rainbow was a sign of a

new beginning, a new dawn so maybe this was my new dawn, maybe God couldn't come down to earth to help me himself so he sent this man. If this was real, I vowed to not let a chance like this slip through my fingers.

I found a guesthouse in the middle of nowhere, it was livable and all i needed was a shower and a bed. Tomorrow is a new beginning.

INSERT 7

Its the weekeeeeeeeend baby!
Ok if it was any other weekend

the mood would be justified, but this one, I am nervous and scared. I am about to commit my life to someone I don't even love, and who seems to be on a mission to destroy me.

Anyways I get up and walk to the ensuite bathroom of this guesthouse. I take a shower, get out and dry myself before lotioning. I look through my bag and find a long yellow summer dress with slits on the side. I put it on and wear some flops. I decide to leave my braids loose, its too hot to put them in a bun. I

pack all my stuff and walk to the reception to check out.

The lady offers me breakfast but I decline. I have a long way to drive, and I also need to pick up Faith from the airport. Buli is already in Nelspruit. I check out and drive out of there.

After an hour of driving my phone rings. Its an unknown number. My phone is connected to the

Bluetooth speaker so I answer.

Me: "Hello."

Guy: "Ntfombatana." (Girl) Its Bab'Shongwe.

Me: "Mtimandze."

Bab'Shongwe: "Unjani?" (How are

you)

Me: "I am good baba how are you?"

Bab'Shongwe: "Kuyale kuyale. (So, so). Buli tells me there are people coming here tomorrow."

Me: "Yebo baba. I hope you don't mind?"

Bab'Shongwe: "Of course not. I am happy to help. But are you sure this is what you want?"

Me: "It is what I want. I tried going home but I just couldn't go in. Seeing them, even from far just....."

Bab'Shongwe: "No need to explain my child. I don't mind

representing you. I hope someday you can make peace with them."

Me: "One day, maybe."

Bab'Shongwe: "Shesha ke sisi. Ushayeke kahle." (Hurry and drive safe.) He hangs up. For the first time since this week started I feel at peace, maybe things will work out after all.

Its crazy though how the people who have brought stability and peace into my life are people who are technically strangers to me, but they have loved me without question and supported me through it all. I guess its true that family isn't always blood, but

its the people who choose to be there through it all. I turn up the music and my drive has just become easier.

I get to Nelspruit just before ten, Faith's flight lands in an hour so I decide to go to Wimpy at I'Langa mall to have breakfast. I sit down and order food, the waiter brings my food and I dig in, I didn't realize how hungry I was.

While I am eating I notice a lady looking at me and walking towards my direction. I cross fingers hoping she is passing by, but she's not. She greets me and

sits down uninvited. People can be so rude sometimes.

Lady: "Sorry to disturb you but can you take off your glasses please."

Me: "Askies!" She must not even try me shem, I hope she doesn't think I am her husbands side dish.

Lady: "I am sorry, its just that you look like someone I used to know and I was hoping you are her."

Me: "Sorry to disappoint you but I don't know you." She looks down.

Maybe I was a bit harsh. I sigh.
"Who are you looking for anyway?"

She looks up again.

Lady: "Someone I grew up with, I haven't seen her in ten years.

She's from Mbuzini." My heart starts beating fast, but I am curious also.

Me: "Whats her name?"

Lady: "Landokuhle Shongwe." Oh shit.

Me: "Are you her friend?"

Lady: "Something like that.

Anyways thank you for your time, I am sorry to have bothered you."

She gets up to leave, but then turns around. "Sorry I didn't get your name."

Me: "Uhm yeah Kuhle, Kuhle

Biyela." She smiles.

Lady: "It was nice to meet you Kuhle." She turns and goes back to her table. I let out the breath I had been holding in. This weekend needs to end before I run into more people I used to know.

I pay my bill and leave as quickly as possible. I get to the airport and Faith is already waiting for me. She comes over soon as she sees me and gives me a hug. She is carrying two large suitcases, maybe she didn't get the memo that this is a weekend thing.

Me: "Friend you do know we are

staying for the weekend only right."

Faith: "Girl please, you know a woman needs to pack for all occasions. You never know what could happen." I laugh as we put the luggage in the boot and off we go.

We get to Lekazi by lunchtime, we drive into Bab'Shongwe's yard, and walk in. There are people in the lounge, three men and a woman. Bab'Shongwe is not here, we walk in and sit down to greet. "Sanibonani" (hello) Faith and I say as we sit on the couch.

Lady: "Sanibonani. Ninjani?" (Hello

how are you)

Me: "Siyaphila, ninjan nine." (We are well how are you?) As if on cue Bab'Shongwe walks in and we get up and hug him.

Bab'Shongwe: "Mantfombatana! Nihambe kahle?" (Did you travel well)

Me: "Yebo babe." (Yes)

Bab'Shongwe: "Good let me introduce you. These are the people who will be helping with the negotiations tomorrow, that is Simelane, Mabena and Mkhonta and this is make Sbongile." We get up and shake their hands and sit back down. "Lady and gentlemen

that is my niece Lando, she's the one getting married, and that is her friend Faith."

Mabena: "It is nice to finally meet you, your uncle never stops talking about you. He is very proud of you."

Me: "Thank you. We will bring our bags in then go back to town to buy some things for tomorrow."

Mam'Sbongile: "No no no you are not going anywhere. You can't leave the house. Its bad enough you came today, you should have been here last week."

Me: "but we need to buy food."

Bab'Shongwe: "Don't worry about

that, Buli is probably on her way back as we speak."

Faith: "Alone?"

Bab'Shongwe: "No I asked one of the neighbours to help out so she went with her. You can start cooking dinner."

Me: "Of course." We get up and bring our bags in. We come back to the kitchen to start cooking.

A few minutes later Buli walks in with groceries and another girl follows behind her with plastic bags too, she must be the neighbour. We group hug soon as she puts the groceries on the table.

Buli: "What the fuck took you so long?"

Me: "We missed you too friend."

Buli: "Mxm. Wena your husband let you go vele."

Faith: "We are not joined at the hip hawu."

Me: "Please that man has called a 100 times in the last two hours alone." We all laugh.

Buli: "See what I mean. We should go on a girls trip for atleast a week soon."

Me: "Mbusi will be in a mental institution by the time we get back."

Faith: "Please leave my husband

alone." She turns to the girl. "Hi I am Faith and this idiot over here is Lando, the bride."

Girl: "Hi!" She says shyly.

Buli: "Oh yes ladies this is Celiwe, she's been such a great help.

We unpack the groceries and I find some bottles of wine.

Me: "Buli, whats this." She turns around and quickly comes to my side.

Buli: "Shhhh. why are you so loud."

Faith: "Alcohol Buli? Really?"

Buli: "Hhay Mamfundisi, we will need this. We need to hide this in our room, after dinner we are having a bachelorette party in

this house. Also there are more ciders in the car. Get them." She tiptoes out to hide the bottles. I turn to look at Celiwe.

Me: "Why didn't you stop her?"

She laughs.

Celiwe: "I tried, I swear to God I tried but she is unstoppable."

We all laugh. We go to the car and bring in the drinks. We take a six pack of Brutal fruit and each pour one into coffee mugs and put the rest away. We place some scones on the table and we start the party early.

My phone vibrates and I take it out of my pocket, its a message

from Philani.

'Are you still alive'

'Lol. I am. Were you hoping I would die.'

'Lol no I just assumed those rural boys had stolen you already.'

'Shem I might just take one, phela they are gifted these ones.'

'😬😬 gifted in what exactly?' I laugh out loud.

'In everything. Looks, charm, biceps and just all round good men.'

'Yawn. Keep trying to convince yourself it won't work.'

'Whatever, I will send you the address now so I can go back to

cooking.'

'Do you even know how to cook?

Poor people are about to eat kak.

Just so you know if you are

cooking I am bringing my own

takeaway tomorrow.'

'Mxm we will see.' I send the

address and put the phone on the

table. I look up to find the girls

looking at me intently with smiles

on their faces.

Me: "What?"

Faith: "Love! Its such a complex

but satisfying feeling right? "

Me: "I wouldn't know."

Buli: "Bitch please I don't need

anyone telling me who you were

texting coz I already know, the look on your face said it all."

Me: "Mxm whatever can we just finish what we came here to do, cook!"

I get up and walk to the sink.



PHILANI

I have been sitting on the couch at home waiting for my uncles, these old people don't know how to keep time. We were meant to be on the road an hour ago. At this rate we will get to Mpumalanga well past midnight. We booked at a hotel there so we

can rest before tomorrow. I don't know why I am anxious though.

I get up and walk to the bottom of the stairs and look up, still no sign of anybody.

Me: "Akuhanjweni phela! (Lets go). I shout but these people are just too stubborn.

I turn around to see my dad leaning on the wall by the passage, he must have come from his study.

Dad: "You seem to be in a hurry."

Me: "Baba. I just hate driving at night thats all."

Dad: "Or maybe you just can't wait to get your wife?" I sigh,

my dad is one of if not the only romantic man on earth, he thinks fairytales and happily everafters still exist even today.

Me: "Don't get your hopes up baba. This is just business." He smiles and walks to the couch and sits down. I follow him and do the same.

Dad: "Son love finds us when we least expect it, even when we try to shut it out it always finds a way." I told you he was a hardcore romantic fool.

Me: "Baba, I know you have dreams about this marriage but I can vehemently tell you now,

two years from now I will be a divorced man." He still has a smile stuck to his face.

Dad: "That's what I said about your mother, look how that turned out." Wait what! Mum and Dad had an arranged marriage? They never told us that. Just then my uncles walk down the stairs.

Bab'Zwelithini: "Seskhona mfana akuhanjwe. (We are ready, let's go)"

Bab Nqoba, Bab Goodwill and Bab Makhosi come and sit down. Here I was thinking we are leaving.

Bab'Zweli calls the maid and

orders tea before joining his brothers on the couch.

Makhosi: "You seem anxious my boy, are you okay."

Dad: "He is nervous." They laugh.

Me: "I just want to get this over and done with." The maid brings the tea and they drink like they are having tea with the queen of England herself, savouring every sip and bite of the scones.

Its getting late and these men are far from finishing. Now I regret not leaving with Lindani and the others. I tap my foot impatiently and they notice, instead of getting up so we can

go they burst out laughing. Mxm
I get up and walk outside. I
decide to call Lindani. He picks up
after the second ring.

Lando: "Hello"

Me: "Who is this? Where's
Lindani?"

Lando: "I don't carry old people on
my back Philani and why would you
call me and ask me about your
best friend?" What the heck. I
look at the screen and I see
Lando's name on the screen. I
must have called her instead of
Lindani. I must have dialled her
number by mistake.

Me: "Hey sorry I thought I was

calling Lindani."

Lando: "its okay, are you here already?"

Me: "Nope still in Joburg. The old people are still busy with tea and scones." She laughs. "Its not funny, they know I hate driving at night."

Lando: "Relax, its just Mpumalanga not Timbuktu."

She is right I need to relax a bit. We talk for a while before hanging up. I get a text from Ayanda.

'Babe where are you? I want to come over so we can spend the weekend together' Shoot! I

forgot to tell her about this weekend, I haven't seen her the whole week and I haven't missed her, I need to end things with her when I get back, as much as I was hoping we would make our relationship work I don't think it will, and its not fair for me to expect her to wait the whole two years. She deserves better.

'No I am not home, the boys and I are going to Mpumalanga for the weekend. I will call you when I get back.' Hopefully she buys this.

'Okay babe, have fun and don't miss me too much.' Whew.

Finally after a whole hour the old people decide to emerge from the house. We get into the minivan and off we go.



NARRATED

Meanwhile at Ayanda's flat, she has just come out of the shower when there's a knock at the door. She throws on her gown and rushes to open the door. It's her friend Cebo. She walks past her into the flat.

Ayanda: "Cebolenkosi, whats going on?"

Cebo: "Friend where is your man?"

Ayanda: "Why?"

Cebo: "Just answer the question."

Ayanda: "He is in Mpumalanga for a boys weekend. Why?" She chuckles.

Cebo: "Is that what he told you? Men really are trash shem. Philani is not on a boys weekend, he went to Mpumalanga to pay Lobola."

Ayanda burst out laughing.

Ayanda: "Friend that is such a joke my darling."

Cebo: "your boyfriend is about to get married and you think its a joke? Ayanda I am dead serious. He is about to be a husband, just not yours." Ayanda's face turns

serious.

Ayanda: "Philani wouldn't do that to me, he loves me and he will marry me." Cebo takes out her phone and opens her instagram. She scrolls to Lindani's profile. She opens a video of him driving.

Ayanda watches with a blank stare.

Cebo: "Let me read the caption for you. 'Amalobolo loading. I chomi yam iyashada.'"

Ayanda: "Lindani has more than one friend, he could be talking about someone else."

Cebo: "I wasn't done. #impintshiyamiyashada #Mr

sBiyelalading. Tell me which other friend he has that is also a Biyela."

Ayanda grabs the phone from her, she has tears running down her face.

Ayanda: "How could he do this to me. He lied to me."

Cebo: "Stop crying, go pack a bag we are going to Mpumalanga, he will not play you like this."

Ayanda: "Mpumalanga is huge, where will we go?"

Cebo: "Lindani will tell us where they are. Go and pack." Ayanda rushes to her room and packs. She

gets dressed, grabs her bags and they drive off to Mpumalanga.

INSERT 8

LANDO

Its 3 AM and I can't sleep. The others decided to sneak out and go partying and now I am stuck here alone. I decide to go to the kitchen for some hot chocolate. I make my hot chocolate and sit down on the table. I hear footsteps in the passage and soon Bab'Shongwe walks into the kitchen.

Bab'Shongwe: "Too excited to sleep?" He asks as he takes a seat across the table. I get up and make him some tea with lots of sugar and milk.

Me: "I am not sure if its excitement or fear." I hand him his tea.

Bab'Shongwe: "Where there is love theres no fear." I smile, he has no idea there is no love involved in this and I am not ready to tell him just yet.

Me: "I know, Love heals and makes all things better right."

Bab'Shongwe: he laughs, "I am glad you still remember that."

I look at this man and I thank God everyday for him. Him and Bab'Biyela are the reason I don't think all men are trash. Because of them I know what its like to have a father figure in my life.

Me: "Baba ngyabonga. (Thank you) for everything you have done for me, I could never repay you."

Bab'Shongwe: "I should be thanking you. You are a strong and kind child, in this day and age kindness is hard to find. After my wife died and then my son I didn't have it in me to love again. I took the job at your school just so I can eat, a part of me was just

waiting for the day God would take me so I can be with my wife and son. Instead you came along and I had purpose again. You unknowingly made me want to live again."

Me: "I guess we needed each other."

Bab'Shongwe: "Yes!" He takes a sip of his tea. "So tell me about this boy. Is he good to you?"

Honestly I haven't known him long enough to figure that out yet. I mean its only been two weeks.

Me: "He is good! He is a good person!"

Bab'Shongwe: "And he makes you happy?"

Me: "Yes baba he makes me happy."

Does he? I don't know but i know being with him is different. He is easy to talk to and he makes me laugh. Is it love? I don't think so. Attraction maybe? Yeah attraction. He is an attractive person but love, I don't think so. Baba finishes his tea and decides to go back to sleep. Before he leaves he turns around and looks at me, smiles and walks away. How did I get so lucky.

I finish my hot chocolate and decide to try and sleep. Maybe this time I will succeed.



NARRATED

At a shisanyama in Nelspruit, Philani, his friends Lindani, Nate and Senzo and his brothers Sihle and Banele are sitting around a table drinking beer. The place is almost empty but these guys don't want to leave.

Philani: "Guys I think we should go get some sleep, its already morning."

Sihle: "So vele you are getting

married?

Philani: "Yep, thats what your father wants."

Banele: "Since when do you do everything dad says?"

Lindani: "Since he saw the woman your father chose. Heck if that was me I would also give up my playboy card and settle down for life if it was with her."

Nate: "Why? is she hot?"

Lindani: "See for yourselves." He takes out his phone.

Philani: "Why do you have Lando's pictures on your phone?"

Lindani: "Its instagram bra."

Philani: "Her account is private."

Lindani: "To you maybe." He passes his phone around and shows everybody.

Senzo: "Ok now I understand, she is hot."

Lindani: "Told you. Your brother is whipped."

Philani: "I am not whipped." They laugh.

Lindani: "Really, thats why you try to call me and end up calling her instead."

Nate: "Wait, what?"

Philani: "Bra its not my fault your numbers are almost similar."

Nate: "But you've never had such a problem before."

Senzo: "Whipped!" They laugh.

Banele: "Now I really need to meet my sister-in-law."

Philani: "Mxm whatever lets go, I am sure the old people are already waiting for us." They get up and leave still teasing him.

They get to the hotel and find the uncles already waiting for them. They shower and get dressed then meet in Bab'Zweli's room. They say a prayer before walking out to their cars. Lindani, Nate, Senzo and Philani are together in the same car.

They drive out and the others follow behind in the minivan. As

they are about to get to their destination they notice a blue car overtake the minivan and follows them close. The car then overtakes them and quickly stops in front of them. Lindani brings the car to a halt and the minivan follows and stops behind them. The guys already have their hands on their guns ready to shoot.

The blue car's doors open and Ayanda and Cebo walk towards the car.

Lindani: "You've got to be kidding me. What the fuck is she doing here?"

Philani: "I'll go talk to her." He gets out of the car and walks towards Ayanda and Cebo.

Ayanda: "Boys weekend Philani? Boys weekend really."

Philani: "What are you doing here Ayanda?"

Cebo: "That's a stupid question even from you."

Philani: "Voetsek wena." He says looking at Cebo who cowers seeing the anger in his eyes. He looks back at Ayanda. "I asked you a question Ayanda, what are you doing here?"

Ayanda: "You are getting married Philani and you didn't even think

to tell me. Am I that useless to you that you can't even consider my feelings?

Philani: "Please just go back home I will explain everything when I get back."

Ayanda: "No Philani, I want an explanation now." She screams at him with tears running down her face.

Philani: "Do not raise your voice to me. I said I will explain when I get back now please leave."

Cebo: "You mean after you are married, explain to her now."

Philani ignores her.

Philani: "Ayanda please go home,

this is not the time for this.
Please go home."

Bab'Zweli gets out of the minivan
and walks to where the three are
standing.

Bab'Zweli: "Philani what's
happening here?"

Philani: "Its nothing baba I'll
sort it out."

Cebo: "Its not nothing, tell him
the truth Philani." She says while
holding Ayanda who is sobbing.

Bab'Zweli: "Philani!"

Philani:

Bab'Zweli: "I don't have time for
this Philani. Sort this out so we
can go we are already late." He

walks back to the car.

Lindani gets out of his car and goes to Cebo's car, he opens the driver's side and takes the keys, Ayanda and Cebo's bags. He locks the car and walks to them. He hands them their bags.

Cebo: "What the fuck are you doing Lindani?"

Lindani: "Ladies we would like to stay and chat but we have important matters to attend. Philani lets go."

Cebo: "Aren't you forgetting something Lindani."

Lindani: "You mean these?" He dangles the keys. "You don't need

these. Someone is coming to pick you up. Bafo lets go." He drags Philani to the car with Cebo and Ayanda swearing at them.

Ayanda: "Fuck you Philani. Uyinja uyezwa (you are a dog.)

Cebo: "Lindani give me my keys wenanja (You dog).

Lindani starts the car but Cebo stands in front of it refusing to move. Nate and Senzo are laughing their lungs out.

Nate: "Bra I thought my baby mama had drama but these two, yesses."

Lindani revs the car hard and goes forward, Ayanda and Cebo

jump out the way and fall to the sidewalk. They get up and watch as Lindani drives off followed by the minivan. Nate and Senzo are still laughing. Philani takes a deep breath and focuses on the task ahead.

Philani: "Dear Lord what have I done."



LANDO

Faith, Celiwe and I are in the kitchen cooking when Buli stumbles in and throws herself on the chair and rests her head on the table.

Buli: "I am dying."

Bab'Shongwe: "Thats what you get for sneaking out at night when you should have been sleeping." He says walking into the kitchen. Buli quickly raises her head and looks at him.

Buli: "Baba I don't know what you mean, I just have a migraine." He laughs.

Bab'Shongwe: "Dear child I am old not stupid. Finish up here and go to your room, we are about to let them in." He walks out again. Buli slumps her head on the table again.

Buli: "Its about bloody time, their screaming is making my headache

worse." We all burst out laughing.
"Please stop."

Me: "But Buli I told you this would backfire on you."

Buli: "Mxm you guys don't love me." She says as she gets up to leave.

Me: "So vele you are not going to make her your stinky hangover concoction?" I ask looking at Faith

Faith: "Nope, she must suffer just a little bit." We all laugh.

Celiwe: "So which one is mkhwenyana?" She asks standing by the window looking out. Faith and I go and stand beside her and

look out. And I see them, well him mostly but you know. He is wearing black formal pants, a white shirt and black formal shoes, that seems to be his uniform. The sight of him gives me butterflies in my tummy, he looks really good. I show Celiwe. Celiwe: "Good, now that that's sorted can I have the one next to him with the shades on." That would be Lindani.

Me: "If you are willing to share him with everybody else then sure you can have him." We leave the kitchen as soon as they let them in.

We get to the bedroom and Buli is slumped on the couch. We get dressed except for Faith who watches us, she is married so.... I put on my brown sidvwashi (sishweshwe) and tie it around my waist. Then bring my red lihiya (kanga) under my one arm and tie it on my collar bone with a brooch on the other arm. I put on my ligcebesha (beaded necklace) and finish my look with some beads around my ankles. I tie my braids in a low ponytail. Not to brag but I look good.

I turn around and Buli and Celiwe are also done, we are wearing the

same thing. We sit on the bed and wait for them to call us. After a while Mam'Sbongile comes in and calls us, Buli, Celi and I follow her with our heads bowed. We get to the lounge and sit on the grass mats by the side of the door.

Bab'Shongwe: "Bo Biyela these are the girls we have in this home, tell us which one your son has fallen in love with."

Lindani: "The one on the left baba." He says pointing to me.

Bab'Shongwe: "Landokuhle, do you know these people."

Me: "Yebo baba I know them."

Bab'Shongwe: "They say they are

here to pay Lobola, Do you agree to that."

Me: "Yebo baba."

Bab'Shongwe: "Okay then, you can go back."

We get up and go back to the bedroom.

After a long while, we hear Mam'Sbongile ululating as she makes her way to us, she opens the door and leads us out. I look into the lounge and Philani and his younger brother, Banele have joined the others.

We go into the kitchen and start bringing the food into the lounge, we place everything on the dining

table, they will have to serve themselves. We are done. We decide to go eat in the kitchen, but before we leave Mam'Sbongile clears her throat and we look back at her.

Mam'Sbongile: "Lando, sisi who is going to serve your husband?" He is a grown ass man with two hands and two feet I am pretty sure he is capable of serving himself. I look at him and he is looking at me with a smirk on his face. I walk over to the table and dish up for him. The girls follow suit dishing for the others. I place the food on a tray and cover

it with a glass of juice on the side and bring it to him, I look at Mam'Sbongile and she motions with her head that I should kneel.

Philani: "I think I will get used to this. Being served like a king." He whispers so

I am the only one who can hear him.

Me: "Mxm don't. This is the first and last time."

Philani: "We will see." I get up and help the others serve.

When they are done eating we walk them out and they leave. We go back to the house and clean up.

I go to my room and sit on the bed, I open my phone and find a message from Philani.

'You looked beautiful today Mrs Biyela.'

I take a deep breath and throw the phone on the bed. What have I gotten myself into?



NARRATED

At Mbuzini, Ntombi just walked into the house from her visiting her friends. Her mother, Nelsiwe is in the kitchen cooking. She decides to join her.

Ntombi: "Make."

Nelsiwe: Looking up from the pot

"Yeah"

Ntombi: "Have you ever thought about looking for Lando?"

Nelsiwe: "Why would I do that?"

Ntombi: "Because she is your child, don't you ever wonder where she is, how she is surviving, whether she has food or clothes? What if she is homeless?"

Nelsiwe: "Sthandwa sam Lando left home, no one threw her out. She left. I don't have the time or energy to run after someone who tried to do what she did. Also I didn't throw her out she left on her own. As for how she's surviving, simple she's probably

opening her legs for every Nigerian in Hillbrow." She goes back to her pots.

Ntombi leaves her and goes to her sister Gugu's bedroom, she is laying on the bed with headsets on so she throws herself on the bed too. Gugu takes off her headsets.

Gugu: "Manje?" (So?)

Ntombi: "Hawu, I just want to spend time with my little sister, you know you will miss me when I go to varsity next year."

Gugu: "I wish I could come with you." She says, her voice laced with sadness.

Ntombi: "Hey don't be sad, I will come back to visit."

Gugu: "I know. Please look for Lando."

Ntombi: "I'll try but you know Joburg is huge. Also I think she might be somewhere in Nelspruit. I saw sis Khabo earlier and she says she saw someone who looks like Lando, she even spoke to her but her name was different."

Gugu: "What did she say her name was, maybe we can look for her on social media coz we can't find Lando anywhere there."

Ntombi: "I think she is there, she is probably using a different

name."

Gugu: "Maybe."

Ntombi: "I will ask sis Khabo for the name tomorrow then we can use that one to try and find her."

"They hear a car pull up outside."

"Daddy is home." She goes running out excitedly.

Gugu gets up from her bed and locks her door, she goes back to sit on the bed with her knees pulled up and her chin resting on her knees. Her hands hug her raised legs, tears streaming down her face. The nightmare that haunts her every night is back.

INSERT 9

Its been a week since we came back from Mpumalanga, I am now officially someone's wife. Philani and I went and signed at home affairs. We decided not to do the other traditional aspect of this marriage, after all its still on probation.

Today is Friday, I am supposed to move in with Philani tomorrow, my bags are packed, most of my stuff will have to go into storage except for a few personal things. The truck is coming in the morning. Now its time to pack my stuff and go home, my home, I

will be sleeping there for the last time today before renting it out. But before I go, there's one last thing I need to do. I walk into Mr Biyela senior's office and he is busy on his laptop. He looks up and smiles when he sees me come in. Mr B: "Makoti, shouldn't you be home cooking for your husband?" I smile.

Me: "I had something more pressing to take care off."

Mr B: "Yeah, whats that?"

Me: "This." I place the flight ticket on his desk.

Mr B: "Huh! You never forget do you."

He picks it up and looks at it.

Me: "You said you would only go for treatment if I agreed to marry Philani, I have held up my end now its your turn."

Mr B: sigh "Ok. So when do I leave?"

Me: "Next week Friday, I have called the hospital and there will be a doctor at the airport to meet you, they will run tests to see how far your cancer is and then take it from there." He leans back on his chair and looks at the ticket.

Mr B: "I can't believe I am about to die."

Me: "Don't say that, these doctors know what they are doing. Besides you still have a zillion grandkids to spoil so you need to fight so you can come back home healthy." There's a smile plastered on his face.

Mr B: "Grandkids would be nice. Its a good thing my will has been revised so if God forbid I don't make it back, everyone will be taken care off."

Me: "I don't think that will be necessary but I guess its better to stay prepared."

Mr B: "Thank you for keeping this secret. I don't want my kids

worrying about me."

Me: "Of course. Although they deserve to know."

Mr B: "Tell you what, lets hear what the doctors say, if there is something they can do then there's nothing for them to know but if its serious then I will tell them."

Me: "You promise?"

Mr B: "I promise."

Me: "Ok. Anyways I have to go. I have some last minute packing to do."

Mr B: "So you are officially moving in with him?"

Me: "Yep. We are married

afterall."

Mr B: "If he mistreats you in anyway, even before the two years is up, promise me you will let me know."

Me: "I promise."

Mr B: "Even if I don't make it promise me you won't stay if he treats you badly, I won't hold it against you if you decide to leave him. There won't be any bekezelaring okay. If he is messing with your peace of mind pack your things and leave. I love you like my own daughter, I don't want you staying in a toxic situation out of loyalty to me. I

would rather have you happy and single than married and miserable. You understand?"

Me: "I understand baba."

Mr B: " Good. Goodnight."

Me: "Goodnight baba."

I leave him there and he goes back to his work. A workaholic till the end.

I understand why he is reluctant to tell everyone about his cancer, its barely been two years since they buried their mother, finding out that their father might be next would break even the strongest people. Hopefully this

hospital in Sweden will help. Urgh, life can be so unpredictable.

When I enter my street I notice some houses including mine are dark. Loadshedding. I open the gate and drive in to my house, thank God my gate uses solar otherwise I would be stranded outside. I decide to stay outside in the car, I am afraid of the dark so going in there will just freak me out. I put on the car light and just chill there.

I don't know when I fell asleep cause I am woken up by someone knocking on my window. I open my eyes and see a black figure by my

window. My heart starts beating fast cause its still dark and I don't know how this person got in the gate. I take a deep breath when Philani calls my name.

I open the car door and he pokes his head in.

Philani: "Why are you sitting in the car?"

Me: "Cause its dark."

Philani: "And let me guess you are afraid of the dark?" He says with a slight smile on his face. "Girls!" He shakes his head and takes my gate remote, opens the gate and drives his car in, I guess he jumped over the first time.

He gets out the car and opens the boot and comes back with a big ass torch. I have to turn my head when he switches it on cause its too bright. I quickly grab my stuff from the car and lock it then follow him into the house. He flashes the torch around looking for a place to sit but there are boxes everywhere and there's no place to sit. He walks up the stairs and I want to ask him where he thinks he is going but the darkness he leaves behind scares the shit out of me so I just quietly follow the leader.

He opens all the rooms and they are all the same, boxes everywhere. He eventually walks into my bedroom and like a robot I silently follow. He leaves the torch on the bed and walks out and comes back with some tiny scented candles, lights them and places them all over the room. Seeing some light I begin to relax. Philani: "Have you eaten?" I shake my head. "Ok I will go get some food." He takes the big torch and walks out. I decide to take a quick shower before he gets back, I take some of the candles into the bathroom and

shower, I walk out dry and lotion myself before putting on some pjs. They are short and I do not have the energy to rummage through my things looking for decent ones. Luckily theres a gown in the bathroom so I put it on even though its hot. Husband or not I am not walking around half naked in front of him.

I take the candles back to the bedroom, can't be leaving unattended candles or else I will wake up in the midst of a fire.

My phone rings and I don't pick it up instead I decided to stand by the window and watch in envy all

those that have lights, although faraway but still.

My phone rings again so I pick it up, its Ngcebo.

Me: "Hello."

Ngcebo: "Hey beautiful, where are you?"

Me: "My place, why?"

Ngcebo: "Want me to come by. I heard loadshedding hit your side and I know you and darkness don't get along. I will bring wine." I sigh, I miss him but having two men in the same house is not a good idea.

Me: "Uhm.... No its okay i am sorted."

Ngcebo: "Please, I will bring your favourite ice cream too." Begging doesn't suit him.

Me: "Tempting but....."

Philani: "Who is that?" I turn around and he is standing by the door with spur and nandos takeaways hanging from his hands. When the fuck did he get here?

Ngcebo: "Is that a man? Lando unobani? (Who's with you).

Ngcebo's voice brings me back to the present. Philani is looking at me waiting for an answer and Ngcebo too.

Me: "No one important." I'm not

sure who that answer is directed to.

Ngcebo: "Who is not important? Me or him?" Ngcebo and his loud mouth. I decide to cut the call.

Philani: "Who was that?"

Me: "Nobody! What did you get." I say as I sit on the bed. This will have to serve as a table too. He comes and sits on the bed too.

Philani: "Ribs and chicken. I wasn't sure what you wanted so I got both."

Me: "I will take the ribs thank you very much." I take the plastic with ribs and open it. Just then my phone rings and its

Ngcebo. I look at the phone not sure if I should answer or not.

Philani: "Let me guess, nobody is calling again." He is looking at me so i decide to switch my phone off. I really hope Ngcebo doesn't show up here.

Me: "Can we eat?" I say avoiding looking at him. He lets out a hmmp.

We eat in silence, when we are done he takes the leftovers and takes them to the kitchen together with the bones and empty packets. This gown is hot and I feel like i will faint. I get up and open the windows.

Philani: "Are you planning on giving the mosquitoes a buffet? Why are you opening the windows?" He really knows how to sneak up on people.

Me: "Its hot."

Philani: "Take off your gown." He closes the windows again. He walks over to close the one I am standing next to. When he is done he stands facing me with his hands in his pockets. His scent is intoxicating. Its musky and manly, I close my eyes and take it in. There is something sexy about a man who smells good. My eyes fly open when I feel his hands

untying my robe. I immediately put my hands over his and he stops and looks at me.

Me: "What are you doing?"

Philani: "You will faint."

Me: "I Am Pretty sure I won't."

Philani: "And I am 100% sure you will." I look at him. Even in dim light he is still as handsome. "Your hands are soft." And then I remember my hands are on top of his, I quickly let go. Stupid me now he quickly opens my gown and sees my crop top and bum short pyjamas. "Nice."

Shit! I try to close the gown but he won't let me.

Philani: "Lando I am tired, I won't be able to pick you up and take you to the hospital when you faint." I look down. "I won't do anything to you, forcing myself on a woman is not one of my traits."

Me: "Promise!"

Philani: "I Promise. Unless of course you want me too." He smiles. Mxm. Idiot. I take off the gown and get under the covers. He laughs.

I look up and he is taking off his shirt.

Me: "What are you doing?"

Philani: "Getting ready for bed."

Me: "Here?" He can't be serious,

isn't he supposed to go to his place.

Philani: "Yes here, I am not driving in the middle of the night and coming back here tomorrow to help you move. Ok that makes sense. He goes around blowing out the candles until one is left. He stands by the bed and takes off his vest revealing his dark chocolate six pack. I swallow the lump in my throat, and I feel a tingling sensation between my thighs.

He takes off his pants and is left with his briefs. He takes the clothes and walks to the corner

where he puts them on top of a box. As he walks back to bed I notice the bulge in his briefs, Jesus Christ this man is gifted. Philani: "You want to take a picture?" I look away blushing. He laughs.

He gets into bed. I see him fumbling with something under the covers and before I know it he throws his briefs on the floor. Oh shit! How am I supposed to sleep with a snake in the bed, even if I didn't see it I know it's there. I clear my throat and look at him.

Philani: "I Sleep better naked."

Geez this guy.

I keep tossing and turning trying to sleep but I can't. Eventually he drags me close to him and puts my head on his chest. I try to protest.

Philani: "Sleep!" I try to move away but he won't let go. "Lando sleep!" He commands. I decide to relax with my head on his chest.

Why does this feel so right though. Why do I feel like my head belongs on his chest, like this is where I am meant to be. I drift off to sleep.

PHILANI

I woke up with her still in my arms. She looks so peaceful when she sleeps. A month ago if anyone would have told me I would be married to a woman I have known for less than a month I would have laughed in their faces, but here I am married. I don't know what it is about her that keeps drawing me in, I mean any normal person would be fighting this whole situation, but not me because here I am with her in my arms and it feels so right.

She is feisty but sweet, strong but vulnerable, she is stubborn

but meek, she is just perfect. I plant a kiss on the top of her head, her braids smell nice. She moves her one leg and throws it in between mine, with her knee kissing UNTshangase. I think she realized that cause she looks up at me with her sleepy eyes and smiles. She looks so perfect, how can one person be this beautiful even this early.

Me: "Morning!"

Lando: "How long have you been up?"

Me: "Long enough to watch an angel sleep."

Lando: "Really, where's the

angel?"

Me: "I am looking at her." She blushes and looks away. She looks up and notices the electricity is back.

Lando: "I guess we should get ready before the truck comes."

Me: "I know what you are trying to do and it won't work." I pick up my watch and its still 5:30. "We still have four more hours before the movers come."

Lando: "Ok I guess its back to sleep then." I laugh. She turns her back to me pretending to sleep.

I pull her back, with her butt on my crotch. I run my fingers on her tiny stomach while planting kisses on her neck. I move my hand up to her boobs and I play with her erect nipples.

Lando: "Philani....."

Me: "Yeah..." I continue massaging her boobs and kissing her arm.

Lando:.....

Me: "Tell me to stop." She moans as my hand goes into her pyjama bottoms. "Do you want me to stop?"

Lando:.....

Me: "I need words Lando, do you want me to stop?" She opens her

thighs a little bit more giving me access to her little haven.

Lando: "No! Don't..... don't stop." She turns around and lays on her back before grabbing my face with both her hands and planting a kiss on my lips. My fingers are doing their magic between her legs and her moans in my mouth make me harder.

I break the kiss and take off her top before planting kisses all the way from her neck down to her boobs. She moans as I put one in my mouth and play with the other. I feel her squirming beneath me so I keep going down

and pull down her bottoms. I plant small kisses on the inside of her thighs before burying my mouth and tongue inside her. I lick and suck her little nub. She moans and squirms with every movement I make. I decide to bring my fingers back into her. She moans harder as they make their way in. I work my magic with my fingers inside her and my tongue on her little nub until I feel her cum on my face, but i keep going.

When she has calmed down I move up and kiss her and she tastes herself in my mouth. She

wraps her legs around my waist as I enter her haven. She moans as I try to push myself in but she is so tight. Eventually I get it all in. I balance myself on my hands and watch her as I slowly thrust into her.

Me: "Open your eyes." She shakes her head. I stop moving. "Open your eyes." She takes a deep breath and opens her eyes while biting her bottom lip. I begin to move again while watching her and her sparkling eyes.

Me: "You like that?" I ask as I slam into her.

Lando: "Ah....."

uh.....yes.....harder....." she screams. I don't need another invitation as I go harder and faster with her screaming and moaning. We both reach our peak at the same time. I collapse on top of her. She plants little kisses on my shoulder and her hands are making patterns on my back. I roll over still inside her and bring her with me and lay her on my chest trying to catch my break. Me: "I love you Landokuhle." I say as i kiss the top of her head. She says nothing, instead I hear her quiet snoring. She is fast asleep.

I smile and kiss her again before sleeping.

INSERT 10

PHILANI

I am woken up by the sound of someone banging the bedroom door before it flies open and Lindani walks into the room with a huge smile on his face, I hold on to the sleeping Lando a little tighter.

Lindani: "Wakey wakey sunshines."

Me: "Lindani what the fuck do you want? Go away."

Lindani: "Bafo I know its really

warm and cozy in there but we need to go, the movers are here."

Me: "Fine, now leave."

Lindani: "You know what?" He takes out his phone and takes a picture. WTF.

Me: "Dude!"

Lindani: "Relax I will send it to you now get up, everyone is downstairs."

Me: "Yeah, the boys....."

Lindani: "Ooh and some hot ass girls in bum shorts, although one of them is married cause she has a ring on her finger but the other one has none so she is fair game. But then again a ring has never

stopped me." He turns around and walks out and closes the door behind him.

Lando: "Does he ever stop?"

Lando says looking up to me with her chin resting on my chest.

Me: "I thought you were sleeping?"

Lando: "I was until he walked in and started yapping away." We get up and I help her pack away the duvet and sheets leaving the bed bare and ready to be moved. She goes to the bathroom and I follow her. She turns on the shower and gets in. She is a little shocked when I get in behind her.

Lando: "And now?"

Me: "Everyone is waiting for us, showering together saves time." She rolls her eyes and turns her back to me and gets under the shower, the water runs on her back and straight to her butt and I feel unTshangase waking up. I decide to just shower cause if I allow him to take over we won't leave this place.

When we are done we dry ourselves. We go into the bedroom and she starts lotioning herself. I left my toiletry bag so I have no lotion. She throws the lotion at me and I am reluctant to even

try it, it smells girly.

Lando: "If you don't use that don't even talk to me. I don't want ashy people talking to me." She says walking into the closet. I laugh and just lotion myself. I guess I will be smelling like vanilla and strawberries for the rest of the day. Ugh.

I put on my grey sweatpants that I brought and a white t-shirt then put on my nike sneakers. She walks out of the closet wearing a denim bum short, white vest with no bra and some black vans. I see the outline of

her boobs as she lifts her hands to tie her braids in a ponytail.

Lando: "You want to take a picture?"

Me: "Actually....." I grab my phone and start clicking away.

Lando: "I was joking." She says with her hands on her tiny waist.

Me: "I wasn't." She starts posing as I take more pictures. She makes funny faces and pouty lips. She even turns around and twerks a bit. The door opens and Lindani pops in again.

Lindani: "Kumnandi ukuba yini mosi (its nice to be you) while some of us are working nina you are

holding photoshoots and twerking contests." He says with his hands on his waist. Lando looks at me and then him before rushing out the room.

Me: "You just ruined my chances of getting a quickie before we leave." I say putting my phone in my pocket, grabbing one of the boxes here and walking out.

Lindani: "You still have plenty of time bafo, you will get some." He says grabbing a box and following me.



LANDO

I make my way downstairs leaving Philani and Lindani. Lindani is the crazy type that is the life of any party, he can be a bit much sometimes, maybe I will get used to him eventually. I walk down the stairs and there is a whole lot of people including my two friends among a whole lot of men. I notice Sihle and Banele together with Nate and Senzo. The other 6 people I don't know. Everyone looks up as I make my way down the stairs. The four guys I know have creepy smiles on their faces. I wonder why. I

greet them and go to the kitchen where Faith and Buli are.

Me: "What's with the crazy looks?"

Buli: "Oh I am sure they are just amazed by the glow on your face."

Faith: "Let me guess, you officially consummated your marriage last night." I blush.

Me: "More like this morning." They both scream and everyone turns to look at us, including Philani and Lindani who have joined the others. "Please shut up."

Buli: "We want details, spill."

Me: "Not now. There's a lot of work to be done please."

Buli: "Mxm. Uyabhora shem." She says walking into the lounge.

Faith: "I smell love in the air."

She whispers as she walks past me.

The move goes faster than expected, turns out the unknown guys are Phila's employees. Shady as they are I wonder what they do. Finally after everything has been packed into two trucks. One goes straight to the storage facility and the other one goes to Philani's new house. It is at a Private estate in Fourways.

Philani punches in a code at the gate and places his finger to be

scanned, why so much security though? I make a mental note to ask him about it. The gate opens and we drive into one long ass driveway with a beautifully manicured lawn on either side of it. The house itself looks like its just made of glass, luckily you can't see anything through the glass walls. He stops the car in front of the garage as the others follow suit. The boys offload everything and put it inside. The girls and I walk in and there are wows all around. This place is stunning. It has an open plan design with the kitchen on one side with clean line

cabinets, they have no handles which makes them really beautiful. There's an 8 plate stove with a griller built into it. The fridge looks like the cabinets and the sink is facing a long window that overlooks a beautiful mini fountain above a tiny pond with fish moving around.

The lounge has a ten seater corner couch with two chairs next to it, there's a book shelf on the wall with all sorts of books. The dining room has a huge round table and I count 16 chairs, but I am sure it could fit more. I am interrupted by Philani who snakes

his hand around my waist.

Philani: "You like it?" He asks with his lips planting kisses on my neck.

Me: "Its beautiful."

Philani: "We could build another one if you don't like this one."

Me: "No its perfect. When did you buy it?"

Philani: "I didn't buy it, I built it." I turn around to look at him. "It was completed about two months back."

Me: "Why didn't you just buy a house? Its easier you know."

Philani: "I prefer building so I can make the house what I want it to be. Come on I have to show

you something." He drags me up three flights of stairs and we walk through double doors into a bedroom, it must be the master bedroom.

We walk into a huge floor length mirror and he presses a button before the mirror slides open and right before me is a huge closet, lets just call it a dressing room cause I have never seen a closet this huge. Its beautiful, but what catches my eye are the four rotating pillars on one side that look like shoe racks.

Me: "So when did you decide to put these in?" I ask when reality

hits, as beautiful as this is it was never meant to be mine. Maybe he had Ayanda in mind when he built it, and that realization stings a bit.

Philani: "It was always in the original plans."

Me: "I actually thought this was a bachelor pad." I say walking around admiring the beauty of this masterpiece.

Philani: "I had this built in because I knew I would get married one day and this would be our home."

Me: "You and who?"

Philani: "Me and whoever gets to

be Mrs Biyela."

That hurts. Here I was thinking it was special for me but it was for whoever would be lucky enough to be picked in the raffle for the position of Mrs Biyela.

Me: "Its nice." I say as I walk out into the bedroom. He follows me.

Philani: "You don't like the closet?" He sounds almost disappointed.

Me: I Turn to look at him. "Its beautiful, I like it, any woman would be lucky to have it. Lets go back to the others and help. I walk out leaving him there.

Luckily most of my stuff has been unpacked, all that's left are my clothes and shoes that need to be packed away. I let the guys move the rest upstairs. I tell them to use the lift though. I join the others who are now relaxed by the pool with beers and meat on the braai, we got here an hour ago, they are quick shem. I grab a bottle of brutal fruit and join the girls on the couch.

The party never stops with these people. By 8 o'clock we had braai'd at least three times, more alcohol was bought and people got

kak drunk pretty fast. Buli being the drunkard that she is got so drunk she couldn't drive so now she's sleeping in the guestroom. I left everyone downstairs and went to unpack my clothes.

I was busy doing that when Faith walked into the open closet. Faith: "Wena satan why would you leave me with those guys."

Me: "Hawu askies, I thought you were having fun."

Faith: "I was but now I am leaving."

Me: "You are drunk you can't drive like that. And I can't even ask one of them to drive you cause

they are just as drunk."

Faith: "Relax, hubby is coming over to pick me up." She walks around the closet. "This is nice and huge, every girls dream."

Me: "Yeah its nice."

Faith: "why do you sound like that?"

Me: "Like what?"

Faith: "Like you don't like the closet. You always said you would have a huge ass closet in your house and now you have it."

Me: "Yeah but this was never mine to begin with. He probably had someone else in mind when he built it."

Faith: "True. But now its yours. Stop trying to find problems where there are none. He married you, and gave all this to you just enjoy it."

Me: "In my head I know that but there's this stinging feeling in my tummy."

Faith: "Its not in your tummy its in your heart and its called jealousy. It usually happens when you love someone."

The house phone rings and I go and pick it up.

Philani: "Tell Faith her husband is here."

Me: "Ok." I hang up and pass the

message on to Faith. We hug and she leaves. I decide to take a shower, the bathroom is huge, the tub could fit at least 4 adults and the shower is just beautiful. I get under it and switch on the taps, its like I am standing in the rain. I get out and lotion then brush my teeth, put on my decent PJs and go into the bedroom. I get into this big bed and in minutes its lights out.

I woke up the next morning with Philani sprawled in the bed snoring. I go into the bathroom and pee. Then I wash my face

and brush my teeth. I change my pyjamas and put on sweats and a vest. I decide to go down and start with breakfast. I find Banele with his face down on the kitchen counter.

Me: "Good morning."

Banele: "Please stop shouting.

Good morning to you too." I

wasn't even shouting, I swear I am surrounded by drunkards. I

text Faith asking for her

hangover recipe and she sends it

to me. Luckily for me I have all

the ingredients. I put everything

in the blender and blend. Banele

lifts his head up and shouts my

name but I ignore him. After a while I switch it off and Banele has his hands covering his ears. Banele: "Why are you trying to kill me?"

Me: "I am trying to make you a remedy for that hangover."

Banele: "I don't want no remedy, I want you to put your hand inside my head and pull out this tokoloshe that is hammering away inside my head." I laugh, it was fun drinking but now.....

Me: "Drink this it will drown the tokoloshe." I say handing him a glass of the smoothie. He takes it and gulps it down in one go.

Banele: "Thank you for this shit now I need to lie down. I will see you later." He gets up and throws himself on the couch. I start with breakfast and set the table. I call everyone down and give them the stinky hangover concoction before they eat. When we are done Buli helps me clean up, when we are done she leaves, followed by the guys.

I go back upstairs and find Philani laying on the bed.

Philani: "Come lets sleep."

Me: "No can do, I need a shower then I have to go buy groceries."

Philani: "We will do that later,

come." He puts his hand out for me to take. Oh what the heck, I get on the bed and we just lay there talking and laughing. Its nice being with him. Eventually we both fall asleep in each other's arms.

INSERT 11

I never in my life ever imagined myself married, I swore I would be a 60 year old spinster with no kids and maybe 3 cats, but I threw out the cat idea cause black people associate cats with witchcraft so maybe dogs will door

instead. But maybe Faith was right, when we make plans God really does laugh cause here I am married and actually enjoying it. Philani and I are learning to know each other better. Most people date and get married but for us, we got married and now we are dating. Its nice though. Turns out his not as bad as I thought he would be. He's really just tough on the outside but soft on the inside and I like getting to know those parts of him, the vulnerable and sensitive parts. Today we are having dinner at his dad's place, he invited everyone,

even Qhawekazi flew in from Durban. Philani and I decided to leave work early cause we need to buy groceries, we've been living on takeaways this past week and thats not good.

I meet Philani in the parking lot and we drive to the mall. We go into Woolworths and get a whole lot of things including chocolate cake. Smh. On our way to check out I see Ngcebo walking into the shop. I hope that he doesn't see me cause I have been avoiding him, I haven't had the heart to tell him about my marriage. Luck seems to have deserted me

though cause he walks straight up to us.

Ngcebo: "Lando, sawubona (hello)" he gives me a hug. Philani who is standing in front of me turns around and looks at us.

Me: "Hi! What are you doing here?" Ok that was stupid, obviously he is here to shop but I am so nervous I can't seem to be thinking straight.

Philani: "Hi Dr Dlamini." He says interrupting the little moment between Ngcebo and I.

Ngcebo: "Biyela."

Philani: "You know when you greet someone's wife its only right that

you extend the greeting to the husband too, especially when he is standing right in front of you."

Ngcebo's eyes slowly move from Philani to me, I get uncomfortable under his scrutiny so I just look away.

Ngcebo: "Wife?"

Philani: "Yes, wife."

Ngcebo: "You are married Landokuhle?" I try to speak but Philani beats me to it.

Philani: "Yes she is married! To me!" Ngcebo: he ignores him with his eyes still boring into me. "I guess congratulations are in order then." He says walking away from

us.

Philani: "What was that about and how do you know him?" I can't really tell my husband about my fuck buddy now can I.

Me: "Its nothing, he is Faith's brother."

He lets out a hmmm and I know he doesn't believe me.

This is not how I wanted this to play out. I wanted to be the one to tell him. But I guess this is the price I have to pay for ignoring him all week. And knowing Philani he won't let this go until he knows the full story. I could

tell him or let him find out on his own, either way I am screwed.

We pay for everything and go home. Philani silently helps me unpack everything, as much as I don't want to think about this whole situation his silence is making me uncomfortable.

When we are done he goes to the study leaving me in the kitchen alone. I decide to go take a shower and change before we leave. When I am done I lotion and pick out some clothes, I put on my black lace thong with a matching bra. I am inside the closet looking for something to

wear when I notice him standing in the closet door. My heart starts beating fast.

Me: "Hi!"

He looks at me and doesn't say anything for a while, making me uncomfortable. I decide to let him be and just pick out some clothes. I decide on a black mid length pencil dress and my red Ankara coat. I tie my braids up in a ponytail. I wear my small stud earrings and put on red stillettos. I put lipgloss on and I am ready. He is still standing there just watching me.

I grab my purse and phone then walk out after spraying some perfume, its a good thing this closet door is big enough otherwise this would be awkward. Philani: "What's going on between you and Dr Dlamini?" He asks as I make my way to the door. I stop and turn around to face him.

Me: "Nothing is going on Philani, can we please go, I hate being late." I turn around and leave him there.

I make my way downstairs and pick out a car key from the holder and walk to the garage. I press the button and the Range Rover

Evoque clicks open. I open the door and sit inside waiting for him. He walks into the garage and walks straight to the Maserati and drives out of the garage and parks outside waiting for me. Mxm. This idiot thinks I can't drive.

I move from the passenger side to the driver's seat and start the car. He blocks my way as I drive out. I honk the horn but he refuses to move, instead he honks his horn and now it sounds like Lagos traffic with horns making noise. He gets out of the car and

comes to me, he yanks open the driver's side door.

Philani: "What the fuck do you think you are doing. Its getting late." I sit in the car and just cross my arms without even looking at him. "Lando, I don't have time for this, lets go."

Me: "I will drive myself, angtsi you are not talking to me so why do you want me in your car?"

Philani: "Lando I swear to you I have no problem dragging you to the car."

Me: "I dare you to try!" I say. He looks at me and before I know it I am slumped over his shoulder

kicking and screaming and he is holding the back of my thighs to keep me from falling. He switches the engine off, takes the key and locks the car. He walks over to the Maserati and opens the passenger side before placing me on the ground.

Philani: "Get in!" He says calmly but I know he is angry. I decide to be stubborn and just stand there with my arms crossed on my chest.

Me: "Why are you mad at me?"

Philani: "I Am not mad at you."

Me: "Then why haven't you said anything to me since we saw

Ngcebo." I see the shock in his eyes.

Philani: "Oh! You even call each other by name but you say there's nothing going on? Really Lando?"

Me: "Of course we call each other by name, he is my best friends brother for fuck sake. How can you be this stupid." He slams his hand on the car, right next to my head. I turn away thinking he is going to hit me.

Philani: "Firstly don't you ever, not even in your wildest dreams, ever call me stupid again or even swear at me. Now get in the fucken car."

Me: "So you are the only one allowed to swear...."

Philani: "GET IN THE CAR!" He screams so loud I am sure the neighbours heard him. I get into the car and he slams the door shut before getting in too.

Me: "Philani!" I whisper and he hears me.

Philani: "What?" He says before starting the car.

Me: "I need my purse and my phone." I say playing with my fingers. I feel his eyes on me.

Philani: "Mxm!" He drives off. I guess I will have to do without a phone tonight.

PHILANI

The drive to my dad's is a silent one. Lando has her arms crossed on her chest and she's looking out the window. She refuses to tell me what's going on between her and Dr Dlamini but I can tell she is hiding something. I might not have known her that long but I can tell when she is lying. There's no way their relationship is purely innocent, I saw how he hugged her and I also saw how uncomfortable she was around him. And if he was just her friend's brother, how did he not

know that she was married.
Something doesn't add up here
and I will get to the truth one
way or another.

LANDO

We get to Bab'Biyela's house and
the guards let us in. We find him
waiting by the door, and since
there's no talking in this car we
both just open our doors and get
out. Philani walks in front and
gets to his father first. They
hug.

Bab'Biyela: "Your wife doesn't look
happy, what did you do?" He asks

as I get close to them.

Philani: "She has a mouth, you can ask her yourself." He walks into the house leaving us behind.

Bab'Biyela: "Tell me what he did, I will gladly punch him for you."

He says giving me his signature warm hug. I smile cause I know he would punch him for real.

Me: "Its nothing baba we will sort it out."

Bab'Biyela: "Ok. I trust you."

Me: "So everything set for tomorrow?"

Bab'Biyela: "Yep. All set. But I cancelled the ticket you gave me, I will take the jet instead. And I

will refund you for the ticket."

Me: "No need."

Bab'Biyela: "It's already done. Lets go in before everyone gets worried." I hook my arm on his and we walk into the house. All three boys are sitting on the couch drinking beer and chatting. I look up the stairs and see Qhawekazi walking down. She is beautiful, she is dark skinned like all of them, average height and slender, but the slender fit type, with some hips and a bit of a butt. She sashays down the stairs and the neon green dress she is wearing makes her skin pop

and glow, I bet you when they talk about melanin dripping this is what they are talking about. Girl looks like she was dipped in chocolate. I have only seen her in pictures but I can tell you now, those pictures don't do her justice.

She rushes over to me and gives me a warm hug. Her dad is already sitting with the boys watching us.

Kazi: "Its so nice to finally meet you, I have heard so much about you."

Me: "Its nice to meet you too. You are beautiful."

Kazi: "Thank you, you too." We walk to the others and sit down. A maid brings us drinks. Philani and his brothers are laughing so hard you would say I was lying if I told you that ten minutes ago he was angry. Guess family brings out the best in some people.

Kazi and I have our little conversation going. We talk and laugh about silly things and I notice Philani stealing glances at me. After a while we are led to the dining room where dinner has been set up. We all take our designated seats and after a short prayer we dig in.

Dessert is served, Kazi and Philani have chocolate cake, me, I just asked for custard and jelly while the others are having malva pudding with custard.

Bab'Biyela clears his throat and we all look at him.

Bab'Biyela: "There is a reason I asked all of you to be here today." Hr begins.

Sihle: "Finally!"

Banele: "Dad what's going on?"

Bab'biyela: "I am going away for a few months."

Banele: "Going where? And why?"

Bab'Biyela: "I am going backpacking in Europe." Everyone

is shocked for a while before they burst out laughing. And me, maybe I am slow cause I don't see the joke.

Kazi: "Yoh, daddy you almost had us with that one. Honestly though what's going on?"

Bab'Biyela: "I am serious Qhawekazi. I am going to Europe for a few months. I know this is sudden but I have been wanting to do this for a while now, and now I can finally do it."

Philani: "Dad you can't be serious, what about the company, you can't just leave without a proper handover."

Bab'Biyela: "Relax, I am just taking leave thats all, look at it this way, this could be your chance to prove to everybody that you can do this, I have faith in you."

Kazi: "But dad how can you just leave, you do realise this is the first time we all are in the same country at the same time."

Bab'Biyela: "I know but I really need to do this. For me."

Sihle: "Dad are you sick?"

Bab'Biyela: "Of course not. I just need some time to myself. And to also deal with your mother's passing. I realize now that I did not mourn her properly cause I

was busy fighting with your uncle." I see all of them look down. I guess the guilt of not being here for him is eating them up. Sihle: "Sorry dad, for not being here for you after mum died."

Bab'Biyela: "Its fine."

Kazi: "No its not fine baba. We were so focused on our own pain we completely failed to acknowledge yours. We are really sorry."

Bab'Biyela: "Really its fine."

Philani: "So how long will you be away?"

Bab'Biyela: "Three maybe four months. But I promise you I am

coming back, I just need this time to be alone and just reflect on everything."

Philani: "When are you leaving?"

Bab'Biyela: "Tomorrow. I will take the jet to London and then go from there."

Kazi: "But dad tomorrow is too soon."

Bab'Biyela: "I will call you all the time, I will send you messages, we will be in contact all the time, I promise."

Kazi gets up and hugs her dad and the others join in, and so do I. Hard as this will be, I really hope

there's something those doctors can do.

After we drive back to the house and my dear husband is back to not talking to me. We get to the house and I get my purse and phone from the other car and I find a bunch of missed calls some from my friends and some from Ngcebo. I really need to go see him tomorrow and sort this out. I get upstairs and Philani is not there. I change into my pyjamas and walk down barefoot looking for him. I find him in his study. Me: "Hi!" He looks up from his laptop and looks at me for five

seconds then goes back to whatever he was doing. "Philani please say something." I walk over to him and sit on his lap. "Please don't be mad at me." He ignores me. I close the laptop. He looks at me, irritation written all over his face. "Baby please say something."

Philani: "Can I finish my work, that's if you don't mind." I get up from his lap and walk back to our bedroom, I feel tears forming in my eyes and I blink them away. I get to bed and just let them flow, before I know it sleep claims me.

PHILANI

I looked at her as she walked out of the study, her pyjamas leaving nothing to the imagination, I just want to be buried inside her, but my pride won't let me. I need to know what's going on with her and that idiot doctor. If she won't tell me then I have to find the truth myself.

My dad leaving means more work for me. At least tomorrow is Friday so I can use the weekend to prepare myself for the workload.

I really need to go to bed but I don't think I can sleep next to Lando without touching her. I guess guest room it is. I walk upstairs and straight to the guestroom. And its lights out soon as my head hits the pillow.

INSERT 12

LANDO

I woke up alone today, to think that just a few days ago that was normal for me, I actually enjoyed it, but now that I know what it's like to wake up cuddled in somebody's arms, waking up

alone is just torture. I walk into the kitchen after bathing and getting dressed and Philani is already there, sitting on the high chair reading a newspaper and eating cereal. I decide not to even greet him, I just grab my car keys and leave him there. If he won't talk to me then I can also shut my mouth. Now its the battle of the egos.

PHILANI

I saw her walk down the stairs and just pretended not to see her. She looks so fucken good I just

wanted to throw her over the couch and have my way with her, but again my pride won. I swear I am going to die of blue balls in this house.

After hearing her car drive out I also leave, but before work I need to sort some things out.

I drive into SunMed Private Hospital and its already busy with patients and nurses walking in and out. I see Ngcebo's car by the entrance and I know he is hear. If I can't get the answers I need from my wife then maybe he will give them to me.

I go straight to his office and run into a nurse walking out, I go in and find him tucking in his shirt, he takes a used condom and throws it in the bin. I guess others have breakfast and others have sex. He turns around and sees me.

Ngcebo: "It's rude not to knock."

Me: "Even if I had knocked you wouldn't hear me."

Ngcebo: "What do you want Biyela?"

Me: "What's going on between you and my wife?" I ask as I take a seat on the armrest of his guest chairs. I am not about to risk

sitting on cum.

Ngcebo: "Isn't that something you should be asking your wife?"

Me: "I did and now I am asking you. She told me her side of the story now I need to know yours."

Ngcebo: "So she told you everything?"

Me: "Yep, from her point of view, but now I need to know yours." I know I am lying, but I will do whatever I have to to get to the truth.

Ngcebo: "I guess its a good thing starting a marriage on a clean slate, with no lies or secrets, I just wish she could have afforded

me that same courtesy. I mean you would think after being together for almost 3 years she would let a guy know about her wedding."

I feel my jaws clench and my fists ball up, he can't be telling the truth.

Me: "You are lying!" He looks at me shocked, before a huge smile forms on his face.

Ngcebo: "She didn't tell you shit did she?" He chuckles. "And you came here with your little act to get to the truth, and stupid me I fell right into that trap."

I get up to leave, I can't believe

Lando lied to me.

Ngcebo: "Philani!" I turn around and look at him. "If you hurt her, I swear to God I will destroy you." I turn and walk out. I should have just let this thing go cause now I can't get the picture of him fucking my wife out of my head. I HATE HIM.

LANDO

Its almost knock off time and Philani still hasn't showed up for work. He even missed a very important meeting. I tried calling but his phone is off. Mxm it's not even 24 hours since his father left but he is already slacking.

I leave work in hopes of going past the hospital to see Ngcebo. As soon as I drive out of the parking I get a text from Philani. 'Come home. NOW!' So now i am supposed to jump just cause he said so. I ignore him. He sends another one.

'Landokuhle!' I continue ignoring him.

He calls and I don't pick up.

I call the hospital and ask if Ngcebo is there but the receptionist says he is not there.

I sigh. I guess home it is then. I drive in and go into the house.

I find him pacing up and down in

the lounge.

Me: "Whats going on?" He turns around and marches straight to me, I take a few steps back seeing the raging fire in his eyes.

Philani: "Are. You. Sleeping. With. Ngcebo. Dlamini?" He says the words like he is counting them. I swallow the lump in my throat.

Me: "I can explain." I say surprisingly calm, although my heart is threatening to jump out of my chest.

Philani: "I am listening." He says that with his face just a few inches from my face. I can literally feel his breath on my

face, and I can tell he has been drinking.

Me: "Can we sit down and talk about this."

Philani: "Don't fuck with me Landokuhle, answer the damn question."

Me: "I Am not. But I used to."

He chuckles and stands back, I let out the breath I was holding in.

Philani: "When did you stop?"

Me: "A few weeks back."

Philani: "Before or after we got married?"

Me: "Before."

Philani: "Do you love him?"

Me: "Of course not. I care about

him as a friend. But I don't love him like that."

Philani: "How do you friendzone someone and still sleep with them? Oh I get it, you were fuck buddies. How many of those do you have?"

Me: "I am not a whore Philani."

Philani: "Why him? Of all the men in this city why him?"

Me: "Philani I've known Ngcebo longer than you. You can't be angry because I knew someone before you. I didn't judge you or even get angry about you and Ayanda."

Philani: "Here's the difference

Landokuhle, you knew about Ayanda before you got into this marriage. You didn't even bother to tell me about Ngcebo even when I asked you. So tell me how much more are you hiding from me? How many more skeletons are going to come flying out from the closet? Now I have to deal with the picture of my wife getting screwed by someone I despise."

Me: "I never claimed to be a saint Philani."

Philani: "And I never asked you to be one. I just asked for the truth. That's it just the truth."

Me: "I am sorry."

Philani: "Yeah, so am I." He grabs his phone and keys and walks out. I slump down on the floor and just let the tears flow. I can't believe things went south so fast.

I don't know when I fell asleep but I woke up and the house was dark, I was sleeping on the cold floor. I got up and my back was killing me. I went upstairs and ran myself a bath. The warm water eased the pain on my back a little. I got out and lotioned then got into bed naked. I looked at the time and it was still 8:30. I took a book and tried reading

hoping Philani would be home soon.
I dozed off before he came back.

NARRATED

At Phoenix Lounge, Philani is in his office drinking when he is joined by Lindani.

Lindani: "Bafo, you look like hell. What's wrong?" He says taking a seat across his friend.

Philani: "I just found out my wife was sleeping with Ngcebo Dlamini."

Lindani: "What? She cheated on you already?"

Philani: "Well she says it happened

before we got married."

Lindani: "Let me get this straight, you are upset because she slept with someone before you two got together? How does that work really?"

Philani: "It's not that she slept with someone, it's who she slept with. Do you know the disrespect I am going to get from him. And I just can't get the picture of them together out of my head."

Lindani: "So you are ready to throw your marriage away because of someone as stupid as Ngcebo. Really?"

Philani: "You are not

listening....."

Lindani: "I am listening to you. But if you allow him to get to you then he wins. Tomorrow it will be a month since you got married, crazy as this might be I know you love Lando. Don't allow Ngcebo to ruin what you have." He says and gets up to leave. Philani goes back to his mini bar and pours more whiskey.

Meanwhile in Mbuzini, Gugu is hiding in the closet when her bedroom door opens and her father Vusi walks in.

Vusi: "Gugu ukuphi? (where are

you)." He turns the lights on and sees the bed is empty. He calls for her but she doesn't reply. He searches under the bed but doesn't find her, he makes his way to the closet when Ntombi walks in wiping sleep from her eyes.

Ntombi: "Papa what's going on? Why are you shouting?"

Vusi: "Where is your sister?"

Ntombi: "I don't know, she was here when I went to sleep."

Vusi: "Then where is she?" He says sounding agitated and pacing up and down.

Ntombi: "I don't know. Let me get my phone so we can call her."

She rushes out. Gugu quickly switches her phone to silent.

Vusi: "I hope for your sake you are not hiding from me Gugu." He says.

Ntombi comes back with her phone.

Ntombi: "Papa, Gugu is at her friends house, she sent me a message earlier but I didn't see it."

Vusi: "And who told her she could go?"

Ntombi: "I am sure mum said it was okay. Please go to sleep Gugu will come back in the morning."

They walk out of her bedroom and

switch off the lights.

Gugu unlocks her phone and goes through her instagram feed when she sees a photo of someone she didn't think she would see. It was Lando, posted by Lindani. She thought the girl was pretty. Her heart started beating fast when she saw the caption. 'My friend's wife is more beautiful than yours. #LandoShongwe #MrsBiyela #umfazikamfowethu

She felt the tears streaming down her face, she closed her mouth as she silently sobbed. Maybe, just maybe there was light at the end of this dark

tunnel she was in. She cried herself to sleep in the closet.

FAITH

My name is Faith Dlamini-Ngcobo. I am 24 years old. And this man sleeping next to me is my husband Mbusi Zwelabo Ngcobo. I am a Swati princess and he is a prince. His father is one of the most powerful chiefs in KZN. We have been married for almost three years now. And in those three years as happy as we have been there is one thing that could

complete our happiness, yes you guessed it, a baby.

We have been trying for a baby for two years now with no luck. Its not that we can't get pregnant, its that I never can carry the baby past 3 months. I have lost 4 babies in 2 years and doctors have no idea why. They have done every test possible but still no answers. What pains me though is seeing the pain in my husbands eyes everytime we lose a child.

His family has been supportive though and I am grateful for that. Well except his mother, she

is always quick to remind me about my inability to give her son an heir. I swear to you that woman is Satan in disguise, theres no way someone could be that evil and heartless. I have even started taking contraceptives again just to make sure I don't get pregnant again. My friends Lando and Buli have been a constant and steady support system. I don't know what I would have done without them. I hope Lando being married will slow down the partying and clubbing, especially for Buli.

I have been laying awake on this bed for a while now. And like clockwork I feel the nausea coming and I rush to the toilet and throw up. I have seen this movie before and I know I am pregnant again, I guess the contraceptives were a bust. I sit on the bathroom floor wondering if I should tell my husband or just keep this one quiet, I mean its highly unlikely that this one will last. I know they say one should have Faith but faith hasn't worked for me. I rub my tummy and just cry. I know I am about to lose another

child without him or her ever being in my arms.

INSERT 13

LANDO

The past few days have been so hard. My husband barely sleeps at home and when he does he sleeps in the guestroom. Even at work we barely talk. Honestly I am tired of the silent treatment, which is why I decided to try and find Philani so we can talk and sort this out.

I drove to Lindani's place and he gave me his access card to get to

the Phoenix Lounge cause apparently thats where he might be. I drove in and used the access card. I parked the car and went in. I looked around and there were too many naked girls walking around. Some were on poles dancing. I asked one of the ladies where Philani was and she directed me to his office. I walked up the stairs towards his office and got lost but eventually I found it. I knocked but there was no reply so I just went in.

My heart almost stopped, Philani was sitting on his chair and there was a girl gyrating her ass in his

face and he was enjoying it. I felt tears sting my eyes and I tried to stop them but I felt them fall. I stood there like I was nailed to the floor and watched my husband getting a lap dance. It was a long while before he even noticed I was there. He turned around and saw me then froze. I decided to turn around and leave.

I bumped into Nate as I went down the stairs.

Nate: "Lando are you ok?"

Me: "I Am fine thanks." I said trying to walk past him but he blocked my way.

Nate: "You don't look ok, what's wrong?"

Me: "Seriously Nate I am fine, can I please go." He stood aside and let me leave. I drove out there with no certain direction really. I ended up pulling up in some garage and just cried.



PHILANI

I swear my lungs deflated when I saw Lando standing there, seeing the tears in her eyes was just..... Argh. I wanted to go after her but I was in so much shock my legs just couldn't move. I told the girl to leave.

Nate: "What the fuck is wrong with you?" He said barging into my office.

Me: "What have I done now?" I said with my face in my hands.

Nate: "Your wife just left here crying and you are asking me what you have done?"

Me: "She will be fine, I am sure the mighty Dr Dlamini is waiting patiently to offer her comfort. And I am sure she is on her way to him as we speak." I sat up and looked at him.

Nate: "Can you blame her? Instead of running after her you are sitting here getting drunk."

That girl loves you, why are you trying to destroy that?"

Me: "She slept with him and then lied to me about it."

Nate: "Blah blah bloody blah. SHE DID NOT CHEAT ON YOU you dumb idiot. She met the guy long before she knew you. If you are going to punish her for that then you also need to punish yourself for every girl you ever slept with because, trust me, incase you lost count there are plenty of those."

Me: "Mxm, until you get married you can't lecture me."

Nate: "If you don't get up from that chair and follow your wife I

will punch you in the face."

Me: "You wouldn't dare."

Nate: "I am giving you five seconds." I laugh, he can't possibly be serious right now.

"Five" he walks closer to me "four" I get up and go. And no its not because I am scared of him, I just don't want to fight.

I got home and Lando wasn't there, I tried calling her but her phone went straight to voicemail. My anger started boiling when I realized maybe Nate was right, what if I have pushed her back into Ngcebo's arms!



LANDO

After crying my eyes out at the garage I drove to Buli's place and found her and Faith watching movies.

Faith: "What's wrong? And don't say nothing cause your eyes are puffy, I can tell you've been crying."

Me: "My husband hates me." I said as I threw myself on the couch and started crying. They both hugged me till I calmed down.

Buli: "Tell us what happened."

I decided to tell them everything, Faith can shout and scream if she

wants I don't care anymore.

Faith: "So you have been sleeping with my brother without my knowledge?"

Buli: "Hhay bo mamfundisi. Of all the things she said is that the only thing you got?"

Faith: "Fine, we will revisit that some other time. So what are you planing to do to fix this?"

Me: "I don't know what to do cause he refuses to speak to me, I even went to that stupid lounge to try and talk but he was busy." I say wiping away more tears.

Faith: "Do you love him?" Do I?

Maybe I do, I don't know anymore.

Me: "I don't know."

Faith: "I think you do love him, because if you didn't you wouldn't be here bawling your eyes out. So what you need to do is put on your big girl panties and fight for your husband."

Buli: "Hha yena why is he not fighting for her. He is the man."

Faith: "Yeah but she is the one who kept the truth from him, if she had told him the truth when he asked for it we wouldn't be here. Hard as it might be to accept, you were wrong Lando, he

needs to hear the truth from you no matter how hard or bitter it is, hearing it from you would have been a whole lot better."

Maybe Faith is right, had I been honest from the start none of this would be happening. At that very moment a decision was made. I got up and drove home. Luckily for me I found Philani's car in the driveway.

He wasn't downstairs so I went up to our bedroom. He was in the shower so I sat on the bed and waited for him. I got nervous when the shower stopped running. He came out dripping wet with

just a towel around his waist. I felt my clit do a little dance of excitement so I just crossed my legs, I don't need to be distracted right now.

Me: "Hi!"

Philani: "Hi!"

Me: "Can we talk. Please!"

Philani: "Not right now, I have things I need to do." He said walking to the closet. I got up and locked the bedroom door and put the keys in my bra and went to sit back down.

He came out wearing blue ripped jeans, a black polo neck tucked in and a black duster coat with black

formal ankle boots. He went straight to the door and tried opening, then he turned around and looked at me.

Philani: "I need the keys."

Me: "We need to talk." I said still not looking at him. He came and stood in front of me with his hand out.

Philani: "Keys Landokuhle! Now!"

Me: "I said we need to talk, the past few days you have been avoiding me, all I am asking for is ten minutes of your time. After that you can do whatever you want to do."

He let out a deep sigh before

dragging a chair and sitting down in front of me.

Philani: "Speak."

I told him everything, from my stepfather all the way to the lobola negotiations. I figured to clear my own conscience I had to lay everything down on the table. By the time I was done he he was sitting beside me with his arm around me.

Philani: "Why didn't you say anything before."

Me: "I was scared!"

Philani: "Scared of me?"

Me: "Scared of being judged and pitied. I don't like talking about

this cause I know the stigma attached to being molested or raped. I just wanted to live my life without people scrutinizing every little thing I do."

Philani: "I am not everybody Lando, I am your husband." He took a deep breath. "Although I understand where you are coming from. I am sorry for being so hard on you." I raised my head from his shoulder and looked at him.

Me: "So you forgive me?"

Philani: "I still hate the guy but Lindani and Nate are right, you didn't cheat on me so I guess I

can learn to live with that."

Me: "This isn't pity forgiveness right?"

Philani: "I am sorry pity what?"

Me: "You're not just forgiving me because of what I just told you right?"

Philani: "Of course not! I am sorry for everything you went through, nobody deserves that kind of pain. But it also just made me realize how strong and resilient you are. And I have allowed my pride to win for a while now so I figured maybe it's time to put it aside and focus on us. I love you Mrs Biyela and I can't see my future

without you in it."

Me: "Thank you. I missed you." I said sitting on his lap and straddling him.

Philani: "You missed me or you missed UNTshangase?" He said with a smile on his face.

Me: "Both, but mostly you." I said planting kisses on his neck. He held me back.

Philani: "I am sorry about what happened earlier. You shouldn't have seen that and I shouldn't have done it either. Ngyacolisa (I am sorry) Bhambolunye."

Me: "I forgive you. But just so we are clear, next time you let some

woman stick her ass in your face
I will cut unTshangase and feed
him to you." He chuckles.

Philani: "I am never getting on
your bad side, you are dangerous."
I smiled and gave him a kiss and
before we knew it clothes were
flying all over the place. I must
admit make-up sex is the bomb.

BULI

Being single sucks. Both my
friends are married and probably
cuddling their husbands right now
and here I am having dinner alone
in this restaurant, how pitiful is

that. I swear when you are single even the universe will rub it in your face, if its not social media its people getting proposed to right in front of you.

I was about to order some dessert when a figure loomed over me. It must be one of these stupid ass men who just cannot let a woman be alone nje, somehow they think one is lonely if she is by herself, Ok I am lonely but that doesn't mean I have to grab just anybody because I am single, nope I still have standards and I plan to keep them.

Him: "Hi!" His voice sounds familiar. Maybe I know him from somewhere. I decide to look up and to my surprise it's Nate Samuels, Philani's friend. He is cute. Okay he is not cute he is hot, he is one of those Zulu speaking white people who can charm you the Zulu and English way all at the same time. He has greyish brown eyes that seduce you just by looking into them. He has abs and arms that would not let me fall. He is wearing a blue shirt, rolled up on the sleeves and tucked into blue stonewash jeans. He is wearing one of those skinny

blue striped ties let loose with two buttons opened on his shirt revealing his smooth vanilla complexion. I wonder if he has any tattoos under that shirt, that would just make him perfect.

Nate: "Buli!" He calls out while waving his hand in front of my face, I blush and look away trying to compose myself, I just went to dreamland.

Me: I clear my throat. "Hi Nate. What are you doing here?"

Nate: "I came to get dinner. Mind if I join you?"

Me: "Of course not as long as you won't get into trouble with your

girlfriend."

He laughs as he pulls out the chair and sits down.

Nate: "Unfortunately I am single. Its just me myself and I."

No girlfriend- check

Me: "So why is a handsome, successful doctor like you single? What is wrong with you?" He laughs. His laugh is sexy.

Nate: "I don't know. I could ask you the same thing though."

A waiter brings his food in a takeaway. I guess I am back to being lonely.

Nate: "Lets go." He gets up and holds out his hand for me.

Me: "Where are we going?"

Nate: "My place. I figured since we are both single and lonely we might as well be single and lonely together."

What the heck. I have nothing to lose anyway. I get up, pay my bill and we walk to his car.

Me: "Wait! I need to get my car."

Nate: "You will get it tomorrow."

Me: "Uhm... I don't know if you noticed but cars get stolen, this is Joburg."

Nate: "Trust me your car will be perfectly safe."

Me: "If they steal my car you will buy me a new one." He laughs as

we get in the car and drive off to his place.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

NARRATED

At a club in downtown Joburg, a beautiful lady is sitting alone in the far corner of the club, away from prying eyes, drinking a Cosmopolitan cocktail. She looks at her watch and back up at the door waiting for her acquaintance. Just as she is about to leave he shows up.

Lady: "You are late?" She says sitting back down.

Guy: "Actually I was here long

before you showed up, I just wanted to be certain you want to go through with this."

Lady: "Are you certain now?"

Guy: "Well you have been sitting here for over an hour so yeah, I am certain you won't flake out on me."

Lady: "Can we get down to business?"

Guy: "Of course. Now what was your plan for our common enemy?"

Lady: "Simple, take everything that is true and dear to him, leave him with nothing, not even the clothes on his back. I want him shamed and humiliated."

Guy: "That can be done."

Lady: "And I want his wife dead."

Guy: "Not gonna happen."

Lady: "Excuse me?"

Guy: "I am not killing his wife, him on the other hand I can gladly send him to meet his maker, but the wife is not to be touched and if I find out you did anything to her I will personally hand you over to him on a silver platter. Are we clear."

Lady: "If I didn't know any better I would say you are in love with her."

Guy: "Its a good thing you know better then. I will call you once a

proper plan has been put in motion. Until then you don't call me. Not even if you are dying. Are we clear?"

Lady: "Fine. I won't touch her."

Guy: "I will see you around." He gets up and leave.

After a while she gets up and leaves too, making sure no one can recognise her under the dark glasses and headscarf. She gets into her car, an Audi A3 and drives off.

INSERT 14

They say for any relationship to work there has to be communication. I guess they were right because ever since I told Philani the truth about my past and all, things went back to normal. It is nice waking up next to him every morning. And the sex has been nothing short of amazing. I actually think I love this man and I know he loves me, he has already told me that twice, the first time I pretended to be asleep and the second time I just flat out ignored it.

The truth is I am still hesitant to say the L word. My therapist

says I should give it time, and not force it so that's what I am sticking to.

After I told Philani about my stepfather I felt free, free to explore this relationship and see where it goes without any baggage. The next morning I woke up and found him making breakfast in the kitchen and he was also on the phone with someone talking about getting info on Vusi and putting a plan in motion to make him pay for everything he did to me.

It took a lot to convince him to let it go and just let karma deal

with him. As much as I hate him, I can only hope that he is a better father to Ntombi and Gugu. But Philani left me with some questions, what if he is hurting them, what if their lives aren't as perfect as I think, I mean it is a possibility that either one or both of them are his victims, but how will I ever know that when the thought of going home just gives me anxiety. I guess all I can do is hope and pray that they are safe.

Faith told us she is pregnant again. I am scared of what this will do to her if she loses this

baby too, the fact that doctors still can't find a reason for all these miscarriages is baffling to all of us. At this point I am thinking its more spiritual than physical, but we have been praying and fasting for things to work out this time.

Oh and great news, my dearly beloved husband bought me my very own Maserati Quattroporte GTS Gransport. When I asked him why he said its a wedding present, so I guess one of these days we might just pull a Khanyi and Mandla stunt and just drive behind each other even if we are

going to the same place, just for control.

I had just finished up a meeting around lunch time when my handsome husband knocked and poked his head into my office.

Philani: "Hi wifey." I smiled, I love it when he calls me that.

Me: "Hi hubby."

Philani: "Have you eaten?"

Me: "Not yet. Why? You want to take me out for lunch?"

Philani: "Even better." He walks into the office with a plastic bag from Spur. I know its ribs cause those are my favourite.

I move from my desk and we sit

on the couch and we dig in.

Philani: "Babe."

Me: "Yeah." I say not looking up from my food.

Philani: "I was thinking maybe we can go down to Durban this weekend to see Qhawekazi."

Me: "Ok, but you need to tell her we are coming."

Philani: "That kind of defeats the purpose of this being a surprise."

Me: "Not everyone likes surprises babe. Besides nje why the sudden need to check up on her."

Philani: "Something is off about her. She doesn't always answer when I call and she always has

excuses when I suggest she moves to Joburg. Dads place is empty she can move there."

Me: "Babe maybe she just likes her privacy, and she wants to be away from her overprotective big brother."

Philani: "But I miss her and I just want to make sure she is okay."

Me: "I know Sthandwa sam. Tell you what, I will call her and talk to her, try and find out what is happening with her."

Philani: "Fine but if I am not satisfied with her reasons I will fly down and bring her back

kicking and screaming."

Me: "And you wonder why she refuses to stay close to you."

Philani: "Whatever, I just love my sister and I want her to be happy."

Me: "I know baby, I know." I give him a side hug and he buries his face between my boobs.

Philani: "Your boobies are warm."

Me: "Don't start."

Philani: "My next meeting is in...." he looks at his watch, "45 minutes."

Me: "Mine is in 15."

Philani: "That's enough time for me." He excitedly rushes to the

door and locks it, and he comes back and throws his suit jacket on the couch before getting on top of me and kissing me.

Me: "If HR finds out about this I will blame it all on you."

Philani: "Fine with me, I will just fire the HR."

I giggled and moaned as he pressed the right buttons and making me wet.



LINDANI

Whoever came up with this whole "take a girl child to work" thing is both an idiot and a genius. On the one hand I like imparting my

knowledge of law on the next generation, especially girls but its like babysitting honestly except without the tantrums and all.

This girl I have been with this week is a quiet sponge. She just sits there with a note pad just writting and asking little to no questions, either way I will be glad when its over. I think she will go into property law though, she was interested in Philani's house when we went there the other day, she refused to get out of the car too which was weird. But my time with her is up so I dropped her off at the taxi rank,

she won't let me take her home.
I hope she is safe.

After dropping her off I decided
to join the squad at the Lounge.
Sihle, Nate and Sizwe are already
there.

Sizwe: "Here comes the
babysitter." They cheer and
laugh.

Me: "Fuck off wena." I grab a
drink and sit down.

Nate: "So where's your baby?"
They laugh.

Me: "She is not my baby, I just
dropped her off now."

Sihle: "Are you 100% sure she's
not yours? Phela wena you are

spreading your seed like wildfire. I am pretty sure by now you have 30 or 40 kids running around with your DNA."

Me: "Mxm. I always use protection."

Sizwe: "So what happened to the girl who sent you a message saying she's pregnant?"

Me: "That was a false alarm, turns out girl was sending the message to her boyfriend, she missed one number and it diverted to me."

Sizwe: "If you slept with her what makes you so sure the baby is not yours."

Me: "Dude keep your negative energy to yourself, she said it ain't my child and I believe her."
Philani walks in.

Nate: "Look at that, he got his visa so he decided to join us." He hugs us, grabs a drink and sits down.

Philani: "I don't need no visa, I am a man with balls and I can do whatever I want."

Me: "You are only saying that cause Lando is not here." We laugh.

Sihle: "To think just a few weeks back you were ready to pay her whatever so she could disappear,

but now you are the one disappearing inside her."

Philani: "Mxm. Leave me alone I am happily married, go find your own wives."

Nate: "But technically speaking you didn't find her, your father did."

Me: "Basically what my learned friend here is trying to say is that usishimane."

Philani: "Wena ke shut up, where's your baby?" Mxm these idiots won't let this go.

Me: "Whatever. Whats happening with the merchandise?"

Philani: "Sorted. I got the money

too, its already at the safe house."

Me: "So when are we cleaning it?"

Philani: "We need to meet there tomorrow and decide how much goes where cause it can't go through the lounge alone, it might raise some red flags."

Sihle: "Which is why I suggest we open another lounge in Cape Town. There are too many rich people there who don't know what to do with their money."

Me: "That's an option. And since we are bringing in more merchandise we'll need to clean large amounts of money quickly."

Philani: "Ok then I guess we are opening a club in Cape Town then." When we are done talking business Philani and Nate leave and we are left to drink, its the weekend after all.



BULI

I have been waiting in this house for an hour now and Nate is still not here. Yes we are being single and lonely together, thats what we call it for now. We are going away for the weekend to celebrate our monthversarry, if theres even such a thing.

The past month has been great, Nate is kind and attentive. He makes me laugh. He is also the kind of man who knows how to take control and just lead, and for me that is quite refreshing. We haven't told anyone though, I guess that makes it even more fun, but I know eventually we will have to let them know.

He finally walks in looking all sorts of yummy in grey sweats, a white t-shirt and white nike sneakers.

Do white people ever get cold coz the weather is cold but he has no jersey or sweater on while I am

wearing knee high boots, jeans, a knit jersey and a poncho on top.

Me: "You are late." He gives me a kiss and wraps his hand around my waist pulling me close to him.

Nate: "I know baby I am sorry."

Me: "I hate driving long distances at night, lets just go." I try to pull away but he won't let go.

Nate: "Relax babe, I hired a chopper to take us there. So no driving at night."

Me: "Ok so what are we waiting for lets go." I pull away and he finally lets go.

Nate: "You are so cute when you

are mad." He says taking the overnight bag.

I grab my handbag and keys and lock the door. We get into his car and we drive to one of his hotels. We take the private lift and it takes us to the rooftop where there's a chopper waiting. He straps me in and gets in on the other side and straps himself in. He gives the pilot a thumbs up and soon the chopper is in the air. We finally get to our destination and it's an open field. I see three cars with their lights on aimed at us. I hope this man did not sell me, Dear Lord no one even knows

I am here.

Me: "Nate this is not a lodge!" I shout over the noise.

Nate: "I know. We can't really land straight at the lodge. Its a game reserve after all so we dont want to be scaring the animals."

Me: "You are not planning on selling me right?" He laughs, gets out of the chopper and comes to my side. He opens for me and I get out. I say a silent prayer. We walk to one of the cars and our luggage is put in the boot.

We drive for a short while before I see lights and the name of the lodge in big bold letters. We drive

in and go straight to reception to check in. While Nate is busy checking in I decided to send my location to Lando and Faith through our WhatsApp group. Luckily the network is good. I get a reply from them.

Faith: 'What in Gods name are you doing there?'

Lando: 'She is getting laid obviously. But in the middle of nowhere babe? Moguy must be special.'

Faith: 'Or he knows how to lay the pipe and sisters needs him alone for the weekend.' I have all of a sudden become invisible in

this conversation cause they are talking to each other now.

Lando: 'Babe just make sure he doesn't tear you apart, we don't want to see you limping on Monday.'

Me: 'Go to your husbands and leave me alone. I will see you Monday.'

Faith: 'Say hi to mystery bae.'

Lando sends some laughing emojis and I decide to ignore them.

Nate calls me and I follow him as we are led to our chalet. Its dark so I can't see this place properly but I can hear the sound of a river close by. I hope I will get

enough time to explore tomorrow. We walk into the chalet and there are rose petals and small scented candles all the way from the door, all over the mini lounge and the bedroom. I walk into the bedroom, Nate switches on the light and on the bed are red rose petals spelling 'PLEASE BE MY GIRLFRIEND'.

I turn around and Nate is leaning by the door looking at me. I walk over to him and he puts his hand on my waist. I get on my tippy toes and give him a kiss.

Me: "Yes, I will be your girl."

He lifts me up and takes me to

the bed. I guess I am officially someone's Girlfriend now.



LANDO

This weekend I convinced Philani that we should stay home and just watch movies, I mean he has an entire Cinema in this house and it should be put to good use.

Today is Sunday and we are on our tenth movie this weekend, it would have been twelfth if he hadn't gone out for a few hours yesterday, but he did bring me flowers so I forgave him.

We are now watching *Hard to Kill* starring Steven Seagal. I figured since we've been watching chick flicks all weekend we should throw in some action too. And off all the movies available he chose an old ass movie, apparently its his all time favourite.

Me: "You know why this movie is fake?"

Philani: "There is absolutely nothing fake about this movie."

Me: "Your hero fights with everybody and he comes out without a scratch."

Philani: "Stop trying to ruin my movie for me."

Me: "But babe....."

Philani: "Nope.

Lalalalalalalalalalalalala" he starts singing with his hands on his ears. I am laughing. He can be such a baby sometimes.

The house phone rings and he gets up to answer it.

Philani:

"Hello.....yeah.....who is she.....fine let her in." He hangs up. "Babe someone is at the gate I need to go check.

Don't change the movie." He says walking out of the room. I decide to call Qhawekazi since I promised Philani I would. She

picks up after the third ring.

Kazi: "Mrs Biyela."

Me: "Miss Biyela."

Kazi: "You do know its actually Mrs Rodriguez right?"

Me: "Until that Mr Rodriguez starts treating you like the queen that you are you will always be Miss Biyela." She laughs.

Kazi: "Yes mam."

Me: "Your brother wants us to come see you."

Kazi: "When?"

Me: "We were supposed to be there this weekend but I talked him out of it."

Kazi: "Thank God."

Me: "Wait what? You don't miss us. That's sad." I pretend to cry.

Kazi: "I didn't mean it like that, of course I miss you guys. Tell you what, how about I come up next weekend.

Me: "That would be great. I will let your brother know."

Kazi: "Okay. I love you. I have to go."

Me: "I love you too. Bye." I hang up.

I am busy on my phone when Philani comes back.

Philani: "Babe!"

Me: "Yes." I turn around and he is standing by the door.

Philani: "Come lets go, there's something you need to see."

Me: "What is it?" I say getting up and walking towards him.

Philani: "Come, you'll see." He holds my hand and drags me all the way downstairs. As we approach the lounge I see someone sitting on the couch, she is wearing blue jeans, a black hoodie and black all stars. Her afro is tied in a bun. She has an adidas backpack next to her.

She looks up as we get closer and I realize who she is.

Me: "Gugu!"

She gets up and I see the tears

running down her face. I walk over to her and hug her. I feel my shirt getting wet as she sobs on my shoulder.

Gugu: "Please don't send me back, I am begging you, please." She says between sobs.

Me: "Shhhhhhhh. Its okay. I won't send you back."

I lift her head up to look at her face, she is so beautiful.

Me: "Hi!"

Gugu: "Please don't let him find me."

I take her back in and hug her. I can feel my heart drop to my stomach at the realization of

what those words mean. He hurt her too. He hurt his own child. I feel my tears fall too, my little sister and I were molested by the same man, Her own Biological Father. Dear Lord give me strength.

INSERT 15

It is said a father is a girls first boyfriend. From him she will learn how to be loved, how to be treated and the respect that he gives her will set a precedence for the kind of treatment she will allow from any man in future. So

what happens when your father is the one who breaks you? If your own father can't protect you from the world then who will?

I have been laying on this bed watching Gugu sleep. She looks so peaceful, like there is nothing in the world that is troubling her, but I know better. I wipe away the tears that keep running down my face, how I wish I could take it all away, the pain, the fear, the guilt and the nightmares.

We couldn't even talk properly earlier, she looked tired and scared so I just gave her food and took her upstairs to take a shower. I

gave her my pyjamas and we sat on the bed in silence. Then she turned over and slept. She hasn't woken up in six hours, its almost 3 am now but I still can't sleep. I get up and quietly walk out the room and go to our bedroom. Its dark cause Philani is sleeping. I walk in and sit on the bed. Its crazy to think just a few weeks back a dark room scared the shit out of me but now I walk in with no issues, I guess knowing that Philani is there makes it easier.

Me: "Philani!"

Philani: "Mhmmmm."

Me: "Wake up."

Philani: "Baby its late, sleep."

Me: "Baby please!"

Philani: "Ok, whats wrong?"

Me: "Aren't you going to turn the light on?"

Philani: "No I don't want to lose my sleep."

Me: "Okay, whatever. I have changed my mind."

Philani: "About what?"

Me: "Vusi! whatever it is you were planning to do to him before, I want you to do it now." He switches on the side lamp and looks at me.

Philani: "Are you sure about this?"

Me: "I have never been so sure

about anything in my life. That man doesn't deserve to be called a father, he doesn't deserve to even live, so I am giving you my blessing to send him on a one way trip to hell."

Philani: "Okay. I will set everything up in the morning." He pulls me to him and I lay my head on his chest. "Do you have a special request for what must be done to him?" I take a deep breath, I have never thought about killing someone before but I know what needs to be done to Vusi.

Me: "I want you to cut his balls

off and feed them to him. I want you to cut his dick off and feed it to the dogs and then rip his heart out slowly. He needs to suffer."

Philani: "Remind me to never get on your bad side."

Me: "He hurt her, I saw the fear and pain in her eyes. He broke her the same way he did me."

Philani: "I Know, and he will pay dearly for it. He will curse the day he put his dirty paws on you or Gugu. I swear to God I will make him pay."

Me: "I know." He kissed the top of my head and I knew Vusi was

about to meet his maker, and I didn't even feel bad for him.

All these years I had tried to justify what he did to me, I always thought he wasn't my father so he had no obligation towards me, but Gugu is his own child, she has his blood running through her veins yet he found it so easy to hurt her. How is she supposed to trust anybody after this. And what will my mother say now, I was called a whore when I told her what he did to me and now he has done the same thing to Gugu. Will she call her a whore too?



PHILANI

By the time I woke up Lando was gone. I tried calling but her phone went straight to voicemail. I got up and went to the bathroom to take a shower and I found a sticky note on the bathroom mirror.

'Hey I went out. I will be back soon and I am not going to work. I'll see you later.'

Oh well as long as she's safe.

I take a shower, get out and dry myself. I lotion and get dressed. Lucky me Lando already picked out a suit for me. I smile like a

retard cause inside the shirt is a lipstick mark, her kissy lips, luckily its under the pocket so no one will see it except me.

I finish up and go check on Gugu, I open the door slightly and she is still asleep. I close the door again and head downstairs and start making breakfast. While busy frying eggs I feel a presence behind me. I turn around and find Gugu standing nervously by the counter.

Gugu: "Hi, sorry I didn't mean to disturb you."

Me: "Its okay, how did you sleep?"

Gugu: "Good thank you. Where's

Lando?"

Me: "She went out." She faces down in disappointment. "She will be back soon. Would you like some breakfast?"

Gugu: "Yes please." I dish up for her, eggs, bacon, sausages and toasted bread. I place the jam and butter next to her. She takes one bite and smiles.

Me: "Its good right?"

Gugu: "Yeah, I didn't think it would be."

Me: "What? Why?" I say holding a laugh.

Gugu: "I didn't think rich people knew how to cook."

Me: "What makes you think I am rich?" She uses her fork to point around the house. I laugh. She's really beautiful and so innocent, but all that is laced with fear and distrust. I can't blame her though. When we are done eating I take away the plates and wash them.

Gugu: "Don't you have a maid?"

Me: "We do." I say looking back to her and wiping my hands with a dishcloth. "She comes twice a week, I don't like people in my space." She looks away. Did I say something wrong?

Gugu: "I am sorry."

Me: "For what?"

Gugu: "Invading your space." She says still not looking at me. I walk around the counter and take a seat next to her on the high chair.

Me: "Gugu, look at me." She takes a while but she looks at me. "You are not invading my space, you are family so this is just as much your home as it is ours, okay." She nods her head. "Good, now you can go take a bath or shower, whichever one you prefer, you can go to our room I am sure Lando has some of those bubbly thingies you girls like. You can also check her closet

for something to wear."

Gugu: "Okay, thank you."

I then show her around the house but she seemed uncomfortable, when we were done I left for work. And now that Lando has given me her blessing to deal with Vusi, I need to put a proper plan in action that won't lead back to me or Lando.



LANDO

I have been pacing up and down this office for almost ten minutes and Dr Steenkamp is still not

here. After what seemed like an eternity she finally showed up. She is probably in her fifties, short with blue hair, yes blue as in sky blue and she is wearing glasses. She is wearing a red jumpsuit that hugs her 25 year old body just right. I need to go back to gym. She takes a seat but I remain standing.

Dr S: "Good morning Mrs Biyela. I didn't know we had a session today."

Me: "We don't, I just needed to talk to someone, objective, I guess."

Dr S: "Okay so whats happening?"

Me: "My little sister appeared on my doorstep yesterday."

Dr S: "Which one?"

Me: "Gugu. She was so distraught and scared and she asked me not to let him find her."

Dr S: "Who is he?"

Me: "Her father."

Dr S: "The man who raped you?"

Me: "Yes, I think he hurt her too." I sit down eventually.

Dr S: "Did she say that?"

Me: "She didn't have to say it.

The fear in her eyes and her words just painted the whole picture. Of all the things he has ever done, hurting her was the

one thing I never thought he could do."

Dr S: "And how does it make you feel knowing that?"

Me: "Like I failed her. Ever since I left that place I have never regretted it, but now..... now I feel like my leaving left her open and vulnerable to him and he took advantage of it, I wasn't there to protect her."

Dr S: "I understand but you do realise if you were there he wouldn't have stopped hurting you?"

Me: "I know, but if it meant he wouldn't have gotten to her then

I would have taken everything."

Dr S: "You would have sacrificed yourself for her?"

Me: "Yes, if it meant her childhood would be a happy one, if it meant she got to experience life at her own pace and not be raped by her own father, if it meant she had gotten a fighting chance at this life then yes, I would sacrifice myself ten times over."

Dr S: "It wasn't your job to protect her sweetheart, as much as I know you would have done that, we need to get her into therapy as soon as possible."

Me: "I know. I just wish I knew

what to do to help her and just make this better for her."

Dr S: "The only thing you can do is be there for her, she came to you to be her safe haven, be that.

Don't feel guilty for something you can't control. The road to recovery will be hard, but with you by her side she will be okay.

Also she can draw strength from your own story so she knows she can heal and still live a full life."

Me: "I don't think she knows about what he did to me."

Dr S: "Either way, now is the time to be her big sister."

Me: "I Hope I don't fail her

again."

Dr S: "You won't."

I leave the office when her PA tells her her first client is here. I didn't make an appointment so I excuse myself. Dr Steenkamp has been my therapist for nine years now. Mrs Biyela sent me to her after I had endless nightmares in boarding school. She has been a Godsent.

I get home and find Gugu in Philani's study. She is sitting on the couch reading a book, Naledi His Love by Dudu Busani-Dube. She is wearing my red knit dress. She looks up when I walk in.

Me: "Hey." I sit down next to her.

Gugu: "Sorry bhut Philani said I can use the books."

Me: "Its okay. You love reading?"

She smiles.

Gugu: "Yeah. Remember when you were home, you used to get books from the school library and you would read them to me all the time. You said books were preparing us for the world, because it was bigger than where we were and one day seeing those places live would be even more special." I laugh. That used to be our little ritual. Everytime I came back from school she would

be standing at the gate just waiting for me, we'd sit on the stoep and read together. Books had become my escape from the reality around me, I guess she also did the same, found solace in books.

Me: "You were four years old, how do you remember that?"

Gugu: "I am smart."

Me: "Of course you are. So how did you find me?"

Gugu: "Promise you won't get mad?"

Me: "I Promise."

Gugu: "I know what Vusi did to you." I feel my heart beating so

fast. I had hoped she didn't know, but I guess like she said, she is smart.

Me: "How..... mh..... how do you know?"

Gugu: "Because he told me. When I was 11 he started raping me. He came home drunk one night, Ntombi was at her friends and mum was working night shift. He said he was horny, and since mum wasn't there I should help him. He made me play with his private parts and then he forced himself on me. No matter how many times I begged he wouldn't stop. He would do it every night when mum

wasn't home. Sometimes Ntombi would be sleeping in the other room but he didn't care. One night I told him if he didn't stop I would tell mum, he just laughed and said I should ask you what happened when you did that. He even said gogo died because you told her what he did. For the first time in a long time it finally made sense why you ran away from home. So I started looking for you. Ntombi also helped although she didn't know what was happening. A few weeks back I saw a picture that Lindani had posted of you. I searched him,

found out the name of his law firm and that they do mentorship for high school students to teach them about law and stuff so I applied and I was accepted. I got here last Sunday. I had hoped that if he mentored me then maybe he would eventually see you whether at home or work so it would be easier for me to come to you. My prayers were answered when he came here to see bhut Philani. I was so happy when you both walked him out. Seeing you again felt like..... like a dream. But I was scared to get out of the car. "

I wiped the tears that had fallen down my face. And then it clicked, the whole of last week she had spent with Lindani and we didn't even know it. We had teased him about it.

Me: "You were right. You are smart. I am happy you came to find me. But where did you sleep the whole week?"

Gugu: "Homeless shelters on a good night but mostly under bridges."

I felt fresh tears flow, my little sister was here for a whole week sleeping under bridges while I have unoccupied bedrooms in this

house. I curse the day Vusi was born. I hug her.

Me: "I Am sorry I wasn't there to protect you."

She pulls away and looks at me.

Gugu: "It wasn't your job to protect me Lando, it was his and he failed at it. For a long time I asked myself what did I do wrong, why am I being punished like this, but after he told me what he did to you I realized I did nothing wrong, he is the one with demons not me."

She wiped the tears that keep running down my face. "Please don't blame yourself, you and I

are victims of a sick twisted man who doesn't deserve to be around children. He is a monster." She takes a deep breath like she wants to say something but is afraid.

Me: "What do you want to say?"

Gugu: "Can I please stay with you, I promise I will be good, you won't even know I am here, I will clean and do chores, anything, please just don't send me back." I don't think I will ever get over her pain laced voice. I cup her face in my hands.

Me: "You are not going anywhere. Vusi will never lay his hands on you

ever again. I promise you." I wipe the tears on her face and bring her in for a hug.

After sitting in that position for a while she fell asleep. I didn't have the heart to move even when I was pressed. I just held it in till she woke up. After having lunch I decided to take her shopping so we can buy her clothes. We decided to go to Sandton City. When we were done shopping we decided to go to Nandos to buy food, I was too tired to cook.

While we waited for our food there was a bunch of girls sitting

a few tables away from us. They kept looking at us and whispering among themselves. Gugu noticed too and she became uncomfortable. I saw one of them get up and walk over to us, I decided to meet her halfway, I don't want Gugu hearing whatever these bitches have to say.

Me: "Hi!"

Girl: "I am sorry but how do you know that girl?" That's a weird question from someone I don't even know.

Me: "She is my sister. Do you have a problem with her?"

Girl: "No of course not, its just that....."

Me: "What?"

She pulls out her phone and shows me a picture of Gugu on twitter, it says she is missing.

Girl: "She is trending on twitter, and there's a video too." She takes the phone and scrolls and then shows me the video. Its Vusi and my mother pleading for whoever has Gugu to bring her back, they say they are willing to pay whatever it takes to bring her home.

The nerve of that man, after all that he has done he still has the

audacity to shed crocodile tears on social media.

Girl: "Look I won't say anything about this and I will make sure my friends don't either because she doesn't look harmed or in danger. But her parents are worried about her, maybe you should reach out and let them know." I give her a smile and she goes back to her friends.

By the time I go back to Gugu our food is already there so we leave. Philani is not home when we get there. We dish up and eat. I decide to tell Gugu about the video. She looks terrified but I

promise to protect her and she calms down. It took a while before I was able to convince her to give me my mums number.

After she went to bed I decided to call.

The phone rings and she picks up immediately.

Nelsiwe: "Hello!" I keep quiet.

"Hellllllllooooo"

Me: "Nelsiwe."

Nelsiwe: "Yes!"

Me: "I know where Gugu is." I hear her take a deep breath.

Nelsiwe: "Please don't hurt her.

Just tell me what you want

please." I think she is crying now.

She must be really worried.

Me: "I won't hurt my sister Nelsiwe and I don't want anything from you."

Nelsiwe: "Who is this?"

Me: "Landokuhle Shongwe, your first daughter." Silence. "Are you still there?"

Nelsiwe: "I should have known. Bring my child back, I will not let you corrupt her. You will not sell her to those Nigerians you sleep with lapho (there)."

Me: "You are still as naive as ever. I will send you the address. If you want her you and your stupid husband will come get her."

Nelsiwe: "And I will bring the police with me, you will rot in jail for this sfebe ndzini (you whore)"
Me: "Good. The more the merrier."
I hang up and send her the address. I go upstairs and take a shower before getting in to bed. No matter how many times we run from our past it will always catch up. And I am about to come face to face with mine.

INSERT 16

I woke up cuddled in my husband's arms. I wonder when he got home. I check my phone to see

the time and I find a message from my mum. They are on the way to Joburg. Its 7 am and the message was sent 40 minutes ago, I guess I have atleast 4 hours to prepare myself for whatever is gonna happen today. I turn over and watch my chocolate dream sleep. I have to tell him about my mother's visit. He opens his eyes and finds me staring at him. He smiles.

Philani: "Goodmorning Mrs Biyela."
I smile too.

Me: "Goodmorning Mr Biyela. When did you get back."

Philani: "I got back very late. You

didn't hear me come in?"

Me: "Nope. Guess I was really tired."

Philani: "I saw your messages. I can't believe that douchebag. He is busy garnering pity and sympathy from everybody. I swear to God when I get my hands on him he will be sorry."

Me: "They are coming here?"

Philani: "Who?"

Me: "My mother, and Vusi. I told them if they want her they'll have to come get her." He props himself up with his elbow.

Philani: "Even better." He grabs his phone and makes a call. "Bafo,

iyeza lenja (he is coming).....

yeah..... he is walking into our playground now. Its time to play."

He hangs up. "So what time will they be here?"

Me: "Around eleven or twelve."

Philani: "Good. We need to get ready for them."

Me: "We!"

Philani: "Yes we. You think I am going to let you face them alone?"

We are in this together." He takes his phone and sends a text message.

Me: "Okay."

Philani: "Yep. I just told Lebo to clear my diary. Now all thats left

is to make him suffer."

Me: "How are you going to get him cause he will be with my mother?"

Philani: "We still have a couple of hours before they get here thats enough time to get a plan together."

Me: "Ok."

Philani: "For now though, bheka (Look) "

He lifts up the bed cover to show me his dick.

Me: "Periods."

Philani: "You had your periods last week.

Me: "When did you start keeping

track of my cycle?"

Philani: "Its my responsibility to know." I laugh, he never ceases to amaze me. I lift the bedcover up and go down on him. His moans get louder as I take him in and out of my mouth while my hands play with his balls. He cums in my mouth and I swallow.

I go back up and lay my head on his chest looking up to him, he is still trying to catch his breath and his eyes are closed.

Me: "Better now?"

Philani: "I had something else in mind but that will do."



GUGU

For the first time in 2 years I slept like a baby. Finding Lando has been an answer to my prayers. She is nothing like my mum said, according to her Lando is supposed to be prostituting herself in Hilbrow, and boy am I glad she isn't.

I wasn't sure how she would react seeing me, but she was happy, for all these years mum had convinced us that she hated us, but now I know, it wasn't us she hated it was him. It made sense to me I just hope mum believes us this time, because I

know I am not going back to that house, not with him there.

I decided to wake up early so I can make breakfast. I get to the kitchen and most appliances are hidden away, I literally have to open every cupboard to find what I am looking for. When I get all that I need I decide to make omelets and pancakes. I was busy with the omelets when I heard footsteps behind me.

Lando: "Something smells nice in here."

Me: "Yeah, I thought I should make you guys breakfast."

Philani: He grabs a pancake.

"These are nice and fluffy."

Me: "Thank you."

Lando: "So how did you sleep?"

Me: "Good. Thank you for everything."

Lando: "We are family." We sit down to eat. "So your parents are coming!"

I ignore her. "Gugu."

Me: "You said you wouldn't send me back." I say still not looking at her.

Lando: "I'm not but I think its time we put a stop to Vusi and his shenanigans. At some point this has to end before he does it to somebody else."

Me: "What if she doesn't believe me? If she couldn't believe you why would she believe me?" She comes and sits next to me with my hand in hers.

Lando: "Look at me." I do as she says. "I will never let anything happen to you ever again. If she doesn't believe us..... we will cross that bridge when we get to it. For now I want you to relax, I will protect you okay."

Me: "Okay." She hugs me.

Lando: "We will get through this. Together."



PHILANI

I left Lando and Gugu bonding in the house and went to Lindani's place. The squad is meeting there to come up with a plan to get this spawn of Satan before he goes back to Mpumalanga. I get there and everyone is already here. I park my car and get into the house. I find them sitting in the lounge.

Me: "Guys." I hug them.

Lindani: "So what's the plan bafo?"

Me: "I was thinking to separate him from his wife without her suspecting anything is a hijack gone wrong."

Nate: "That should work, this is Joburg hijackings happen all the time and if they find him dead it will be just another hikacking gone wrong."

Me: "Exactly. But here's a problem. I was thinking he should confess his sins before he meets his maker."

Lindani: "Then a hijacking won't work."

Sihle: "It could actually. Hijack the car, stab him a little so he gets admitted to the hospital. We book the wife into a hotel and get him from the hospital, he writes a letter to his wife admitting his

sins and then we send him to meet his ancestors."

Me: "That is actually brilliant. It will be like he ran away to avoid the law. I knew there was brains in that big head of yours."

Everybody laughs.

Sihle: "Hahaha very funny, you just jealous I can plan better than you."

Me: "Whatever."

Sizwe: "I just texted Sbu, him and the guys are already on standby."

Lindani: "Good. So when are they getting here?"

Me: "Lando will text me when they

arrive."

Lindani: "I wonder what goes through someones mind when they decide to rape someone, let alone a child, your own child even. Mxm."

Me: "That is a mystery my friend."



LANDO

Gugu and I were in the kitchen cooking lunch when the house phone rang. When I answered the security told me my mother and Vusi were at the gate. I told him to let them in. I turned to Gugu who was staring the rice.

Me: "Gugu," she turned and looked at me. "I need you to go to your room." The smile faded from her face.

Gugu: "They are here?"

Me: "Yeah, I need you to go upstairs and stay there. I will sort this out ok." She nodded, took her phone and rushed upstairs.

I took my phone and texted Philani telling him that they are here. I then went to the front door and opened it, I saw two cars pull up, I saw the backdoor of the first car open and Ntombi ran to me, almost knocking me over with her hug.

Me: "Hey."

Ntombi: "I missed you." She said not letting me go.

Me: "I missed you too." I pulled her away looking into her eyes. She looks just like Gugu. I hugged her again.

Nelsiwe: "Ngcela umntfwanami. (Can I have my child)" That was my mother disturbing us. Ntombi let go of me but still kept her one arm around my waist.

I looked at my mother and quite frankly I couldn't read her face, I wasn't sure if what I saw was anger or hatred, or maybe both. I don't know. I looked behind her

and saw her pervert husband, he looked at me almost expecting to see that little girl he had broken and tried to destroy, but he couldn't find her, cause I stared right back at him till he looked away, I want to say in shame but that would be pushing it.

I saw my uncle Bahole and his wife Nkosazana behind them. I led them inside the house and into the lounge. I told Ntombi to go see Gugu. My mother, Vusi, Malume and aunty Nkosazana sat on the long corner couch and I chose to sit on the one sitter couch facing them. I had prayed

earlier asking God for strength to face this man and boy did he deliver. Looking at him now I had no ounce of fear, I didn't feel intimidated and I sure as hell was not gonna give in this time, this time I wasn't just fighting for me but for Gugu too, and I needed to do this, especially for her.

Bahole: "Mshana (Niece) wahamba lijuba lika Noah, leni nje? (You left and never came back, why?)" My uncle said breaking the ice, I didn't even realize we were sitting in silence for a long time.

Me: "Ask your sister and her husband."

Nelsiwe: "Ungalingi! (Don't you dare). No body told you to leave home, you did that yourself so you can come and whore around this evil place, look at you now, working as a maid. Sies man. Give me my child so I can go."

A part of me wanted to tell her that this was technically my house but this is not why we are here so we can get to that later.

Nkosazana: "Lando sisi, what happened? I know gogo's death was hard on you, but to just pack up and leave, that wasn't right."

If things were hard at home you could have come and stayed with us."

Me: "She wouldn't let me stay with gogo who lived less than a km away do you really think she would have let me stay with you in Nelspruit?"

Nelsiwe: "Lo she ngubani ke? Ngimi? (Who is the she? Me?)"
She says looking at me with so much hatred.

Vusi: "Tell Gugu to come so we can leave." At last he opened his mouth, I was wondering how long he would be silent. I looked at him straight in the eye.

Me: "Gugu is not going anywhere, especially with you. After all you have done to her, she will never be anywhere near you ever again."

Bahole: "Lando what are you talking about, she is his child."

Me: "I know that malume, so explain to me what kind of father sleeps with his own child?" I saw aunt Nkosazana raise her hands and put them on her head, malume just sat back in defeat, Vusi had guilt written all over his face and my mother just shook her head chuckling.

Nelsiwe: "Awudzinwa neh? (You don't give up, do you?) After the

lies you told my mother, the same lies that led to her having a heart attack, you continue where you left off, now you have even recruited Gugu with this stupid plan of yours, who are you trying to kill this time?"

Me: "I never lied before and I am not lying now. Your husband is nothing more than a perverted individual who deserves to rot in jail." I was now shouting at her. She got up from the couch so fast and charged at me. I closed my eyes expecting slaps and punches but they never came. I opened my eyes and realised why,

Philani and Lindani were standing between us, with my mother standing in front of them while I sat on the couch.

Philani: "You need to sit down." I saw my mother sit back down almost in slow motion. Philani has that effect on people sometimes. He turns to look at me. "Are you okay?" I nod my head. He takes a sit on the couch next to me and Lindani stands behind me.

Honestly I felt confident before, but now, now you can't touch me. I look at Philani and he is looking straight at Vusi, I didn't even tell him which one was Vusi. I

turn and look at Lindani and he is also looking straight at Vusi too. I wonder how they know which one is him. I look at Vusi and he has his head bowed. Malume clears his throat.

Bahole: "Lando I think you should call Gugu so we can go."

Philani: "Gugu is not going anywhere." He says that not moving his eyes from Vusi.

Nelsiwe: "I don't know who you are and quite frankly I don't care, I just want my child so we can go home."

Philani: He turns to look at my mother. "You did hear me say she

is not going anywhere right? Or do you need me to repeat myself?"
Silence.

Just then Ntombi comes rushing down the stairs followed by Gugu. As she gets closer I see the tears running down her face. I guess Gugu must have told her everything. She walks straight to her father and stands in front of him. Gugu comes and stands next to Lindani.

Ntombi: "Is it true Papa?"

Vusi: "Gugu go get your stuff we are leaving." He says ignoring Ntombi.

Lindani: "Your daughter asked you

a question, aren't you going to answer her?" He asks Vusi, who can't seem to even look at Lindani.

Ntombi: "Papa!" She is shouting.

Nelsiwe: "Hhay man Ntombi this has nothing to do with you."

Ntombi: "No mama why are you the one defending him, why can't he speak for himself? He has a mouth mosi let him speak."

Nelsiwe: "Ntombi unganglingi. (Don't try me)"

Ntombi: "Papa why won't you defend yourself? Why are you quiet?"

Vusi: "I think its time we left,

Ntombi get in the car, wena Gugu

get your stuff, we are leaving."

Philani: "Awuzwa neh (you don't listen) I said Gugu is not going anywhere."

Nelsiwe: "Lando tell your bulldogs to let my child go."

I got up from the chair I was on and walked over to my mother. I sat on the coffee table right in front of her.

Me: "Your child is not going anywhere. You have failed to protect her the same way you failed to protect me. I told you what your husband did and instead of protecting me you protected him. And thanks to your

protection he felt confident enough to go and do the same thing to Gugu, his own child and you are still protecting him. What he did to us was horrible but it doesn't compare to what you did. He hurt me but you, you broke me. And I can guarantee you right now no one in this world will ever break me the way you have. But I forgive you. I can't speak for Gugu but me, I forgive you, because I know that if I don't forgive you I will take out my anger on everyone who gives a shit about me. I am still standing Nelsiwe, despite everything you

two did to me, I am still standing and I will keep standing because I have been blessed with people who love me with my cracks and scars, and trust me Gugu will stand to. Wena on the other hand, the lightning that will strike you is still doing push ups. Now you can take your husband and get the fuck out of my house. Yes MY HOUSE! I am not a maid, I am a Chartered Accountant. Now get out." She sat there with shock written all over her face.

Vusi: He gets up. "Nelsiwe asambe." (Let's go)

She gets up and goes to Gugu,

she tries to grab her hand but Lindani and Philani are already standing in front of her in protective mode.

Gugu: "Why won't you believe us mama? Why won't you?" She has tears running down her face but my mother is not moved. I move over to her and hug her. She buries her head on my shoulder and sobs.

Nelsiwe: "When you decide you want to come home, uyayati indlela. (You know the way).

Ntombi lets go." She says walking out. Vusi follows her. Ntombi walks over to Gugu and I and

hugs us.

Ntombi: "I believe you." She whispers before following her parents out.

Malume gets up followed by his wife, they come to Gugu and I.

Bahole: "Ngyacolisa mshana (I am sorry my niece). We should have taken this seriously the first time you told gogo, and because of our ignorance and taking things lightly we have failed the two of you and I am so sorry. Please take care of each other, we will deal with Vusi, this time we won't fail you." He hugs us. His wife hugs us too with

tears in her eyes.

Nkosazana: "I am so sorry."

They walk out.

I know he said they would handle Vusi but I don't know how. I am just glad that they believe us.

But I am happy that Ntombi believes us too. I had thought that since she is Vusi's favourite she would side with him, but she surprised me. My mother on the other hand, I hope one day she realises her mistake. As much as I have forgiven her I want nothing more to do with her.

As for Gugu, the only thing I can do is walk with her on this path

and hope to God she gets back even a tiny piece of who she was.

INSERT 17

PHILANI

Our plan worked out better than we expected. After my boys did the hijacking and left Vusi, his wife and Ntombi on the side of the road, Nate swooped in like a good Samaritan and saved the day. He made sure Vusi was admitted to the hospital and he booked the women in one of his hotels. Then late at night he was

sedated which made it easy to take him without a fight.

We woke up the next day and assembled at the safe house where he was kept. Luckily for us he was in the basement of the safehouse and it was soundproof so no matter how loud he screamed no one would hear him.

We got there and made ourselves breakfast just waiting for Vusi to wake up. Eventually around 12 noon he woke up. We went down to the basement which was dark with just one light dangling in the middle of the room and found him still groggy. I turned the light to

his face and he turned away because of its brightness.

Me: "Vusi, mavusana."

Vusi: "Who are you and what do you want from me? Where am I?"
I turned the light to me.

Me: "You remember me?"

Vusi: "You are Lando's friend!"

Me: "Husband actually, as for where you are, well lets just call this a passage, what you do in this room will determine whether you go back home to your wife or you go meet your ancestors, the choice is yours really." I signalled for Sbu to switch on all the lights

and he did, now we could see each other perfectly.

Vusi: "You don't know who you are messing with right now." He said trying to free himself from the handcuffs that were hooked to the table where he lay. I laughed.

Me: "Your problem is that you think this is your playground, you think you can walk in here and intimidate me? I am going to show you who I am. People like you don't deserve to walk on this earth, people who hurt innocent children for their own satisfaction just make me want to vomit. But

first I need you to do something for me. Can you do it?"

Vusi: "I won't do anything for you."

Me: "Trust me, you will."

Sbu brought a chair and Nate helped me uncuff him and put him on the seat, I put a pen and notebook in front of him, on the table we just moved him from.

Me: "Now here is what you are going to do..... firstly are you right or left handed?" He keeps quiet and just folds his arms.

Nate: "He is left handed, I saw him sign the admission papers at the hospital."

Vusi: "I knew it, those people who hijacked me were sent by you, you pretended to help us you son of a bitch. How sick can you be?" We all just burst out laughing.

Nate: "You are the last person to talk about sick people, sleeping with your own children is not just sick its revolting. Sies." He spits on the ground.

Me: "As I was saying, you are going to write a letter to your wife telling her how you raped Lando and lied about it, then you will detail how you killed her mother for believing Lando and then finally you will tell her about

Gugu and what you did to her,
Are we clear?" He chuckled.

Vusi: "You have lost your mind if
you think I will do that. I will not
confess to anything."

Me: "Okay." I take his right hand
and place it on the table, I took
out the cigar cutter from my
pocket and placed it on the table
too. "I will ask you again and if
you refuse I chop a piece off like
this," I put his finger in the
cutter and chopped it off while he
screamed like a little girl. "I have
time so we can do this all day and
night."

Vusi: "You are going to hell for this." He says between sobs.

Me: "Save a place for me cause you'll get there first. Now are you writting or should I chop another piece off?" Silence. I guess he has a high tolerance for pain, so I chop another finger and he keeps screaming. This went on till there was no fingers so I moved to his toes. Eventually he agreed to write the letter after screaming and even peeing himself. Seeing him suffer was actually nice.

When he was done we put him back on the table face down and ass in the air, before sticking a

baseball bat in his ass. He begged and pleaded and cried but we just wouldn't stop.

Vusi: "Please stop, please I'm begging you." He cried.

Me: "Did you stop when Lando begged you to, did you stop when Gugu cried. This is what you put them through. The physical pain that is, but the emotional pain is different, you will never feel that so this will just have to do." I said as Nate shoved the baseball bat back in his ass, took it out and shoves it in again and again. He screamed and cried till he couldn't cry anymore. After that

we cut his balls off and fed them to him, as per instruction, then we put him in his car and drove him to a veld on the outside of town and set the car on fire and burnt him alive.

When we were done we drove back to our respective houses, it was almost 4am when I got home. Lando and Gugu were sleeping together in Gugu's room. I sat for a while watching them sleep. I vowed at that moment to protect them with everything in me.

I got up and went to the study and put Vusi's letter in the safe

then went to our room, took a shower before falling asleep.

I woke up and found Lando laying on her side next to me watching me sleep.

Me: "Its rude to stare." She smiled.

Lando: "Maybe if you weren't so handsome I wouldn't stare." Now it's my turn to smile. "Are you blushing Mr Biyela?"

Me: "No I am not, I am a Zulu man and we don't blush." She threw her head back laughing. It's nice to see her laugh despite all the pain.

Lando: "So what happened yesterday?"

Me: "Everything worked out the way it was supposed to. You never have to worry about Vusi ever again."

Lando: "What about Nelsiwe?"

Me: "She and Ntombi will go home today after finding out that her husband discharged himself from the hospital and ran away to God knows where."

Lando: "So no one is gonna find his body?"

Me: "Nope. We burnt and buried him." She took a deep breath.

Lando: "Am I a bad person?"

Me: "Why would you say that?"

Lando: "You just told me you killed someone, my stepfather, why am I not feeling bad. Not even an ounce of guilt."

Me: "There's nothing to feel guilty about. That man deserves everything that happened to him and more. People like him don't deserve to be in this world."

She takes another deep breath before laying on my chest.

Me: "I am proud of you. You stood up for yourself and you stood up for Gugu too. You are one heck of a woman Landokuhle Biyela, and I am so proud to call you my wife."

She laughs. What's so funny?

"Why are you laughing?"

Lando: "You just said you are proud to call me your wife but just a couple of months back you wanted to pay me off." Oh God.

Me: "I am never gonna hear the end of that will I?"

Lando: "Nope. But I am proud to be your wife. And thank you for protecting us."

Me: "Anytime baby. Anytime. I love you babe."

Lando: "I love you too baby." Wait what? She just said she loved me.

Me: "You do realise you just said you loved me right?" She laughs,

turns her head to look at me.

Lando: "Yes, I love you and I can say it again and again. I love you Ntshangase."

Man those words. I have waited for a while to hear them and she has said them, unforced, so I know she means them. This day is starting on a very good note.



LANDO

Hearing about Vusi's death should have sparked some sort of feeling inside me but, nothing. I was glad to hear that we will never have to see him again. Maybe even Gugu's nightmares would stop.

Honestly though I never thought I would have to live through this again. I had thought I had healed but this just triggered me and set me back, but I thank God for Dr Steenkamp, God knows if it weren't for her I would have lost my mind.

This whole week has been one heck of a week, Gugu finding me, coming face to face with Vusi and my mother not believing me, but I am glad we came out strong and still standing.

Today is Sunday and we decided to go to church. We got to church and Buli and Faith together with

her husband were already there and they had saved us some seats. After church we went to have lunch at a restaurant in town. After eating Philani and Mbusi decided to leave us, Gugu asked if she can go home too cause she was tired so Philani took her with him.

Buli: "So how is she holding up?"

Me: "Taking each day as it comes. It will take a while for her to just be herself again."

Faith: "And you. How are you doing?"

Me: "Honestly it's like reliving my own experience all over again. The

nightmares are the worst though, but we will be okay.

Forget about me though, how's the baby doing?" She looks away soon as I mention the baby, I hope it doesn't mean what I think it does.

Buli: "Faith?"

Faith: she takes a deep breath. "There's no baby."

Buli: "You had a miscarriage again?"

Faith: "I don't know. I went to the doctor and I was told there's no baby. There was no heartbeat so...."

Lando: "Faith I am so sorry." Buli

and I give her a hug.

Faith: "No need to be, it's not like we weren't expecting it anyway. I knew it would happen I just didn't think it would be so soon."

She says wiping away the tears from her eyes.

Buli: "When..... mhm.... when did it happen."

Faith: "A few days ago. I didn't even feel it strangely enough. I thought I was still pregnant until the doctor told me there was no baby."

Me: "Does Mbusi know?"

Faith: "No. I was hoping to tell him when I came back with the

scan but there was no scan
so....." she shrugs her shoulders.

Me: "You have to tell him."

Faith: "And say what Lando?"

'Guess what, I was pregnant
just days ago but I lost the child,
again', I can't do that to him
again. I just can't."

Buli: "Honestly this needs a
sangoma now."

Me: "Buli!"

Buli: "What? Doctors can't find
nothing wrong, Faith is healthy
and young and clearly getting
pregnant isn't the issue so what
is happening? Hhay we need to do
something."

Faith: "I don't know Buli mine I am just tired of this thing so I asked the doctor to put me on Nexplanon. So hopefully there won't be any pregnancy anytime soon."

Me: "Are you sure about this?"

Faith: "Yes I am. Now can we talk about something else."

We changed the subject but we could tell Faith wasn't okay. But then who would be okay with losing multiple children when they yearn to hold a child in their arms and hear the cries of a baby fill their home. Life can be unfair sometimes. The people who

deserve to be mothers, people you know would move heaven and earth for their children can't seem to get that, and then there are people like Nelsiwe who don't deserve children but they still have them anyway. I swear God is playing a cruel joke on us.



FAITH

After lunch Buli dropped Lando and I off at our respective houses, as much as they tried to cheer me up, I think i am now over the whole pregnancy thing. It's clear i wasn't meant to be a mother so there's no point forcing

things. All I need now is to get a job so I can stop thinking too much about this baby stuff.

I walked into the house expecting to find Mbusi in the lounge watching soccer but he wasn't there. I looked all over the house but I couldn't find him. Maybe he went to see his friends. I will just text him to buy takeaways for dinner and I'll take a little nap.

I walked into our bedroom and I almost had a heart attack.

There was an old lady sitting on the bed looking outside the window.

Me: "Hello." I said not moving

from the door. If I had to make a run for it I will.

Old lady: "Oh hi Faith, you're back, I have been waiting for you." She said with a smile on her face, not moving from the bed.

Me: "I am sorry, do I know you?"

Old lady: "No sweety you don't know me, but I know you. Come sit with me." She said patting the bed next to her. "Come I won't hurt you."

Her demeanor was inviting, calm and almost protective. I wanted to turn and leave but my feet seemingly had developed their own brain cause I found myself

walking towards this woman. I sat next to her and she held my hand.

Old lady: "You need to stop crying now, everything will work out the way its supposed to."

Me: "What does that mean?"

Old lady: "It means all that you yearn for will come to you at the right time. Don't worry yourself about anything."

Me: "I am confused."

Old lady: "I know. But trust me. Everything will be okay. I promise you."

Just then I heard Mbusi calling

me. I got up and rushed to the door.

Me: "I am up here." He came running up the stairs wearing his gym gear, I guess he was at the gym. He gives me a kiss and a hug.

Mbusi: "I missed you."

Me: "I was with you two hours ago."

Mbusi: "That's way too long."

Me: "Mxm whatever. Come I want you to meet someone." I held his hand and led him inside the bedroom, I looked up but she was gone. I looked around and I couldn't find her. I wonder how

she got out cause there is no way she jumped from the window.

Mbusi: "Baby are you okay." I faked a smile.

Me: "Yeah I am okay."

Mbusi: "So what did you want to show me?" I walked over to him as he sat on the bed and started kissing him, hoping to make him forget about this, I don't want my husband thinking I am losing my mind. It worked.

Maybe Buli was right, I do need to see a Sangoma.



NARRATED

A security officer is doing his rounds late in the night. He runs into his colleague who is also doing his rounds. He greets him and keeps it moving. The officer walks into one of the offices in the executive floor. He checks to make sure no one sees him. He closes the door as soon as he is inside. He walks to the desk and switches on the desk lamp that gives him some light. He opens the desk drawers until he finds one that is locked. He looks for the key and finds it in one of the tiny boxes on top of the desk. He opens the drawer, takes out a

parcel from his jacket pocket and places it inside the drawer, closes it and locks it and puts the key back where he found it. He gets up goes to the door, opens it slightly to check if anyone is there. As soon as he is sure that no one is there he walks out. He makes it into the parking lot without anyone noticing or asking too many questions.

As soon as he gets into his car he takes off the uniform and puts on his clothes. When he is done getting dressed he makes a phone call.

Security: "Boss, it's done."

Boss: "Good, are you sure it's in a place he won't easily see it?"

Security: "I put it in a locked drawer. I think it's where he keeps important documents."

Boss: "Good. When the police find it he won't be able to explain it away."

Security: "So do we call the cops now or we wait until tomorrow?"

Boss: "We will have to wait until tomorrow, I want the cops to take him when the sun is out, that way he won't be able to hide from people, his face will be all over the news clean and clear."

Security: "Sure thing boss. Can I ask a question though."

Boss: "What?"

Security: "Are you sure about this, you know he is not the type of person to be messed with, when he finds out you did this he won't rest until he finds you and kills you."

Boss: "And who's going to tell him I did this? I know i won't. I hope you are not planning to snitch on me!"

Security: "Of course not boss, I am no snitch you know that."

Boss: "Good, cause I am going to go down in the history books as

the one who brought his arrogant, self righteous ass down."

Security: "If you say so boss. Let me go."

Boss: "Sharp."

He hangs up, starts his car and drives out of the building, still unsure of what he has just done. He knows never to poke a snake in its burrow cause when it comes out it strikes everything on sight. But there's no going back now. What's done is done.

INSERT 18

Usually i hate Mondays but this one is different. I woke up hopeful. Hopeful that the bad days are behind us and better days await us. It won't be easy, that I know, but we are headed there one step at a time.

I woke up early because I wanted to tackle last weeks workload before the day begins. By the time I got to work it was 6 am. Philani has an out of office early meeting so I didn't wait for him. I left a note for Gugu and some money, if she wants to go to the mall or wherever, the driver will be waiting for her. I really

hope she gets out and gets some fresh air, although she'll probably end up in the study with her face buried in a book. I really need to get her into school soon, although she'll have to start next year and repeat grade 9 but, there's nothing we can do about it, school is school and it must be attended. By the time everyone started coming in I was almost halfway through last weeks workload and by lunchtime I was done. There was a file I needed which my PA told me was in Philani's office so I decided to go get it myself, luckily he was back in the office. I

greeted his PA who gives me attitude every chance she gets, she must have a crush on Philani.

Lebo: "He is busy, he said no one should disturb him. Including you." She says as I walk past her desk. I decide to walk back to her. I lean on the desk and signal for her to get close, she does. I pull her close with the little bow tie she's wearing, choking her a bit.

Me: "Now listen to me and listen very well because I will not repeat myself. This little crush you have on Philani is cute but that does not give you the right to talk to me as if you own this

place because you don't. Whatever opinion you have of me you will keep to yourself, if I want to see my husband, I will see him, when I want. I am sick and tired of your attitude. Just because I haven't said anything before does not give you a pass. Philani is your boss and by virtue of that I am your boss too."

Philani: "Just don't kill her, I don't have time to find a new PA." I look over at his office and he is leaning by the door, legs crossed at the ankles and hands in his pocket. He looks like a younger version of his father. I look back

at the PA and she looks scared. I let go of her.

Me: "Do we have an understanding?"

Lebo: "Yes ma'am."

Me: "Good." I turn and walk towards my husband, I give him a French kiss with her watching before going past him into his office. He follows behind me with a smirk on his face. I lean on his desk and look at him.

Philani: "I never figured you for the jealous type."

Me: "I am not. I need the Cranwell File."

Philani: "You almost killed my PA

for a file?"

Me: "I didn't almost kill her, we were just having a woman to woman talk. How did you know anyways?"

Philani: "Glass door. I can see on the outside but no one can see from the outside." He goes to sit on the couch with his feet on the coffee table.

Me: "Ok. So where's the file?"

Philani: "bottom drawer. The key is in that little red box."

I move around the desk and sit on his chair. I take the keys and open the drawer. I take out a little package that's in a black

plastic bag. I find the file at the bottom of the pile. As I put everything back the plastic bag catches my eye. I decide to open it.

Me: "Philani. What's this?" I know what this is, i have seen it before but I am hoping it's not what i think it is.

Philani: "What?" He walks over to me and sees the shock on my face. He looks at the package. "What the fuck."

Me: "Philani why are you bringing drugs into the office?" I am way too calm for my own good.

Philani: "They are not mine?" why

don't I believe him.

Me: "They were in your drawer, a locked drawer for that matter. What are they doing here." I get up from the chair and start pacing up and down. This is not good.

Philani: "Lando, I swear to you these are not mine. Please believe me."

Me: "Fine, then I'll keep them." I take the package and the file and head for the door. I am frozen on the spot when I see through the glass door a whole police force marching towards the office.

Philani comes over to see what I

am looking at.

Philani: "This cannot be happening right now, give me the package I'll flush it down the toilet." He tries to take it from me but I hold on to it. "Lando"

Me: "You can't, it's a lot and its taped shut, flushing it will take time. We need to hide it."

Philani: "And where are we supposed to hide it?" And then it hit me.

Me: "The safe." I say rushing towards it. I move the picture that hides the safe.

Philani: "And if they search the safe, then what." He locks the

door and rushes towards me.

"Lando, stop." He says as I punch in the code.

Me: "There's a secret compartment in the safe." I open the safe and open the secret compartment and put the package in. I close it and put back the files on top of it and close it, and put the picture back in its place. And just on cue there's a knock on the door before someone tries to open it. When it doesn't open they bang the door.

Philani walks over and opens the door slightly. I decide to unbutton my shirt and take off my blazer

and throw it on the floor.

Philani: "Can I help you."

Officer: "Yes you can." He pushes the door wide open and walks in followed by a dozen other officers.

"We have a warrant to search these premises." He says shoving the piece of paper in Philani's hand. I see the look on Philani's face and know whoever this guy is, he's screwed.

Philani: "What are you looking for?" He asks not even opening the paper. He takes out his phone and sends a text.

Officer: "Drugs. We got a tip that you, Mr Biyela have drugs in

this building and we are going to find them. Now if you will both stand by the window and let us do our job."

I pick up my blazer from the floor and place it on the couch before standing by the window with Philani. The officers start throwing things around, the main officer, Maswanganyi, that's what his badge says, walks over to the desk and starts opening drawers until he gets to the locked one. My heart starts beating fast.

Officer: "Where are the keys?" He asks looking at Philani. Philani

stares back at him and says nothing. "Yebaba I am talking to you, or do you want to me to charge you with obstruction of justice?" Its like he is speaking to a brick wall honestly cause Philani refuses to answer him. He gets up and marches over to Philani, holds him by his shirt and pushes him against the window. It's a good thing these aren't ordinary glasses otherwise he would be flying out the window right now. Officer: "I know people like you Biyela, and I have brought many of them down, and you are next. And if you think your silence won't

make me open that drawer, you have another thing coming. I will find what I am looking for." He let's go of him. I can literally see the wheels turn in Philani's head. Officer Maswanganyi just signed his death certificate.

Me: "That is abuse of power. When you are done here, we will sue your ass." He laughs and walks over to me.

Officer: "Oh princess, your time is up, and you hubby here is going to jail, you will be too focused on seeing him through bars to even get time to sue." He calls one of the officers, whispers something

in his ear before walking out. He comes back with an iron rod, he uses it to open the drawer.

Officer: "What the fuck." I hear him mutter to himself. He takes out the files from the drawer and throws them on the floor. He takes a deep breath and looks around the office. All his officers have nothing, and then he sees the picture on the wall. "Do you have a safe." He asks, looking at Philani who still hasn't said anything. And then he turns to look at me. I fold my arms and just stare at him.

He goes around the room and stands before the picture. He takes it down and he almost screams in jubilation.

Officer: "Code?" He asks. Just then Lindani comes barging into the office, walks over to us and Philani hands him the warrant. He opens it and reads.

Lindani: "Who is in charge here?" He yells. Everyone stops and looks at him, including officer shithead who is still trying to open the safe.

Officer: "I am. Who the fuck are you?"

Lindani: "Why are your officers in

every office in this building?"

Officer: "They are doing their job, what's it to you."

Lindani: "I have my colleagues taking pictures and videos of everything your officers are doing in this building and we plan to sue the department for trespassing." He laughs.

Officer: "We have a warrant dumbface." I swear he is on a roll, but I wonder where it will end.

Lindani: "According to your warrant the only place you had to search was this office so all the other offices are off limits to you and your brigade. And this has

now become a trespassing and harassment case. This is a private building. You cannot come in here and do as you please just because you have a badge. Now since you haven't found shit, take your minions and get the fuck out."

Officer: "I still need the code for the safe." He says with his arms folded.

Lindani: "There's nothing here about a safe, so get the fuck out."

He gathers his men and they walk out, leaving the office messy. I close my eyes and take a deep

breath soon as the last officer leaves.

Me: "That was way too close."

Lindani: "What happened?"

Philani: "There were drugs in the office."

Lindani: "Please don't tell me you are bringing drugs here."

Me: "That's what I said."

Philani: "They are not mine. I already told you that." He says calmly.

Me: "Then how did they get in your drawer, a locked one for that matter with the key stashed away."

Philani: "Which part of they are

not mine don't you understand."

He says now looking at me.

Just then one of Lindani's colleagues comes in and whispers something in his ear.

Lindani: "Bafo we will talk about this later, I have to go." Philani just nods his head and he leaves.

Now it's just us and some awkward silence.

Me: "Where did the drugs come from Philani?"

Philani: "I don't know."

Me: "Look Philani, I know about your side hustle, and that's good and well but you need to keep it as far away from the company as

you possibly can." He moves from the window where we've been sitting and goes to the mini bathroom. He comes back and says nothing, instead he calls the cleaners to come and clean the office, before taking the drugs and leaving me standing there. I really hope he is telling the truth because if this is some Bonnie and Clyde shit that he thinks I will put up with, he has another thing coming.



NARRATED

At Sunmed private hospital, officer Maswanganyi is in the

doctor's office waiting for him. He starts pacing up and down looking at the time. Finally the doctor appears.

Officer: "Doctor Dlamini where have you been."

Ngcebo: "I had an emergency surgery, I just got out now. Tell me the good news, I haven't had time to go through social media and what not." He says taking a seat on top of his desk.

Officer: "Good news huh. Here's some good news, we didn't find any drugs and here's some better news, I have been put on suspension thanks to your stupid

tip."

Ngcebo: "That's impossible, I sent my guy last night to plant the drugs, he put them in a locked drawer on Biyela's desk. Did you open it?"

Officer: "Of course I did, there was nothing there, just business files. Maybe your guy lied to you."

Ngcebo: "No. He wouldn't do that. He knows what would happen if he did."

Officer: "Well then how do you explain the drugs not being where they were supposed to be. My career is on the line because of you, how will I feed my kids."

Ngcebo: "You need to stop whining. I pay you ten times your salary every month. You'll survive."

Officer: "Of course you would say that, your job is safe, unlike me, who by the way just made an enemy of Philani Biyela, and you and I both know he won't rest till he gets to the bottom of this, and if he found those drugs, we are doomed." He walks out leaving Ngcebo with his thoughts.

Ngcebo: "How in God's name did he find those drugs, nah man something doesn't make sense here." He picks up his phone and calls someone. "Zakes."

Zakes: "Bozza."

Ngcebo: "Where did you put the drugs yesterday?"

Zakes: "Which ones?"

Ngcebo: "The ones you were supposed to plant in Biyela's office."

Zakes: "I put them in his desk drawer. Why, what happened?"

Ngcebo: "Where are you? And why are you asking me what happened? You were supposed to be watching the building so the moment he walks through those doors, the cops would descend on him before he even got to his office. The fact that I had to

call Maswanganyi myself is already
pissing me off now the drugs just
magically dissapeared. So tell me,
where were you Zakes?" He says
now getting angry.

Zakes: "Hardy bozza, iolady Iiya
sicker (my mother is sick) so I
had to take her to the hospital."

Ngcebo: "Do you know the mess
you just created. Biyela is coming
after us, if he found those drugs
I am coming after you." He hangs
up and throws the phone against
the wall, breaking it into pieces.

"Damn it Zakes, what have you
done."



PHILANI

I walked into Nate's house and found him sitting with Lindani. I threw the package on the coffee table and sat down.

Lindani: "I was expecting you hours ago, where have you been."

Me: "I needed to cool off and think."

Nate: "So you still don't know who planted the drugs?" He says handing me a drink.

Me: "Nope."

Lindani: "Do you think its business related?"

Me: "No, this was personal. You know people who do this kind of

business would not waste a kilo of coke trying to set someone up.

This was personal, trust me."

Nate: "So we don't know who is behind this?"

Me: "No. And I have asked around, but no one knows anything. And you know after the last turf war we had, no one would dare come after me like this. Whoever did this has a personal vendetta that goes beyond just business."

Nate: "We need to find this person and put a stop to this." He takes the package and opens it, he sticks a knife in and gets a bit of

the powder and puts it in his mouth. "You are right, it's not one of our rivals."

Me: "What makes you so sure?"

Nate: "Because this is a local product, most of our rivals get their products from Mexico or Colombia, this is a local product, so whoever did this got this for the sole purpose of setting you up."

Lindani: "So we find the producer of that product and we find our guy?"

Nate: "And I know someone. I will get the boys to go get him, stash him at the safehouse and let him stew for a while, maybe he'll give

us the info we need."

Me: "Hopefully he talks, cause whoever did this, will not live to regret it."

Lindani: "Bra something is burning."

Nate jumps up and runs to the kitchen and we follow him. He moves the burning pot from the stove. We laugh at him, Nate can't cook to save his life. He must have a girl over.

Me: "Nate since when do you cook?"

Nate: "Since i am hungry."

Lindani: "Liar! You have a girl in here." Lindani says walking up the

stairs. Nate starts running after him so he also starts running. He catches up with him and blocks his way.

Nate: "I think you two have overstayed your welcome. It's time to go."

Me: "Dude how are we going to negotiate Lobola for you if you won't even let us meet the girl."

I shout from the bottom of the stairs.

Nate: "I am white bra. We don't pay Lobola." He says following Lindani down the stairs. "You need to go home to your wife and wena you need to find a slay queen for

the night. Now gentlemen
goodnight." He follows us to the
door and shuts it behind us.

Lindani: "I can't believe Nate has
a girlfriend?" I laugh.

Me: "That should be your sign, you
need to find your own girl."

Lindani: "I am too young to be
tied down." He says getting into
his car and driving off. I follow
behind him.

On my way home I see a police
car behind me, they sound the
siren so I park on the side. I see
the officer walk towards my car
with a clipboard in hand. It's late
so I can't even see his face. He

gets to the window and knocks, I open the window and he tells me to step out. As soon as I step out and stand by the car he lifts his head up and I see who it is.

Me: "Dladla!"

Dladla: "Bafo. I am sorry I couldn't warn you about the raid. I only found out when we got to your office and it was too late to call by then." He says walking around the car checking stuff.

Me: "Ok so what's with the inspection?"

Dladla: "I have a new recruit I've been partnered with so I don't want him seeing my shady deals."

I chuckle.

Me: "So you are babysitting."

Dladla: "You can call it that.

Anyways I found out who snitched on you." He says coming back to stand in front of me.

Me: "Who?"

Dladla: "I don't know who it is exactly but the call came from SunMed hospital and it went straight to Maswanganyi's cell, so whoever snitched knows him."

Me: "They didn't just snitch they tried to frame me."

Dladla: "But no drugs were found."

Me: "Yeah, that's cause my wife hid them."

Dladla: "Eh bafo, mosi you have a ride or die wena."

Me: "She'll kill me if I don't get home soon. Dankie bafo." I shake his hand and he hands me a ticket. "Manje (and now)"

Dladla: "I need to give a reason for stopping you. And besides you can afford two hundred for a broken taillight." He walks away and kicks my taillight. I will take that from his pay.

I get into the car and drive off. I wonder who would set me up and then snitch on me. And then it hit me, only one person at SunMed would do this. Ngcebo

Dlamini.

I guess it's time I reminded The good Doctor about what I am capable off.

INSERT 19

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LANDO

Gugu and I have been watching TV in the lounge after dinner.

Philani didn't come home, I guess he must be upset with me for not believing him about the drugs.

But then again he can't blame me, drugs don't just magically find their way into a locked drawer,

unless someone is trying to set him up, but who would want to do that? I really hope he gets to the bottom of this, we can't have police parading around the building like they own it, it's not good for our reputation and we might just lose business because of it.

We had just finished watching the queen when Philani walked in whistling, he is in a very good mood for someone who almost went to jail just hours ago. He walks over to the lounge and gives Gugu a high five before kissing me.

Me: "You are in a good mood. What happened?"

Philani: "I am always in a good mood."

Me: "You weren't in a good mood this afternoon."

Philani: "Argh don't worry about that, it will sort itself out." I know he is lying, he never leaves anything to chance and now this will sort itself out? But I will let it go, for now.

Me: "Are you hungry?"

Philani: "I am, but not for food." He whispers in my ear. He's really in a good mood. "I am going to take a shower."

He leaves.

Gugu: "You know there's no need to whisper if you want to have sex." She says soon as Philani is out of sight.

Me: "Askies?"

Gugu: "I am 14 not stupid." I throw a cushion at her and she laughs.

Me: "Go to bed. It's way past your bedtime." She laughs, seeing her laugh is quite something. For just a few seconds she has a moment of joy, and it makes me happy. It means therapy is working. It's only been a few days

but she is soldiering on. I get up and leave her there.

I get to the bedroom and Philani is in the shower. I take off my pajamas and join him. I get into the shower and he has his back to me. His hands are on the wall and the water is just cascading down his back. It's a sight to behold honestly.

I walk closer and hug him from behind and plant kisses on his back, I feel his muscles move beneath my lips while my hands run over his abs. He turns around and cups my face before kissing me, it starts slowly and builds up,

I feel untschlagend on my stomach, poking me. I break the kiss and start kissing his chest, I go all the way down till I am on my knees and face to face with his dick. I kiss his inner thighs and hear him groan as he holds on to the wall with one hand.

I lift his dick up and start massaging his balls, before I put them in my mouth. He groans even louder. I leave his balls and put his dick in my mouth, starting with the tip, he has his one hand on my head pushing himself in and out of my mouth. He pulled away

when he felt himself about to release. I got up and we kissed. He lifted me up and I wrapped my legs around his waist as he pushed me against the wall. Honestly though shower sex is overrated, I was slipping on the wet wall and the water was getting hotter and there was way too much steam in the bathroom so we just decided to go into the bedroom.

He carried me into the bedroom and layed me down on the bed while kissing me. His one hand was busy fondling my boobs while the other helped him balance, I felt

myself getting wetter as he moved down to my boobs with his lips before going further down and burying himself between my thighs. I cross my ankles behind his head as he nibbles on my clit, I feel his fingers go inside me and before long I feel my muscles contract around his fingers.

When I am done he comes up again and kisses me before I feel him go in me, slowly, and my little haven opens up to welcome him.

In no time he pounds into me with so much force I think his balls went in too. After some time he turns me over and he enters

from behind and pounds the living daylights out of me.

He then straddles me as he sat on the bed facing the headboard. We both released at the same time. I got off him and lay on the bed while he went to the bathroom and came back with a towel to clean ourselves up. When we were done he took it back then we cuddled on the bed before falling asleep.

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By the time I woke up Philani was already gone. He left a message on my phone saying he

had an early meeting. Oh well, I guess no morning glory for me. I get up and go to the bathroom and take a shower, when I am done, I lotion and put on a black mid length pencil skirt, a white shirt and a black blazer. I put on some makeup and wore my red heels which matched with my red bag.

I got downstairs and found Gugu in the kitchen making breakfast. Me: "Hey, why are you up so early?"

Gugu: "I couldn't sleep." She places a bowl of porridge in front of me.

Me: "Nightmares?"

Gugu: "Yep. Do you think they'll ever stop."

Me: "Eventually, it will take some time but eventually you'll be better, you won't forget but it will become more bearable, and you'll be happy again."

Gugu: "I guess. Do you think mum will ever believe us?"

Me: "I don't know. But that's the last thing you should be worried about. Right now your first priority is you and nobody else, mum is an adult and she made her choice and we made ours, to heal and be better, and if that means

distancing ourselves from her then so be it." She let's out a sigh.

Gugu: "I guess you are right. Ntombi called by the way, apparently Vusi dissapeared, no one knows where he is. He discharged himself from the hospital after they were hijacked and no one has seen him since."

Me: "Thats a pity."

Gugu: "Do you think he's coming after us? Maybe he is out there plotting his revenge."

Me: "Trust me he is not."

Gugu: "You don't know that."

Me: "Believe you me, even if he is

planning something, he'll have to go through Philani to get to us. Stop worrying yourself okay and start looking for a school."

Gugu: "Okay." She doesn't seem convinced though, but I know in time she will see for herself that Vusi is no longer a problem.



NARRATED

At SunMed hospital, Ngcebo is in his office having sex with one of the nurses when Philani barges in. He throws the drugs and they hit Ngcebo on his back.

Philani: "I do believe that belongs to you."

They both quickly get dressed and the nurse rushes out.

Ngcebo: "I see you are still allergic to knocking Biyela."

Philani: "And you're allergic to staying out of my way."

Ngcebo: "What have I done now."
He says sitting on his chair and placing his feet on the desk.

Philani: "I have been so patient with you so many times, and that was my mistake because somehow that made you believe you could walk all over me. Well it ends today."

Ngcebo: "Stop speaking in riddles Biyela, what are you talking

about?"

Philani: "This little stunt you pulled yesterday, you took it a bit too far. You crossed a line and theres no going back."

Ngcebo laughs.

Ngcebo: "Your problem is that you think I am afraid of you, I am not. You took something that belongs to me and I want it back, and if that means getting you out of the way, then so be it."

Philani: "You are going to die for someone who doesn't even give a shit about you, that's fine by me, but your ancestors are ready to welcome you and I will gladly do

the honours of sending you there." He walks away, then turns around at the door. "By the way your daughter is really cute, she looks just like you, except she's cute of course." Ngcebo quickly gets up from the chair and walks towards Philani.

Ngcebo: "You wouldn't dare!"

Philani: "Why, cause she is a child and children are off limits? My father spent years building that company that you tried to ruin in one afternoon. If my company is not off limits to you then nothing is, including that cute little girl."

Ngcebo: "Ok I am sorry, look it

won't happen again."

Philani: "Of course it won't. But if I were you I would call my baby mama just to make sure all is well." He turns and leaves. Ngcebo rushes to his desk drawer and takes out his phone and calls his baby mama but she doesn't pick up. He calls again and it sends him straight to voicemail. He panics and takes his car keys and leaves. He drives out of the hospital like a maniac and rushes to Midrand. When he gets there he finds the gate wide open so he drives in. He gets out of the car quickly and rushes inside the house only to

find a man playing with his daughter Simamkele.

Ngcebo: "Who the fuck are you?"

Man: "Just a friendly neighbour."

Ngcebo: "Baby come to daddy." He says to his daughter but the man lifts her up and puts her on his lap. "Can I have my child please."

Man: "But we are still playing."

Ngcebo: He walks over to them and takes the child. "Where's Palesa?"

Man: "Upstairs taking a nap."

Ngcebo rushes up the stairs with his daughter in his arms. He gets to the bedroom and Palesa is sleeping peacefully. He checks her

pulse and let's out a deep breath when he finds it.

Ngcebo: "Thank you God."

Man: "She's alive, for now that is." Ngcebo turns around and finds the man leaning on the doorframe with his hands in his pockets.

Ngcebo: "What did you do to her."

Man: "Nothing much, just gave her some of the drugs you left in Biyela's office."

Ngcebo: "No." He says tears falling down his face as he looked at his baby mama.

Man: "Oh and your daughter took some too, I guess her immune system is stronger, but they will

work eventually." He says walking away, leaving Ngcebo in a panic. He called the ambulance and before long both Simamkele and Palesa were on their way to hospital. Ngcebo sat with them at the back as the Paramedics tried to help them. He said a little prayer asking God to save them.



LANDO

Some days just drag on and on like they are on a go slow strike. I have been watching the clock waiting for knock off time, Gugu and I are going to the movies

tonight so I need to be home early. I was about to knock off when my phone rang, I looked at the caller ID and it was Qhawekazi. I picked up.

Me: "Liar liar pants on fire." She just started laughing.

Kazi: "Wow you just made my day. How are you?"

Me: "Pissed. You do remember what you said last week."

Kazi: "I know that's why I am calling, I am sorry for dropping you, something came up."

Me: "Something more important than us?" She laughs again. "This isn't funny."

Kazi: "I know my love that is why I want you to come to Durban tomorrow."

Me: "Some of us have work you know. And Philani has a meeting with some investors from overseas."

Kazi: "Even better, I want you to come alone. There is something I need to talk to you about."

Me: "What is it?" Now I am curious.

Kazi: "I can't say it over the phone, it needs to be said face to face. Its important. I promise." I take a deep breath.

Me: "Fine, I will come. Send me

your address."

Kazi: "Ok. Thanks love, see you tomorrow." She hangs up.

I decide to book the flight ticket so I can leave early in the morning and come back in the evening. I pack my stuff and tell my PA that I won't be in tomorrow, luckily there's nothing important that needs my attention.

By the time I get home Gugu is already dressed and ready so I quickly get in the shower, I get out and opt for a pair of blue ripped jeans, a white graphic tee and a denim jacket, I finish my

look of with white Adidas sneakers.

I get downstairs and Philani is already here.

Philani: "Where are you going?"

Me: "Movies. There is food in the microwave if you are hungry."

Philani: "But I want to watch a movie too." He says sulking. "What am I supposed to do in this house, all by my lonesome self, with no one to talk to." I know what he is trying to do. I look at Gugu and she is hiding a smile. This is supposed to be a girl's only thing.

Gugu: "You can come too if you

want."

Philani: "Thank you." He says with a huge smile plastered on his face. "Let me go change." He runs up the stairs and comes back exactly 10 minutes later wearing blue Jean's, a white tshirt and a denim jacket. He sees the looks on our faces.

Philani: "What? I thought this was the theme." Yep, we are matching cause Gugu is also wearing blue ripped jeans and a white Mickey mouse tshirt with a denim jacket. I can already imagine the strange looks we are going to get at the mall.

We leave and by the time we get to the cinema we have five minutes before the movie starts and there are 3 couples before us who can't seem to decide what to watch. Eventually we get to the front and we settle for a romcom. Actually we voted for a romcom and it was two against one. We buy the popcorn and some slushies and sweets.

As we walk into the cinema I feel someone watching me, I turn around and I could have sworn I saw a glimpse of Ayanda. I look again and there's no one I know, maybe I am just being paranoid.

We get inside and take our seats. As soon as the lights go off I feel Philani's hands all over me. And here I was thinking we were here for the movie.

After the movie we decide to go to McDonald's for some takeaways. We eat in the car on our way home. By the time we get home we are all tired so we just decide to go sleep. As I am about to follow Philani into our room I feel Gugu hugging me from behind.

Me: "What's wrong?"

Gugu: "Nothing. I just want to say thank you. For everything."

She places a kiss on my shoulder before walking away to her. I smile and just go to sleep.

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NARRATED

Ngcebo is in his office at the hospital starrng outside the window with a glass of whiskey in his hand, and tears running down his face. It's been two hours since the doctor told him that Palesa and Simamkele didn't make it. He decides to call his father, chief Mliba.

Mliba: "Ngcebo."

Ngcebo: "Nkhosi."

Mliba: "You sound down, what's wrong?"

Ngcebo: "Bafile! (They are dead)"

Mliba: "Bobani labafile? (Who is dead)"

Ngcebo: "Palesa and Simamkele. He killed them dad." Mliba takes a deep breath.

Mliba: "Oh dear Lord. Who did you piss off this time Ngcebo?"

Ngcebo: "Dad I just told you my child is dead and you are trying to lay the blame on me? Really?"

Mliba: "You said someone killed your child, now my question is who did you piss off to the extent that they come after your child?"

Because no one in their right mind, no matter how heartless they are would kill a child unless you did something to them first. So the question is what did you do and to who?"

Ngcebo: "I should have just called mum, atleast she would have been more sympathetic than you."

Mliba: "Either way she still would have told me and I still would have had to fix this for you like I do everything else. This way I get to tell you this myself, you are on your own. We will bury

Simamkele as per custom, but her mother's family will take care of

Palesa because she wasn't your wife yet."

Ngcebo: "She was never going to be my wife anyway."

Mliba: "I guess whoever killed them did you a favor then."

Ngcebo: "You need to help me get my revenge." Mliba starts laughing.

Mliba: "You did hear me say you are on your own right, because you are. You did this Ngcebo, so you fix it before they come after anybody else in this family especially your sisters."

Ngcebo: "Dad....."

Mliba: "No Ngcebo, I am done

cleaning up after you, I am done. And I can bet you right now all this started because of a woman, because you can't keep your zip closed now Palesa and Simamkele have to pay for your sins. You are a disgrace Ngcebo, I don't understand why you feel the need to poke people you know very well have no mercy. Still trying to be some gangster. Mxm, you are weak for that type of shit."

Ngcebo: "Dad why are you so cold. Your granddaughter just died and you don't seem to have any emotion at all."

Mliba: "I do have emotion my son,

it's called pity. Pity for the two souls that had to leave this earth because of your recklessness. Pity for Palesa's family for the loss of their child because of you. So yeah I do have pity. I will tell your mother and she'll start planning the funeral. Goodbye son." He hangs up and Ngcebo slumps to the floor in tears.

Just then officer Maswanganyi walks into the office and finds Ngcebo on the floor.

Officer: "Dlamini, what's going on?"

Ngcebo: "He killed them. Biyela, he

killed my child and her mother.
They are dead."

Officer: "Oh shit." He starts
pacing up and down in panic. "I
need to get my family out of the
country before he gets to them."

Ngcebo: "Your daughter was
admitted 20 minutes ago, drug
overdose. The same drugs that
killed my baby."

Officer: "Wait, drug overdose?
How much drugs did he give
them."

Ngcebo: "The drugs we planted in
his office are the same drugs
responsible for the death of 34
kids in Soweto, they are laced

with arsenic. I figured if the police found the same drugs that killed those kids in his office then it would be automatic jail time for him, but now....."

Officer: "But now he is using those same drugs to kill our families. This is all your fault Dlamini. See the mess you just made. I need to see my child." He leaves.

Ngcebo takes the bottle of whiskey and pours another glass. He gets up from the floor and stands looking at himself in the mirror not sure where to go from here. Does he get revenge or let

go before things get out of hand. He figures he has nothing left to lose anyway. So maybe, just maybe.....

INSERT 20

LANDO

I took the first flight out of Joburg in the morning, I was curious about Qhawekazi and what she wanted to say. I just hope it's not something serious. I get to King Shaka airport and switch on my phone. I get a message from Faith, apparently Ngcebo's daughter passed away

last night, together with her mother. Ngcebo must be devastated, as crazy as he is there is nothing in the world he loved more than his daughter. I will have to go see him when I get back to Joburg.

I request an uber and go to the address Kazi sent me, it's in Ballito. By the time I get there it's almost 9 am. I buzz the intercom at the gate and it just slides open and we drive in. The uber drops me off and drives off. I knock at the door and Kazi comes running down the stairs, I can see her through the glass

front door, clearly this family has a thing for glass.

Kazi: "Makoti. You came." She says opening the door and giving me a hug. She is still in her pajamas.

Me: "Hey, you did command me so here I am." She laughs. We get into the house and she leads the way into the kitchen.

Kazi: "Breakfast?"

Me: "Yes please." She starts taking out everything she'll need and placing it on the countertop.

"So what am I doing here?"

She stops and looks at me.

Kazi: "Promise you won't judge?"

Me: "I promise."

Kazi: "Okay, i will be right back."

Really? She runs up the stairs and I decide to continue with breakfast. She comes back a few minutes later with a baby in her arms.

Me: "Please tell me you are babysitting?"

Kazi: "I wish. He is mine. His name is Theodore, but I call him Theo " Holy fuck. That's why she didn't want to be in Joburg.

Me: "When? How?" I walk over to her and take the baby, he's the cutest thing I have ever seen in my life.

Kazi: "Three months ago, as for the how, the usual way you know, Sex?"

Me: "You know that's not what I meant. How did no one know about this?" I walk over to the lounge and sit on the couch with the baby in my arms.

Kazi: "Because if Rafael finds out about him I am screwed. So I couldn't tell anyone."

Me: "Ok but why are you telling me now?"

Kazi: "Because I want you and Philani to adopt him." She can't be serious right now. I look at her obviously shocked. "Listen hear me

out okay." This I need to hear honestly. I turn and sit facing her on the couch.

Me: "Okay ke, explain?"

Kazi: "You know my family never approved of me marrying Rafael but I was such an idiot and rebellious that I did it anyway.

But a few months after we got married he told me he wanted a child so we tried but nothing happened, so he started cheating on me. He would go out for days, even weeks and then I found out he had a girlfriend in New York, when I confronted him about it he said he wanted a child and if I

couldn't give him one he would find someone who would so I suggested we go to a doctor so we can find out what's wrong. He was reluctant at first but eventually he gave in. When it was time to get the results he refused to come with me cause the girl was pregnant already. When I got to the hospital the doctor said there was nothing wrong with me but he was sterile, he couldn't have kids. He was so excited about the baby that when I asked for a divorce he granted it no questions asked. After we were divorced I was

preparing to move back to SA so his brother Raul came to help me pack my stuff so I can ship them here. One thing led to another and we ended up sleeping together. When I got here I found out I was pregnant and obviously it's not Rafael's baby."

Me: "I am not trying to be judgmental or anything but if you two are divorced why would he care about your baby cause he has his own?"

Kazi: "I heard he found out that the baby isn't his, and now he knows he can't have kids so chances of him taking over his

father's empire are very slim. His father wants his empire passed down to the person who will bear the first grandson. So if Rafael finds out about Theo he will want to use him to get the empire and if Raul finds out he has a son....."

Me: "It will be world war."

Kazi: "Yep, and it will be bad because Rafael will find out I slept with his brother, the fact that we were already divorced won't count for shit."

Me: "Ok I will be honest with you. You are screwed."

Kazi: "Geez no need to remind me."

She slumps back on the couch.

Me: "As much as I understand your situation if we do decide to do this, where will you be in all this?"

Kazi: "I will get to be his favourite aunt. Be there for him just not as his mother. I want him to have a normal childhood, I don't want to look over my shoulder for the rest of my life, I just want him to be safe and free."

Me: "But that would also mean keeping him away from his real family."

Kazi: "I know but you are his real

family too."

Me: "Wait a minute, didn't you tell me just a few weeks back that you are Mrs Rodriguez?"

Kazi: "Yeah I lied. That ship has sailed."

I seriously miss my peaceful life, when all i had to worry about was work and which club to go to on a Friday night, if I do decide to go out. Now I have been thrown into the deep end and I either learn to swim or I drown. I spent the day with Kazi and Theo and flew back to Joburg in the evening. I really hope Philani doesn't blow a gasket over this.

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PHILANI

I was in my office about to knock off when the good doctor came barging in like a bat out of hell. I looked at him and he looked drunk and dirty.

Me: "You look like shit Dlamini, what happened to you?"

Ngcebo: "You lousy son of a bitch. Why did you have to take my child, you should have just killed me."

Me: "You are right, I should have just killed you then I wouldn't have to see your ugly face again, but seeing you like this is actually good for the soul, my soul that is."

Ngcebo: "She was just a child Philani, she had nothing to do with this." I see his eyes getting glossy, he is trying really hard to hold back the tears.

Me: "The same way I had nothing to do with the death of those kids in Soweto but you were prepared to let me take the blame for it. So I guess we are even."

Ngcebo: "We are far from being even Biyela, you took something precious to me and I promise you, now that I have nothing left to lose, you will regret this." I get up and stand before him, he

smells like a whole brewery, I wonder how much he had to drink. Me: "You know I am a nice person, I am really sweet but people like you push and push and push. And when I decide to push back I become the villain. You started this so I am going to end it. If you think this is the end then you don't know me. I am not done with you Dlamini, that I can assure you."

Ngcebo: "You started this when you took my girl from me."

Me: "She was never yours and the sooner you get that the better." I turn around to take my

briefcase on the desk and I feel something cold on my neck, I think it's a gun. I take my briefcase and my phone then turn around to face him.

Me: "When you pull that trigger make sure you don't miss." I see the safety on the gun is still on and this idiot's hands are shaking. I hold his hand and lower it so the gun is pointing to my chest. "Make sure you hit that part because if you miss it, I will come for everything you hold true and dear to you before ripping your heart out with a spoon. Now shoot."

He looks at me without doing anything. For someone who wants to be a gang lord he really is weak and pathetic. I push his hand away and the gun falls to the floor. He starts crying.

Me: "Close the door on your way out." I walk towards the door and then turn around to look at him.

"On second thought, get out before you plant anymore drugs." He wipes his tears then picks up the gun before walking out. I tell my PA to alert security so they make sure he never sets foot in this building ever again.

When I get home I can smell the aroma of some delicious food being cooked. I get a text message as I get into the house.

Maswanganyi's daughter just passed away, he has three more daughters and two sons, I need to decide what to do with the rest of them.

I get inside the house and the girls are in the kitchen cooking up a storm. I wonder what they are up to. Lando walks over to me and gives me a kiss before taking my briefcase from me.

Lando: "Hi hubby, how was your day?"

Me: "Whatever it is I didn't do it." She laughs.

Lando: "Don't be silly Ntshangase, I just thought my husband should come home to a nice home cooked meal. I made....."

Gugu: "Its we, we sis Lando." I smile, she is slowly coming out of her shell, and it's a great thing to see.

Lando: "Can't you just let me shine? Fine WE made lamb stew with samp or dumpling, you choose. We also made creamy spinach, butternut and for dessert we made chocolate cake, your favorite." Now I know for a

fact she is up to something, I wonder what it is. I am hungry so I sit down at the dining table and let her serve me. We sit down and eat while talking about our day. Gugu was busy looking for a school for next year while Lando was in Durban for whatever.

When we are done I go up to take a shower while they clean up, I wasn't even allowed to help with that. When I get out of the shower Lando is sitting on the bed with a huge smile on her face and some oils next to her. I am still trying to figure out what's going on cause I know it's not

about money. If it was she would have just taken my card from my wallet. Maybe she's pregnant, oh yes, I hope she is.

Lando: "Hubby, do you want a massage?"

Me: "What are you up to Landokuhle?" She looks away sulking.

Lando: "I just thought I would do something nice for you."

Me: "Fine, I would love a massage." She looks up excited again.

Lando: "Good. Come lay down, I will start with your back." I throw the towel that was

wrapped around my waist on the floor and walk towards her stark naked. "You know if this was a spa they would throw you out."

Me: "Lucky for me this isn't a spa and stop pretending like you don't like what you are seeing." She laughs. I get on the bed and lay face down. She gets on top of me and sits on my back. I feel the cold oil as it makes contact with my body. Its smells good. Its vanilla, I am going to smell like a girl, but if it makes wifey happy then so be it. She clears her throat after working her magic on my back and making sure I am

relaxed.

Lando: "Faith told me Ngcebo's daughter died last night." I feel my muscles tense up, here I was hoping this night would be a good one.

Me: "Mhmmmm." She stops massaging me.

Lando: "Is that all you are going to say?"

Me: "What else am I supposed to say. I dont like the guy so....."

Lando: "A child is dead Philani."

Me: "Ok ke I feel sorry for him, his daughter is in a better place now, she is his guardian angel now."

Lando: "Mxm. Don't say it if you don't mean it." She starts massaging again. I really hope this doesn't escalate into a full blown fight. "Speaking of babies, Qhawekazi wants us to adopt her son." I turn around so quick Lando ends up on the floor. She gets up holding her head. "Ouch. Really?"

Me: "What did you say?"

Lando: "I said ouch." She sits back down on the bed.

Me: "No before that. You said something about Qhawekazi and a son?" She starts playing with her hands.

Lando: "She wants us to adopt her son."

Me: "What son? When did she have a son? When was she even pregnant?" I was now shouting.

Lando: "He is three months old and he is the cutest thing ever."

Of course, that's why she went to Durban. I get up from the bed and walk to the closet. I grab

some sweatpants, a tshirt and a hoodie. I put on my sneakers and walk out. "Where are you going?"

Me: "Durban." I pick up my phone and text the pilot to get the jet ready.

Lando: "I don't think we will get

flights right now let's just go tomorrow after you've calmed down."

Me: "We have a jet for a reason, so we can fly whenever we want." I say walking towards the door with my phone in hand. She beats me to the door and blocks the way.

Lando: "So you are going to wake the poor pilots up."

Me: "They get paid to be on call 24/7 so they will be fine. Now move."

Lando: "Fine I am coming with you." She moves from the door and I walk out. If she really

wants to come with she will have to hurry cause I am not waiting for her. I get out the front door as she makes her way down the stairs with her bag and some clothes on her arms, still in her PJs. She makes it to the car just as I am about to put the car on reverse.

She gets in and tries to catch her breath. If it was any other day this would be funny to me but not today. I drive out. She takes off her pyjama top and throws it in the backseat. She has no bra on and I am human, I might be angry but I am still hot blooded.

I try to distract myself by playing music so I don't have to look at her getting dressed.

After she is done the backseat looks like her closet when she can't decide what to wear and she is wearing black sweatpants, a white vest and my black hoodie and sneakers. By the time we get to the airport the plane is ready. We get in and soon we are in the air. The moment we land my anger boils up again. I thought being in the flight for a couple of hours would calm me down but clearly it didn't. We find a car already waiting for us. I instruct

the driver to take us to Umhlanga Rocks but Lando says we should go to Ballito instead. So she moved and didn't even inform anyone. Mxm.

We get to Ballito and we buzz the intercom. She answers after some time sounding sleepy.

Kazi: "Who is this and what do you want, it's late."

Me: "Open the fucken gate Qhawekazi."

Kazi: "Philani?"

Me: "Yes now open the bloody gate." The gate swings open and we drive in. I get out the car before it even stops and Lando

follows me. I start banging on the door before Qhawekazi comes running down the stairs. She opens the door and I walk in.

Me: "What the fuck Qhawekazi?" I am shouting at her while Lando stands a few feet away.

Kazi: "Shhh, kunengane layndlini. (There is a baby in the house.)"

Me: "I know, apparently you had one and didn't bother telling anyone. Why?"

Kazi: "I had my reasons."

Me: "I would love to hear them."

Kazi: "Can we sit down?"

Me: "Qhawekazi!"

Kazi: "Please." I walk over to the

couch and sit down. She follows together with Lando and they sit on the same couch. They are about to gang up on me. Kazi tells me everything. By the time she is done I have my head in my hands. What pisses me off though is that I can't even kill this stupid Rafael because my father has some business deals with him. If I kill him and his death is traced back to me, all hell will break loose. Mr Rodriguez senior is a Mexican drug cartel leader, he kills for fun, as much as Theo would grow up with everything he needs, he would be taught how to be a

killer. Mr Rodriguez has a habit of gifting his children guns from as little as 5 years old. I don't want my nephew growing up like that.

Me: "Pack his stuff we are leaving." They both look at me in shock. "Now Qhawekazi!" She gets up and rushes up the stairs.

Lando: "So we are adopting him?"

Me: "Isn't that what you wanted?"

Lando: "Yes but don't you want to think about it?"

Me: "There's nothing to think about. He is my nephew, I have to keep him safe." She comes and

sits next to me and lays her head on my shoulder.

Lando: "I don't think you are as heartless as you like to pretend to be." I smile.

Qhawekazi walks down the stairs with the baby in his car seat and a bag. She places the bag on the couch and the car seat on the coffee table facing me.

Kazi: "This is Theodore Busani Biyela." He really is cute, even though he is fast asleep.

Me: "I will get Lindani to do the paperwork. But you do realise if we are going to keep him safe we can't have your name down as his

mother?"

Kazi: "I don't need a paper to tell me that. I just want my boy safe."

Me: "Ok then." I grab the bag and the carseat and head out to the car. Lando and Kazi follow behind. I strap him in and give my sister a hug. She has tears running down her face. "I will keep him safe, I promise and you can come see him anytime."

Kazi: "I know." We get into the car and drive off.

Lando: "That went easier than I thought it would."

Me: "Yeah well, I have a heart

you know."

Lando: "I know." She is Smiling.

A few hours ago I was hoping my wife would tell me she is pregnant, now we are parents, I guess it's true when they say careful what you wish for.



NARRATED

Ngcebo is in his office with a glass of whiskey when the door burst open and Ayanda walks in.

Ayanda: "Dr Dlamini."

Ngcebo: "What do you want?"

Ayanda: "I just came to offer my condolences on the passing of your

daughter." She says sitting down across from him.

Ngcebo: "You have said that now leave."

Ayanda: "You know you brought this on yourself right? I mean I warned you not to plant those drugs, and now those same drugs have been used to take away what's most precious to you. I told you Philani would leave no prisoners but you wouldn't listen."

Ngcebo: "Great sermon now leave."

Ayanda: "We should have just gone with my plan. Get her out of the way but you allowed your ego to

cloud your judgment."

Ngcebo: "Oh really, so you have been AWOL for a few months and now you come back and think you can take on Philani, really Ayanda?"

Ayanda: "That time away gave me time to think carefully about how to get him back and for you to get Lando back. All we had to do was kidnap her and ship her off to Thailand with some drugs, she would spend a couple of years in jail there and then you would roll in with your diplomatic powers as a prince and save her and you two would ride off into the sunset

and I would have my man back. See how simple that plan was?"

Ngcebo: "I need to bury my child Ayanda please leave me alone."

She gets up from the chair and looks at Ngcebo with a disgusted look on her face.

Ayanda: "You should stick to being a Prince, being a drug lord is way out of your league. You are weak and pathetic honestly I don't know why I thought you would do this. Have a nice life Dr Dlamini."

She marches out of the office, a few minutes later a nurse walks in carrying an urn, she places it on the desk.

Ngcebo: "What's this?"

Nurse: "I don't know sir, someone left it at reception. There is a note." She walks out leaving Ngcebo alone. She opens the note. "As per your request we have cremated her. Condolences." He looks at the urn in shock before getting up and pacing up and down. He doesn't remember giving anyone permission to cremate his daughter, he couldn't have. Not when he knows there are rituals to be performed before her burial. Now how do you perform a ritual on ashes, and how will his elders take this news? He takes the urn

and slumps on the floor with it
crying.

INSERT 21

'Nkosi nglimele'

'Ngpholise, ngpholise, ngpholise
lamanxeba'

'Nkosi nglimele'

'Ngpholise, ngpholise, ngpholise
lamanxeba'

'Baba ngidinga wen' uzongpholisa'

'Oh nglimele enhlizyweni'

'Ubuhlungu obungaka, ngipholise,
ngpholise'

'Noma kubuhlungu Nkosi yami'

'Inhliziyo yam iyadadamba'

'Ngiph isibindi baba wami'

'Ukuthi ngkwazi ukuthethelela'

'Jehovah Elohim, Jehovah
Shalom'

'Mpholisi wamanxeba'

'Wena wedwa ulithemba lami'

'Uzongisul' izinyembezi'

'Ngipholise'

'Yeeeeeeeah, yeeeeeeeah'

'Ngipholise'

'Jehovah wentandane, ngikhala
kuwe'

'Ngikhala kuwe'

'Baba ngipholise, ngilimele'

'Ngilinyazwe ngabantu
ebengibathembile'

'Nkosi ngilimele'

'Ngilinyazwe ngabantu
ebengibathembile'

'Nkosi ngilimele'

'Ngilinyazwe ngabantu
engibathembayo'

'Bangihlukomezile, baba
ngipholise'

'Ngilinyazwe ngabantu
engibathandayo'

'Ngipholise'

'Woza uzongpholisa Nkosi'

'Ngipholise, Ngipholise'

Honestly funerals are depressing
but a child's funeral is just
heartbreaking. We have been
sitting in this tent singing, crying

and listening to sermon after sermon. This is just sad, some of the pastors here don't even know what to say. If it was an adult they would say she has lived her life, seen the world and got to experience some sort of joy and achieved her dreams, but what can one say about a child. She was barely two years old. This is just unfair.

I get up and go outside. I try to call Philani but he doesn't pick up, I am sure he is tired of me calling every five minutes to check on Theo. I hope they are okay. I turn around and Ngcebo is

standing there. His eyes are puffy and red. Since all this happened, this is the first time we have been alone together.

Me: "Hey, how are you doing?"

Ngcebo: "Did your husband send you here to spy on me, to make sure his handiwork is top notch?"

Me: "I don't know what you are talking about."

Ngcebo: "He killed them. Your husband, he killed my child and her mother."

Me: "Ngcebo I know you are hurting but blaming Philani for this is just wrong." He chuckles.

Ngcebo: "You don't know him as

well as you think you do. All this, this is his revenge for me planting those drugs in his office."

Me: "You are the one who planted those drugs? Why in God's name would you do that, do you know the kind of mess you created?"

Ngcebo: "A bigger mess than me losing my child?" He takes a deep breath. "Lando, you do not know what that man is capable of. If he can easily take the life of a child, what makes you so sure he won't do the same to you when he is tired of you or you piss him off? Ask yourself that."

Me: "Philani would never do

something like that."

Ngcebo: "Are you trying to convince me or you? That man took my child and I will make him pay."

Me: "Look around you Ngcebo, look at where we are, if he is prepared to kill a child like you say he did what do you think he will do to you? Cut your losses, focus on you and live your life. This gangster life you are trying to live is not you and you know it. The sooner you give it up the better for you." I walk away.

Is he really capable of taking a child's life. I know he has killed

before, but a child? Can he, really?
I decide to go back into the tent
and focus on the service.

At 4 am we leave home to go to
the gravesite. It's about an hour
away at the top of the mountain.
As per custom the women stay at
the bottom of the mountain and
the men continue up with the
little coffin. Just as they are
about to go into the burial site
the weather changes, the clouds
get darker and the sun that was
beginning to rise is suddenly
covered by deathly clouds. We hear
thunder and rush to sit in cars

while the men continue up the mountain.

Just then a streak of lightning splits the sky and strikes right at the entrance of the burial sight before a fire erupts. The crazy part though is that the fire seems centered in one place, the entrance, preventing the men from going into the burial site. Some men come running down the mountain in fear. The lightning continues to strike the same place over and over again. More and more men come running down and get into cars until only the family is left. We decide to drive back to

the family home to help with the serving and cleaning up, Buli and I still need to drive back to Joburg. By the time we get there the weather has cleared up. We go in and help where we can. By 8 AM people are now beginning to come back from the burial. We serve them food and they leave. We start cleaning up and by lunchtime we have done all that needs to be done, the rest will just have to be handled by the servants.

We bid goodbye to Faith since she has to stay for another week for a cleansing. We get to the Oshoek border gate and luckily for us it's

not too busy. Buli is driving and I am deep in thought. I still can't get over what Ngcebo told me.

We get to Alzu in Middleburg and decide to rest and have some lunch at Mugg 'n' bean. We sit down and make our order.

Buli: "Okay, are you going to tell me what's going on with you?" I shake my head. "If you don't speak now I will drag it out of you, and you know I will." I take a deep breath.

Me: "Ngcebo told me that Philani killed Palesa and Simamkele." She looks at me with shock written all over her. "I know, it's hard to

believe."

Buli: "Why would he do that?
What did Ngcebo do to him?"

Me: "It doesn't matter what he did, it still doesn't justify taking innocent lives just for revenge."

Buli: "True. So how do you feel about it?"

Me: "I don't know. A part of me is hoping Ngcebo is lying but then the other part of me thinks he might be right."

Buli: "If he is right what then?
Are you going to leave him?"

Me: "I don't know Buli. Right now I am just thinking what kind of person has no mercy on a baby?"

Am I really prepared to spend the rest of my life with someone like that? What happens if I do something wrong, am I going to live my life in fear, afraid to step on his toes lest I end up in a body bag."

Buli: "Do you love him?"

Me: "Of course I love him."

Buli: "Then maybe you need to hear his side of the story too. Its painful for any parent to bury a child, Ngcebo might be a piece of shit when he wants to be but he didn't deserve to bury his child. So before you decide talk to Philani, let him be the one to tell you that

he killed her, then make your decision based on the truth, whichever one you choose to believe."

Me: "I am scared friend."

Buli: "I hate to break it to you mngani but you didn't go into this marriage with rose coloured glasses. You hired a PI to find dirt on Philani and he did, plenty of it. You knew what kind of person he was before you married him so you can't act surprised now."

Me: "I know, but a child Buli? A child?"

Buli: "I know, but talk to him first."

Maybe Buli is right, before I condemn Philani I need to hear the truth from him. When we are done eating we hit the road, this time I drive while Buli snores all the way there which wasn't good for me because the whole way it was me and my overthinking mind. I drop Buli off at her place and head home. I get there and Philani's car is parked outside, either he just came back from somewhere or he is headed out. I feel my heart start beating fast. How do I even begin to bring up the subject.

I walk into the house and find Gugu in the lounge playing with Theo.

Me: "Hey." I walk over to them and pick Theo up and play with him.

Gugu: "How was the funeral?"

Me: "Horrible. Burying a child is sad."

Gugu: "I can tell, you don't look okay." I smile.

Me: "I will be okay. Where's Philani?"

Gugu: "Upstairs taking a shower."

Me: "Ok. Let me go see him." I take Theo and walk up the stairs. I get into our room and hear the

shower running, I guess he is still in there. I lay the baby on the bed and play with him. Philani comes out the shower with a towel wrapped around his waist. Philani: "Hey, you are back!" He says giving me a peck on the cheek.

Me: "Yeah." I say not even looking at him.

Philani: "Are you okay, you don't look good."

Me: "I just came from the funeral of a baby Philani of course I am not okay." I snap.

Philani: "Geez, ok. I was just concerned, no need to bite my head

off." He walks away to the closet. I look at him and he doesn't even seem guilty. Is he really that heartless?

Me: "Did you kill her?" He turns around and looks at me.

Philani: "Who?" Is he really going to act dumb right now.

Me: "Simamkele."

Philani: "I don't even know who that is."

Me: "Ngcebo's daughter, did you kill her?"

Philani: "Is that what your boyfriend told you?" He says walking into the closet. I follow him and stand at the door.

Me: "It doesn't matter who told me, I just need to know the truth. Did you or did you not kill her, as revenge for planting those drugs in your office?" He is busy getting dressed.

Philani: "I wish you had as much faith in me as you have in him."

Me: "Philani....."

Philani: "No Lando, you came in here with your mind already made up, you don't want the truth you want confirmation. And I do not have the time or the energy to get into this when you have already picked sides."

Me: "Philani this isn't about sides,

it's about a dead child who was murdered, possibly by you." I say shouting at him. Theo starts crying and I pick him up.

Philani: "I think you need to decide where your loyalties lie

Landokuhle. If you are more concerned about Ngcebo and his feelings then maybe you should go be with him and comfort him."

Me: "What are you saying?"

Philani: "I am saying make a decision. Ngcebo sold drugs laced with arsenic that killed 34 kids in Soweto and then he planted those same drugs in my office, the same drugs you hid. If the police had

found them I would be in jail right now. So before you go crying for one child remember the 34 that Ngcebo killed." He grabbed his wallet and keys from the side table. "I will give you space to think about what it is you want. If you want to walk out that door I won't stop you." He said as he walked out.

I understand what Ngcebo did but an eye for an eye leaves the world blind, and how many more people will have to die.

I decide to lay down on the bed with Theo and before I know it its lights out for both of us.



PHILANI

I knew Ngcebo would tell her about this but I didn't think she would believe him. I could have told her what she wanted to know but the fact that her mind was already made up is what pissed me off. I decided to give her space so I went to Nate's place. I found him having a braai with Lindani, Sihle and Sbu. I greet them, grab a beer and take a seat.

Nate: "Are you okay bro?"

Me: "I am okay, I am just worried about Lando, it seems the

funeral really affected her."

Sihle: "A funeral can affect anyone bro."

Lindani: "Just tell her the truth bra. She has proven her loyalty to you by hiding those drugs, clearly all she wants is for you to play open cards with her. She will support you either way."

Me: "I don't know man."

Nate: "What are we going to do about Maswanganyi? Do we go after his family or not?"

Me: "Nah, I think it's time we got him out of the way."

Sihle: "It's about time."

Just then Dladla appears from

the side of the house, still in his uniform, together with another cop.

Dladla: "Madoda."

Me: "Officer."

Dladla: "Mokhethi, go check around the house. And make sure there are no people at the back." He says to his protegee. He leaves.

Lindani: "So to what do we owe the pleasure officer?" Dladla grabs a can of beer and gulps it down in one go then burps so loud we laugh. "Are you even allowed to drink on the job officer?"

Dladla: "Bafo it's hot, I don't want to die of heat stroke." We

laugh.

Me: "So what's up?"

Dladla: "Maswanganyi handed in his resignation earlier and I heard he is leaving town, he has family in Zim so he is headed there. He will leave tonight."

Me: "Thank you for that, I guess we need to pay the officer a visit and bid him goodbye." Mokhethi comes back.

Dladla: "Did you find anything?"

Mokhethi: "No, its all clear."

Dladla: "Good, gentlemen please keep the noise down, your neighbors are complaining."

We all yell "yes officer." He gives

me a wink, turns and walks away with Mokhethi following him like a stray puppy.

Nate: "Gentlemen I think it's time we go play."

We all get up and get into Nate's car and drive off to find Maswanganyi.

We are parked outside his house in Vanderbijlpark, he drives out the gate as his family is busy packing things into a truck. We follow him until he gets to a garage and fills up. He gets out of the car and walks inside the garage. I get out of the car and get into his, on the back seat. I give the petrol

attendant a 200 rand note and he looks away. Maswanganyi comes back and gets in, he starts the car and drives off. When he gets to the main road I put a gun to his head.

Maswanganyi: "You don't want to do that my friend, I am a police officer."

Me: "I know." He pulls the car over on the side of the road. "I didn't say pull over officer, we still have a long way to go. And if you dare draw attention to us I will not only put a bullet in your head I will also go back and do the same to that lovely wife and kids

of yours."

Maswanganyi: "What do you want Biyela?"

Me: "I want you to start the car and drive."

He starts the car and drives off. I direct him till we get to a forest on the way to

Mpumalanga. We drive in as the guys follow behind until we are in the center of the forest. We get out and Maswanganyi is already shaking.

Maswanganyi: "Biyela I am sorry, please i will do anything for you, please just let me go. What happened wasn't even my idea.

Please."

Lindani: "I hate it when they beg."

Nate: "I love it, it makes the kill even better."

Me: "Boys, it's time to play."

INSERT 22

It's been a week since we buried Simamkele. Philani has been distant or maybe I am the one who is distant, I don't know anymore. I decided to take some time off work to be with Theo and also help Gugu find a school, she wants to go to boarding

school so I spoke to my old Principal and he was more than happy to take her as long as her paperwork is good. Now I have to get her transfer papers from her previous school. Philani said he would call the principal and talk to him. Now that that is sorted, it's time to bond with my son.

A couple of days ago a body was found in a forest somewhere on the route to Mpumalanga, I didn't care much until the cops revealed it was a police officer, Maswanganyi. They were still investigating what happened to him and who had killed him, I

knew Philani did it. It didn't matter much to me, he got what's coming to him.

I was in the kitchen cooking supper when Philani came in. I heard something heavy being dropped on the floor in the lounge, I panicked thinking Gugu dropped Theo, I rushed in there only to find a huge box with books in it.

Me: "What's going on?"

Philani: "Books for Gugu."

Gugu: "I know I love reading but this is a bit much."

Philani: "These are for school actually. Exams are close so I figured you would write your

exams for grade 9 and then next year you go to grade ten."

Gugu: "Oh. But I haven't been to school in months."

Philani: "I know, which is why I also hired a tutor to help you. I called your old school and told them you were sick that's why you couldn't come to school so they agreed to let you write at a school here under supervision of course, then they will write you a transfer letter for next year."

Gugu started screaming and jumping up and down in excitement and gave Philani a hug.

Gugu: "Wow, I don't have to

repeat grade nine?"

Philani: "Yep. And since I didn't know which subjects you took I bought....."

Gugu: "The whole shop?" They laugh. "Thank you."

Philani: "Anytime." He picks up Theo while Gugu goes through the books. I go back to the kitchen and Philani follows me with Theo in his arms.

Me: "Thank you for that."

Philani: "Yeah. What's for dinner."

Me: "Pasta."

Philani: "Ok. I will go take a shower then." He takes Theo back to the lounge and goes

upstairs. He comes back a few minutes later in a vest and shorts and we eat. When we are done he goes to his study and we watch TV. After a while we decide to go to bed. I put Theo in his nursery and go to our room and take a shower. I get into bed and hear the door open as Philani comes in. I pretend to be sleeping but he comes and sits next to me on my side of the bed.

Philani: "Baby." I keep quiet.

"Lando I know you are not sleeping, please talk to me." I don't answer him. He pulls the blanket off me.

Me: "Really Philani?" I get up and go look for another blanket from the closet.

Philani: "How long will you keep ignoring me?"

Me: "You are here talking to me, how am I ignoring you?"

Philani: "Lando?"

Me: "Are you willing to tell me the truth?" He looks down. "Thought as much."

Philani: "You know it would be nice if you would just trust me, and let this go." I turn around and look at him. I take a deep breath.

Me: "Philani I am scared. A child is dead, Ngcebo's child and you know

how volatile he can be. What if he comes after us, Gugu or even Theo? What then?"

He walks over to me and hugs me. I bury my head in his chest and he kisses the top of my head.

Philani: "I am not going to let anything happen to you, I promise you." He holds me away from him. "You trust me right?"

Me: "Philani....."

Philani: "Its a yes or no question Landokuhle, do you trust me?"

Me: "Yes, I trust you." He takes my hand and leads me to the bed. He sits down and I sit on his lap and lay my head on his shoulder.

Philani: "They are fine."

Me: "Who?"

Philani: "Palesa and Simamkele.

They are fine." I lift my head to look at him with a look that says explain. As if he read my mind he continues. "Palesa is at a rehab centre in Atlanta and Simamkele is with Lesedi, Palesa's sister."

Me: "But how, we just buried them."

Philani: "You buried dog ashes not them."

Me: "I am confused!"

Philani: "I met Lesedi and Palesa when they were at the rehab centre my parents sponsored,

they were addicted to Nyaope after their mother died and their grandmother and aunt threw them out. They got clean and went to school. After they matriculated Lesedi got a scholarship to study overseas and Palesa went to UJ. She met Ngcebo, he promised her heaven on earth and when he failed to deliver she went back to drugs, she dropped out of school, got pregnant and Ngcebo was more than happy to supply her with drugs. Lesedi tried to get custody of Sma but no judge would take away a child from its father,

especially since he is a prince. Ngcebo moved them to Midrand so I had one of my guys move in close by so he can check on them and make sure they are okay. That day Ngcebo found them Paleaa had taken drugs and she was drunk and passed out. I made Ngcebo believe I had given her the drugs he planted but I didn't. When they got to the hospital the doctor told Ngcebo they were dead. We took them out of the country but in order for Ngcebo to believe that they were really dead we got a couple of stray dogs, burnt them and gave

the ashes to him." By the time he is done I am not sure if its shock I am feeling or relief.

Me: "There was a whole funeral, for a dog."

He laughs.

Philani: "Hey, even dogs deserve a dignified burial." And then something clicks in my head.

Me: "The lightning and thunder that happened?" He shrugs.

Philani: "I guess the ancestors didn't want a dog buried with them."

Me: "I thought it was because of the cremation."

Philani: "that's what Ngcebo

thinks too. That's why they buried the ashes outside the burial site."

Me: "So they are alive."

Philani: "Yep, and you can't tell anyone about this, especially Ngcebo and Faith, not even Buli. This stays between us."

Me: "But you do realise how cruel this is? Ngcebo is mourning a child."

Philani: "I know, but in order for Palesa to get better and refocus on her dreams again, this is the only way."

Me: "What makes you so sure she won't contact him."

Philani: "Eventually maybe she will, but for now I need to make sure they are okay. Promise me you won't tell anyone about this."

Me: "Ok. I promise." I hug him.
"Thank you."

Philani: "I have done a lot of fucked up shit in my life Lando, but I would never kill a child."

Me: "I am sorry for doubting you."

Philani: "So how are you going to make it up to me?"

Me: "You are the one who needs to make it up to me, I almost gave myself ulcers because of this."

Philani: "Self inflicted ulcers. You should have just trusted me."

Me: "I know. I will never doubt you again."

Philani: "Good, now how are you going to make it up to me?"

Me: "What did you have in mind?"

I ask straddling him.

Philani: "How many days has it been with you sulking and moping around?"

Me: "five or six days."

Philani: "Good, that's six rounds today and six more tomorrow."

Me: "Hha!"

Philani: "Yebo. Azishe ke!" He throws me on the bed and gets on top of me. Its gonna be a long night.



LINDANI

I need a girlfriend. It's almost ten o'clock at night and I am sitting here waiting for Nate. He is taking his sweet time. Finally he shows up.

Nate: "Do you see the weather outside?"

Me: "Its cold. I can see that."

Nate: "Do you know what I was doing when you called?"

Me: "What, masturbating?"

Nate: "No, I was cuddled up in the warm arms of my girl, now thanks to you I am cold." He sits down and orders a castle lite.

Me: "You are white, white people don't get cold."

Nate: "Mxm. What do you want?"

Me: "I just needed company."

Nate: "Where are the others?"

Me: "Philani is married, Sihle is in Cape Town, Sizwe is in Durban and you are here."

Nate: "What happened to your slay queens?"

Me: "Argh, I am bored now, all these girls are the same. All about champagne they can't afford and Dubai trips for Instagram. Its tiring honestly."

Nate: "I hear you man." He takes a sip of his beer.

Me: "Do you think Ngcebo will come after Philani?"

Nate: "I don't think so. I heard he handed in his resignation and checked himself in to rehab back home."

Me: "Good." Just then Ayanda walks in, looks around, spots us and walks over to our table.

Ayanda: "Gentlemen." Nate looks at her and goes back to his phone.

Me: "Ayanda. You are back. Where have you been?"

Ayanda: "I have been around."

Me: "Nursing a broken heart?"

Ayanda: "Where's Philani, the wife is keeping him under lock and key

already?"

Me: "No, he is bonding with their son." She looks shocked.

Ayanda: "I'm sorry what?" Nate looks at her with a smirk on his face, he never did like her.

Nate: "Yeah they have a son now, cute little thing. Sorry we didn't invite you to the baby shower, you weren't around." She clicks her tongue, turns around and leaves. I look at Nate.

Me: "When did we have a baby shower?"

Nate: "Forget that, I think she is up to something." He sends a text to someone.

Me: "I hope not, unless she has a death wish."

Nate: "I am not willing to wait for her to do something, I just texted Sbu, he'll get some of the guys to watch her."

Me: "You really think she's up to something?"

Nate: "This is Ayanda bra, we can never be too sure."

We get up and leave. I look at Ayanda on our way out, she looks at me with a deathly stare. I hope to God she is over Philani, cause if she is not and she tries something.....

NARRATED

In Durban, Qhawekazi just got back from town, she drives into her house, unloads the groceries and goes to open the fridge, she takes off her shoes, pours herself a glass of wine and goes to the lounge. She is about to switch on the TV when the intercom buzzes. She answers.

Kazi: "Hello."

Guy: "Please open the gate." She drops the glass that was in her hands, she knows that voice, she could hear it even in her sleep.

She opens the gate and a white Mercedes G wagon drives in. They park and the guy walks in.

Guy: "Hello my love."

Kazi: "What do you want Rafael?"

Rafael: "Am I not allowed to come see my wife now?" He said as he came closer to her, so close she could smell his breath on her face.

"You are just as beautiful as the last time I saw you if not more. I have missed you my queen." He runs his hand on her cheek. She turns away from him.

Kazi: "I am no longer your wife Rafael, we are divorced remember?"

Rafael: "I don't need a piece of paper to tell me you are my wife. You and I will be separated by

death." He walks over to the couch and sits down. "I am hungry, is there food in this house?" Kazi walks over to the other couch and sits down.

Kazi: "There is food, just not for you." He laughs.

Rafael: "Oh I missed you mi amor (my love). Come sit next to me."

Kazi: "No thanks, why are you here Rafael? What do you want?"

Rafael doesn't answer her, instead he gets up and walks over to the side table that has pictures on it. He picks up a photo of Kazi carrying Theo. Kazi's heart starts beating fast, hoping

and praying that he doesn't see any resemblance to him or his brother. She stands up and watches him as he looks at the photo.

Rafael: "Cute kid. Who is he?" He says still staring at the photo.

Kazi: "My nephew."

Rafael: "Nice. Which brother?"

Kazi: "Philani." He turns and looks at her.

Rafael: "I thought your brother married a black woman. Why does the baby look mixed?"

Kazi: "I don't know. I wasn't there when they made him."

Rafael: "You know if I didn't know

better I would say he was mine."

Kazi: "Luckily for us you know better, you shoot blanks." He clenches his jaw and puts the photo back in its place.

Rafael: "You asked why I am here. Well I want you to seduce my brother, get pregnant, and give me the baby."

Kazi: "And why would I do that?"

Rafael: "Because I am tired of waiting for my father to decide who will take over after him. Raul keeps having daughters and me, well you know what's happening, or not happening. I need to take over."

Kazi: "There are millions of women in Miami and you came all the way here to tell me that? You can't be serious."

Rafael: "I am my queen. Besides I have always wanted to have a child with you."

Kazi: "Except with your little plan I would still have a child with Raul not you, so either way you still lose."

Rafael: "Not if I kill him first."

Kazi: "Here is an idea, go back to Miami, get a girl there, I am sure there are plenty of women who would do with the cash."

Rafael: "Yeah that would work

but, it's you I want my love." He says standing in front of her.

Kazi: "Rafael the sooner you get this idea of us being together again out of your head the better." She tries to walk away from him but he grabs her by the arm and she hits his chest.

Rafael: "You don't walk away from me Kazi. You are going to do this, Raul will be in Cape Town in a few days, you are going to go there and run into him then carry out our plan."

Kazi: "I will not do it." He let's her go before slapping her so hard she falls on the floor. He

crouches next to her and holds her by the chin so she is looking at him.

Rafael: "You know I don't like hurting you mama, but you just refuse to listen. I wasn't asking you I was telling you."

He stands up and pulls her up.

She rubs her cheek as tears fall down her face.

He pulls out a flight ticket from his jacket pocket and hands it to her, she takes the ticket, looks at it then tears it up. When he sees her do that he puts his hand on her throat and pushes her till her back is against the wall. As she

struggles to breathe he pushes even harder. Just then he feels a cold metal on his neck.

Guy: "Get. Your. Hands. Off. Her."
Rafael slowly let's go of Qhawekazi who slumps to the floor coughing hard.

Rafael: "You don't want to do that my friend."

Guy: "I am not your friend. Now unless you want to see tomorrow, I will suggest you take your flat behind and get the fuck out."

Rafael tries to turn and look at the man but he won't let him, instead he leads him to the door with the gun still on his neck and

his hands in the air. He opens the door for him and shoves him out before hiding behind the wall so he won't see him through the glass door. Rafael gets into his car and drives away.

The guy then rushes to Qhawekazi.

Guy: "Are you okay?" She nods her head, still coughing a bit.

Kazi: "I am fine. What are you doing here Sizwe?" She says rubbing her neck. He helps her up and leads her to the couch where she sits down.

Sizwe: "I was in the neighborhood. Go pack your

things, we are leaving."

Kazi: "Where are we going?"

Sizwe: "Joburg."

Kazi: "No."

Sizwe: "Either you go pack your things and we leave or I call Philani and tell him what happened then he will come here and drag you to Joburg himself or he sends an army of people to watch over you 24/7. The choice is yours."

Kazi: "Fine." She leaves and goes upstairs. Sizwe then takes out his phone and calls Philani. He answers after the first ring.

Philani: "Bafo, what's up?"

Sizwe: "I am bringing Kazi to Joburg."

Philani: "What happened?"

Sizwe: "That psycho husband of hers is here."

Philani: "I will wait for you at the airport."

He hangs up. Kazi comes down after a while with her luggage and the Sizwe loads it into the car before driving off to the airport.

INSERT 23

This year has been nothing short of a rollercoaster, but these past

couple of months take the cup. I went from being single and happy to being married and happy. I became a mother, I came face to face with my past, although unresolved but still, I think facing it was a giant leap forward for me.

Gugu wrote her exams, and being the smart ass that she is she came out with four distinctions, I was impressed honestly, for someone who hadn't seen a classroom in months she did pretty good. Our therapist says she is coming along very well with her healing process, she went

from seeing her twice a week to once every fortnight. Her progress makes me happy.

Qhawekazi has permanently moved to Joburg, well she had no choice in the matter after her psycho ex showed up terrorising her she had to be around people who can protect her. She stays at her dad's place since she didn't want to move in with us, something about cramping our style. She has an army of bodyguards who watch her everywhere she goes. She comes by on most weekends to spend time with Theo, seeing her with

him makes me happy, as much as legally I am his mother, she will always have a deeper bond with him. Rafael keeps coming in and out of the country still trying to get Kazi to seduce his brother. Now I am really glad she let us adopt Theo, if Rafael had to find out about him, it would be the last time we ever saw him.

Buli and Nate finally came out of the 'closet'. They are good together, and Nate seems to make her happy, that is all anyone can ask for really.

Faith's marriage has been tested lately. Her mother in law decided

to bring a woman to their house, 'to bear children for her son since Faith has failed', her words. I swear that woman shares DNA with satan. She is the only one in that family that gives Faith a hard time. She just won't stop. But luckily for Faith she married a sensible man, who stands up for her, even against his evil mother. Christmas is around the corner, and I am nervous, Philani said we will be spending it at the family home in Mandawe KZN. Bab'Biyela is back from his treatment and recovering at home in Mandawe, the treatment

was a success hence we are going home. Although he said he wouldn't tell the kids about his cancer, I just hope he finally opens up to them, they deserve to know.

I saw Ayanda a few days ago at the mall, while shopping with Theo and Gugu, I could have sworn she was following me, but then again it's a mall, you're bound to run into people multiple times at different areas. I just hope she has gotten over Philani. I was at home cooking Lunch after church. Philani and Theo are in the pool area. Gugu and

Qhawekazi went to Park station to pick up Ntombi, she is coming over to visit. Security calls to say we have guests, I cross my fingers hoping it's not Rafael again. Luckily for me its Faith and Mbusi. I tell the security to let them in. They come in and they have two big bowls with them, and they smell divine.

Me: "Hey, something smells nice."

I give Faith a hug and then Mbusi.

Faith: "Its oxtail stew and some pickled fish."

Me: "Oh thank you. I can't wait."

Mbusi: "Before you completely

ignore me, where are the boys?"

Me: "By the pool."

Mbusi: "Cool I'll see you later." He leaves. We go into the kitchen.

Me: "He seems excited, what did you give him?" Her face changes.

Faith: "He is excited to see Theo.

He loves kids, and I hate the fact that I can't give him that."

I go over to her and give her a hug.

Me: "Friend, when the time is right, God will make a way.

That's what the pastor said right?"

Faith: "I know, I just wish....."

just then Buli comes bursting into

the kitchen and I let Faith go.

Buli: "Hey bitches."

Me: "Buli we just came back from church, no swearing please." She laughs.

Faith: "Where is your vanilla ice cream?" Yep, that's what we call Nate now.

Buli: "Outside, with the boys."

They help me set the table, and since Lindani and the rest of the gang are here we decided to do a buffet, and let everyone serve themselves. We decide to join the boys by the pool while we wait for Kazi, Gugu and Ntombi.

Finally they arrived, it feels so good seeing her again, after the last time we saw each other, although we kept in touch but seeing her is good. We all ate as we sat around the pool. Nate and Buli need a room cause they can't keep their hands off each other, I am pretty sure if we were not here they would be on round three right now. Mbusi and Faith are busy fussing over Theo, you can tell they will make great parents one day.

After lunch I found Ntombi in the kitchen washing dishes.

Me: "You do know we have a

dishwasher right?" She turns around and smiles.

Ntombi: "I know, I just needed something to do." She doesn't sound okay.

Me: "What's wrong?" She takes a deep breath as she wipes her hands and sits down on one of the high chairs. I decide to join her.

Ntombi: "Gugu looks different."

Me: "Different how?"

Ntombi: "She looks happier, I don't know when last I saw her like that."

Me: "Therapy is working for her?"

Ntombi: "Why didn't I see it

Lando? How could I not notice the

pain and anguish she was going through? I am her sister, I should have known something wasn't right." A tear escapes her eye.

Me: "That's because you wouldn't have thought her own father would do this to their own child. You hear about it but you never think it could happen right under your nose."

Ntombi: "I actually thought she would hate me. You too."

Me: "Ntombi you are not your father, his mistakes or choices are not yours to bear, you are not Jesus." She sighs. "Stop focusing

on the could have or should have, we are here now, moving forward and getting better."

Ntombi: "I wish he was here to answer for his sins, but then like the coward that he is he ran." I swallow, as cruel as Vusi was, he was her father and to her he was a great dad, I can't fault him on that. He just failed at being consistent.

Me: "Ntombi forget about the past, maybe one day he will show up and face the music." I hope I can convince her to let this go.
"How is your mother?"

Ntombi: "Argh let's not talk about that one."

We pack the dishes in the dishwasher and join the other's outside. In the evening we decide to dish up the leftovers from lunch, cause we are too tired and drunk to cook.

After dinner everyone leaves, I decide to take a shower while Philani puts Theo to sleep, he has started sleeping almost the whole night so that makes me happy cause I can sleep too, although I still get up to check on him.

Ntombi and Gugu decided to share a room, even though we had a

room set up for her, she refused to use it.

When I am done with my shower, I lotion and put on my pajamas. I sit in front of the dressing table to tie my weave in a bun. I look at my reflection in the mirror wondering how I got here, successful, educated and married inspite of all I went through I still got to the other side, bruised, broken and damaged, but I still got here. To be honest I have asked myself that question a million times and the answer that always pops in my head is God! Sometimes I think when

Gogo died and got to heaven she marched up to God and told him to be extra nice with the blessings, cause I know I would not have gotten this far without him. I am not a religious person, I am more spiritual really, and looking at my life I can proudly say God is showing off.

I am lost in thought when I feel Philani's hands on my shoulder.

Philani: "I hope there isn't another man running through your mind." I smile.

Me: "Actually there is, Michael B Jordan. I just can't stop thinking about him."

Philani: "Please, even if I handed you to him on a silver platter he would bring you back within a day, you are way too stubborn." I laugh, he pulls me up and gives me a hug. "What are you thinking about?"

Me: "How blessed I am. I have you, i have Theo and now i have both my sisters with me under one roof. Could life get any better?"

Philani: "Yes actually it can." He kisses me so passionately I can feel his dick growing bit by bit. I break the kiss but he moves to my neck instead.

Me: "I think you need help, even on a Sunday you want sex. Sundays are for resting Biyela." He quickly brings his head up and looks at me with a smirk on his face.

Philani: "Ok." He let's go of me and walks away.

Me: "Woowow. Where are you going?" He turns around.

Philani: "To rest. Its Sunday mosi." Really!

Me: "Bengdlala hawu. (I was joking)"

Philani: "Ngidlaliswa ngemali mina ngiy Jukebox." He turns around to walk away. I run to him and jump on his back.

Me: "Sorry ke Ntshangase." I say kissing his shoulders and neck. Before long we are on the bed making love.

NARRATED

At Ayanda's flat, she is pacing up and down while her friend Cebo sits on the couch painting her nails.

Ayanda: "This plan is taking way too long."

Cebo: "Patience is a virtue my friend."

Ayanda: "I can't believe Philani has people watching me. And his stupid wife has guards now and

going into that house is mission impossible. How are we going to get her?"

Cebo: "Ayanda you need to calm down. We will get her, no need to stress yourself. An opportunity will avail itself and we will be ready to pounce. If we do this now we might just end up with bullets in our heads." Ayanda sits down next to her friend.

Ayanda: "I think it will be harder to get her now, they have a child and Philani has gone into overprotective mode."

Cebo: "Mxm. When was she even pregnant?"

Ayanda: "Apparently they adopted."

Cebo: "So does that mean the Mrs is barren,"

Ayanda: "I don't know, all I know right now is that with each passing day they get closer and closer, and by the time the two year mark hits they will be so in love Philani won't even remember that I exist."

Cebo: "Which is why we have this plan. We get her out the way and you take your rightful place by his side as Mrs Biyela, just like we had planned."

Ayanda: "And then no one will

touch me. I will be the hottest thing in this continent people like Bonang will just disappear into the background."

Cebo: "Exactly friend. Your patience will pay off." They lift their glasses of wine and make a toast.

QHAWEKAZI

I hate Joburg, it's too fast paced and people here all seem to be hyper. I miss Durban, but since my psycho ex refuses to let go I have no choice but to be here, at least here my brother can protect me and I also get to see my baby boy anytime I want.

After the lunch at my brother's place I decided to catch a movie, being in that house alone is depressing, I can't wait for Banele to come back from Varsity so we can be bored together.

I get to the mall and go straight to ster kinekor with this army following me, I get weird looks from people, they probably think I am some rich spoilt Nigerian brat. I decide to ignore them and just do what I came here to do.

I pay for my ticket and ten more for the guards, yes I have ten guards, Philaniis extra like that. We walk into the cinema, luckily

for us the movie hasn't begun yet so the lights are still on. I sit down while they scan the place, scaring the people in here. I have honestly learnt to pay little if any attention to them.

After some time the lights go off and the movie starts. We are almost in the middle of the movie when I see someone sitting a seat away from me. Within seconds he has a gun pointed to his head, the two guards in front of us have turned with their guns subtly pointed at him and the one next to me has a gun on his abdomen. I swear if it wasn't

dark in here the people would be watching a second movie for free.

Guard: "Move away from here."

Guy: "Princess please tell your guards I won't hurt you." Even in the dark I know who that is, and it's a relief that it's not Rafael.

I tell the guards to put away the guns and they reluctantly do it but they still have their eyes on him. The one next to me searches him before moving so he is sitting next to me.

Me: "Raul what are you doing here?"

Raul: "I came to see you."

Me: "Why? You know your brother

will kill us if he finds you here."

Raul: "I don't think so. One of his men told me he has been a constant visitor to South Africa for the past few months. And he also told me why?"

Me: "Tell me why he keeps coming here then." He chuckles.

Raul: "You know exactly why. You are supposed to seduce me and get pregnant. But how do you think he would feel if he knew you and I have already gone down that route and we have a son to prove it."

INSERT 24

Me: "What the fuck are you talking about Raul?"

Raul: "I know about Theo, I know he is our son." Just then the lights turn on, I didn't even notice the movie had ended. I get up and look at Raul.

Me: "You need to stop smoking your father's drugs. I have to go." He holds my hand and pulls me back down.

Raul: "You know exactly what I am talking about Kazi. Here." He takes out something from his pocket, it's a hotel key card. "I am staying at the Radisson Blu hotel in Sandton. Come by

tomorrow so we can talk about this properly." He gets up and leaves. I feel a tear fall down my face. I send Philani a text message with the hotel name and room number. I get up and leave.



PHILANI

I got a text from Kazi about Raul being in town. Luckily for me I was already up giving Theo his bottle when I got the message. I decided to go and see him before all hell breaks loose. I tiptoed into our bedroom since Lando was still sleeping. I went to the closet and found some

sweatpants and a hoodie. I put on my sneakers and tiptoed out. I got to the garage, got into my car and drove out.

I got to the hotel, and it was busy, even though it's almost midnight there were a bunch of people making noise which gave me an opportunity since the security was busy trying to get the people quiet. I got to the lift and pressed the button. It opened and I got in and went up to the sixth floor. I got out and looked around till I found his room. I knocked. He opened after some time.

Raul: "Biyela." He says shock written on his face. I pushed open the door and walked in. "I take it Kazi told you about our meeting?"

Me: "You and your brother don't listen."

Raul: "Look I am not trying to hurt her, I just think we need to talk about our son."

Me: "You don't have a son Raul. So what are you on about?"

Raul: "I am talking about Theo."

Me: "Theo is my son."

Raul: "I know you are trying to protect him from Rafael, but there's no need to protect him

from me."

Me: "I will tell you again. Theo is my son. You don't have a son. Now if you still want to raise your two daughters you will stay the fuck away from my sister and get that little idea out of your head." I walk to the door.

Raul: "I am not going to take him from you." I turn around to look at him. "I know why Kazi gave him to you. Rafael is crazy, trust me I know that better than anyone. I also don't want him getting his hands on him."

Me: "What are you saying?"

Raul: "I am saying Rafael can

never find out about him, and neither can my father. He deserves a better life and I know you can give him that. Look I know that how I approached Kazi is questionable but I promise I don't mean any harm."

Me: "Ok. Lets say for arguments sake you are right and Theo is yours, why won't you use him to gain control of your father's empire."

Raul: "Because I don't want it. I just want to live a peaceful life with my kids and not worrying about when the cops will come knocking. I am not cut out for

the drug world Biyela, it's not me and I am not about to use a child to gain control of something I don't even like." He says as he takes a seat on the couch. I join him.

Me: "How did you know?" He chuckles.

Raul: "I saw her at a hospital a few months back, I was there assisting a doctor friend of mine. I think she was there for a check up. I decided not to bother her cause she had cut off all contact with us."

Me: "It could be your brother's child you know." He laughs.

Raul: "Impossible! He shoots blanks, that's probably why he is crazy."

Me: "So what guarantee do I have that you won't come back one day to claim him?"

Raul: "I've always wanted a son, but I let that idea go when my father said the first person to have a son would take over from him. When my girlfriend was pregnant both times I prayed hard everyday not to have a son. And God answered."

Me: "And now that you have one?"

Raul: "I will do anything to protect him, and if that means

not claiming him and staying far away from him then so be it.

Someday he might decide to want to know me, but for now I need to keep him as far away as possible from my brother and my father"

Me: "So you won't be bothering my sister again?"

Raul: "Of course not. I just wanted to tell Kazi that I won't be coming to claim Theo, they both deserve to live without looking over their shoulder." I get up and we shake hands.

Me: "Just so we are clear, I will protect my family no matter

what, and i will kill any of you if you think you can take my son from me."

Raul: "I don't doubt that for a second."

Me: "Good. Goodnight Raul, or is it goodmorning? Either way, have a safe flight home."

Raul: "Will do. Tell Kazi I am sorry, I didn't mean to scare her."

Me: "I will." I walked out and texted Sbu and told him to get some guys to come watch Raul, until he leaves the country I can't trust him.

I got home and found Lando sitting on the bed with her arms

crossed and her head resting on the headboard.

Lando: "What's her name?" I smile while taking off my clothes.

Me: "Meagan Good. I figured since you have Michael B Jordan I might as well get myself someone too."

Lando: "I will slit her throat." I laugh as I get into bed and bring her close. "Seriously though ubuyaphi (where are you coming from?)"

Me: "I went to see Raul." She quickly brings her head up to look at me.

Lando: "If he comes anywhere

near Theo I will kill him myself."

Me: "I know you will but he says he won't be claiming him. He also wants to protect him from his family."

Lando: "Ok since Raul is out of the picture what are you going to do about Rafael? We can't be living in fear of that Psychopath. Kazi needs her life back."

Me: "I know, I just need to find a way to get rid of him without his father coming after us."

Lando: "I hope that day comes soon."

She is right. I really need to find a way to put a stop to Rafael's

torture. I can't have my sister looking over her shoulder all the time.



NARRATED

At Phoenix lounge, Lindani and Sizwe are having drinks in the office.

Sizwe: "Its almost morning and we are still drinking, I need to sleep."

Lindani: "Yep."

Sizwe: "Dont you have work tomorrow?"

Lindani: "I do, but the perks of being my own boss, I am not going."

Sizwe: "You know I have been thinking about this whole Rodriguez situation, why can't we just take him out like we do everybody else?"

Lindani: "Because his father and Bab'Biyela have some deal, trust me if it wasn't for that he would be six feet under right now."

Sizwe: "But he doesn't have a deal with us." Lindani turns to look at him.

Lindani: "What are you thinking?"

Sizwe: "What does Rafael want more than anything else in the world,"

Lindani: "His father's empire."

Sizwe: "Exactly. We all know Rafael doesn't give a shit about Kazi, so if we get rid of Rodriguez senior, Rafael takes over and he leaves Kazi alone."

Lindani: "Why dont we just get rid of Rafael?"

Sizwe: "Because if we do that, Rodriguez senior won't rest until he finds the person who killed his son, but if we get rid of Rodriguez senior Rafael will be too busy taking over to even care."

Lindani: "Bafo, you are talking about taking out one of the biggest cartel bosses in the world, he has security with him 24/7."

And I am talking military trained individuals. No one will be willing to take on that man."

Sizwe: "We don't need to get close to him to take him out, a good sniper will do the job even from hundreds of meters away."

Lindani: "And do you know a good sniper?"

Sizwe: "You know I like it when you underestimate me." Lindani laughs.

Lindani: "You know the SANDF did not send you to train with the navy seals just so you can take out cartel bosses."

Sizwe: "You know that's the only

reason I joined the army."

Lindani: "So when are you planning on doing this?"

Sizwe: "I need to put a plan in motion before i take this on. But you know we can't tell anyone about this, especially Philani."

Lindani: "I know. This stays between us."

He takes a sip of his drink. "You know this crush of yours on Qhawekazi is cute."

Sizwe: "Mxm. I am going to sleep."

Lindani: "You know she's single now, shoot your shot bra, it might work."

Sizwe: "Fuck off bra. And go to sleep." He takes his car keys and leaves.



LANDO

I was woken up by music being blasted all over the house. I woke up and looked beside me but I was alone. I went to the bathroom and washed my face before going downstairs. I found Ntombi and Gugu dancing around the lounge, Theo was in his stroller just watching them and laughing his lungs out. I sat at the bottom of the stairs and just watched them have fun. I was

still sitting there when Philani came downstairs already dressed for work.

He sat down next to me and gave me a perk on the cheek.

Philani: "Morning."

Me: "Morning."

Philani: "They look happy."

Me: "They do. Its really amazing seeing them like that, especially Gugu."

Philani: "I know. Now I have to love and leave you. Work awaits."

He gets up and the girls turn the music off.

Me: "Tell them I miss them." He laughs.

Philani: "I will, although being a stay at home mom actually suits you."

Me: "Dont start. I am coming back to work next year."

Philani: "Okay. I will see you girls later. Bye." He leaves. Ntombi and Gugu walk over to me with Theo.

Ntombi: "Lando, why is your baby mixed."

Me: "He is not mixed he is black."

I get up and take him from her then walk to the kitchen to start with breakfast.

Ntombi: "He is mixed. Look at his hair." I laugh. Ntombi has always been the type that asks too many

questions.

Me: "I promise you he is not mixed, he is the Pearl Thusi kind of black." She rolls her eyes.

Ntombi: "So we have been talking and we think Gugu should come to Nelspruit for Christmas." I wonder when they decided that. I look at Gugu.

Me: "Do you want to go?"

Gugu: "Yeah. I mean you are going to your in laws for Christmas and I can't be here by myself so it makes sense."

Me: "What about your mother?"

Ntombi: "She is working on Christmas day so she won't be

there."

Gugu: "Plus I spoke to aunty Nkosazana, she says i am more than welcome to come."

Me: "But are you ready to face everyone?"

Gugu: "I have to face them at some point right, why not now. And I have Dr Steenkamp on speed dial if it gets too much."

Ntombi: "And I will be there to make sure all is well and nobody messes with her."

I take a deep breath. Maybe it is time we face the family. Although I won't be there to hold her hand I trust Ntombi to protect her.

Me: "Fine. But call me if anything happens." They start screaming and hugging each other before coming to me and hugging me.



PHILANI

I got to work late than usual cause I had to go to Phoenix lounge to see Sizwe unfortunately he wasn't there, I tried calling him but his number sent me straight to voicemail, the manager at Phoenix said something about him taking his girl to Dubai for her birthday. I didn't even know he had a

girlfriend, oh well as long as he is getting laid, we are good.

I got to my office and there was a whole pile of files that needed my attention. I realized then that as much as I like Lando being at home with Theo i need her here even more. I decided to call the agency to hire a nanny. I hope Lando doesn't bite my head off.

I go through the files on my desk and I notice a file from our medical aid. I open it and its statements for my dad. I look at the numbers and it seems fine until I notice an exorbitant

amount of money, it's from a hospital in Sweden. Maybe my dad got sick while he was there but why is the amount so high. I decide to call Lando, maybe she knows something. She picks up after the fourth ring.

Lando: "Hey hubby, miss me already?"

Me: "Always. I have a question, did my dad tell you anything about being in hospital in Sweden?" She keeps quiet. "Lando?"

Lando: "No, he didn't tell me anything. Why?"

Me: "There is a bill here for a hospital in Sweden, it's a large

amount."

Lando: "Uhm babe I don't know, lets ask him when we go home. I am sure there is an explanation for this."

Me: "Ok." I hang up.

Something about this doesn't make sense and I will find out what's going on.

INSERT 25

We drove down to Mandawe a week before Christmas. I think it was because this man wanted to confront his father about the hospital bill. He even tried calling

the hospital to find out why his father was there but you know private hospitals, they protect their patients no matter what, so he was left with no choice but to confront him.

We drove to Mandawe late in the afternoon and by the time we got there it was already late so we just went to his father's part of this big ass yard, and just went to sleep.

Its morning and I am in the kitchen making breakfast, luckily for me because no traditional rights were done for me as a new wife I am not allowed to cook in

the main kitchen, so I will be umfazi wephepha in this little corner.

I was busy cooking when Bab'Biyela joined me.

Bab'Biyela: "Makoti." He says walking into the kitchen with a smile on his face.

Me: "Baba." I went over to him and gave him a hug. "You look good." He takes a seat on a highchair.

Bab'Biyela: "All thanks to your stubborn self. If it wasn't for you I would probably be dying right now."

Me: "Well I am glad you are okay."

I made him a cup of tea and put it in front of him with some scones. He takes a sip. "Philani wants to know why you went to Sweden."

Bab'Biyela: "Argh dont worry yourself about that I will take care of it." He takes another sip. "Kazi tells me I have a grandson." Me: "Yes, he is sleeping though. You will meet him when he wakes up." As if on cue Philani walks in carrying Theo.

Philani: "Morning."

Bab'Biyela: "Morning son. Is that my grandbaby?" Philani hands Theo to him then sits down to

have his breakfast. "Ntshangase.
Handsome boy, ufuze umkhulu.

(You look like your grandfather.)"

Philani: "My son is not ugly baba."

He laughs.

Bab'Biyela: "Mxm. You know very
well I am handsome, where do you
think you got your good looks
from?"

Philani: "Mom."

Bab'Biyela: "You wish. Where are
the others?"

Philani: "They will be here in a
couple of days."

Bab'Biyela: "Makoti we need to
introduce you to the family before
everyone gets on with their day."

I quickly go to our bedroom and put on a long black maxi skirt, a white long sleeve tshirt, a doek and a shawl on my shoulders. We walk out with Philani holding my hand and Bab'Biyela holding Theo. We get to the main house and everyone is gathered around the lounge and some are sitting on dining room chairs. There are two seats saved for Philani and his father. They sit down and I sit next to Philani on a grass mat. I steal glances around the room and notice people looking at me and gossiping. I also notice an empty one sitter couch, I wonder

who its saved for. There is chit chat among everyone and I am just sitting here with my butt getting numb with each second. Eventually an old woman walks in, she is carrying a walking stick, I think she is about 80 years old if not more. She walks over to the empty couch and sits down. She greets everyone and someone brings her tea.

After a while she asks who I am. These men that brought me here have totally forgotten about me since everyone is fussing over Theo.

Bab'Biyela: "Mama, lona unkosikazi ka Philani. (This is Philani's wife.)" She looks at me.

Gogo: "Makoti, woza la. (Come here)" I get up and walk over to her and kneel in front of her.

"Hhay makoti uzozlimaza amadolo. Sukuma Bonakele umakoti azohlala. (You will hurt your knees. Get up Bonakele so she can sit.)" I look at this

Bonakele, she was introduced earlier as Bab'Biyela's sister.

There are three sisters Bonakele, Kholiwe and Sphelele. The

brothers Zwelithini, Busani,

Nqoba, Goodwill and Makhosi. And

each of them has their own brood, there are way too many to remember. Aunty Sphelele and Kholiwe have not arrived yet and only three of the brothers are here, Busani, Nqoba and Zwelithini. I look over at aunty Bonakele and I swear if looks could kill I would be dead. She clicks her tongue then gets up so i can sit.

Gogo: "Awfuni bakwenzele itiya. (Do you want someone to make you tea.)"

Me: "Cha gogo ngyabonga. (No thank you.)"

Gogo: "Ok." She asks one of the

younger kids to bring Theo to her, she holds him and plays with him.

"Bayanda oBiyela. (The Biyela's are growing.)"

Bonakele: "Longathi yijazi nje lengane. (He doesn't look like a Biyela.)" Everyone turns to look at her.

Bab'Biyela: "Uhlushwe yini wena? (How is that your problem?)"

Bonakele: "I am just saying. This child is not a Biyela and everyone here can see that, so maybe Makoti should tell us who the father is."

Philani: "Aunty please leave my wife alone."

Bonakele: "Hhay bo, I am just saying."

Lady: "Hhay suka wena, you should worry about your own issues.

Where's your husband, busy complaining about other people."

There's silence in the room as everyone's heads have turned to

the door. "Hello family." She

catwalks over to gogo. I say

catwalk because as much as she looks older, probably around 45 to

50 years old. She is wearing a

black leather pencil skirt with a

Gucci shirt tucked in accentuating

her figure and putting her hips

and butt on display, 9 inch heels, a

30 inch Peruvian weave adorns her head and she has some black Gucci sunshades on. She kneels in front of gogo and gives her a kiss and a hug. "Hello mummy."

Gogo: "Kholiwe. You still love grand entrances."

Kholiwe: "Always mummy, you taught me that." Gogo laughs. She moves over to me still on her knees. "Makoti don't worry about that one, she is just bitter because of the salt in her body. Her husband has diabetes so uyalamba shem."

Bonakele: "Kholiwe musa ukungjwayela kabi." The room

bursts out in laughter. She gets up takes a chair from one of the kids and sits down then looks around. "So vele no one is going to offer me even a glass of water." I guess that was everyone's cue because they started filing out one by one. Now I am sitting there while the others are talking to each other.

Thank God for my Theo cause he decided to poop and stink up the room. I took him and went back to our house. I change him, give him his bottle and put him to sleep. I walk back into the lounge and find Bonakele and her

daughter Sindiswa opening and closing cupboards and the fridge. I cough and they turn around. Sindiswa takes an apple from the table and bites into it.

Bonakele: "Where is the father of that child?"

Me: "You left him kagogo."

Bonakele: "You think you are clever neh. I mean his real father, cause that child is mixed so I know Philani is not the father. Tell us who the father is and why are you not with him?"

Me: "That is none of your business."

Sindiswa: "You know this marriage

won't last, barely a year in somthwalise ijazi (you have an illegitimate child)."

Bonakele: "You won't even make it to the two year mark, Nokukhanya is back." I dont know who Nokukhanya is so I dont reply.

Sindiswa: "Nokukhanya is the love of his life, the one girl who owns his heart. And when he finds out he will drop you like a hot potato."

Me: "Maybe, but I'll still have the time I had with him, if it lasts it lasts and if it doesn't it doesn't."

Bonakele: "You are still on probation Sisi, if I were you I

would tread carefully."

Kholiwe: "Ave unyanyisa kodwa Bonakele (you are so disgusting). What did she do to you? Fix your own marriage first before poking your nose into other people's business. Wena Sindiswa go find one of the fathers of those crayons running around and tell him to marry you so you can stop poking your stupid nose in Philani's marriage." I swear this woman has a knack for appearing in places without notice.

Bonakele and her mini me click their tongues before walking out.
Me: "Thank you for saving me,

again."

Kholiwe: "Don't worry about it makoti you will get used to those two, and if they get too much just slap them."

Me: "I'm sorry?"

Kholiwe: "If you can slap your husband you can slap them." She laughs. Oh my God, does everyone here know I slapped my husband? As if she read my mind. "Relax I know because Philani tells me everything, I am his favourite aunt after all." She laughs. I think I like her, she is dramatic but kind. "Go get your bag, we are going to town."

Me: "I can't, I just put Theo down."

Kholiwe: "There are a thousand kids outside they can watch him." She calls one of the kids who takes Theo to the main house. I grab my bag and we go out. We pass the men sitting outside.

Philani: "Where are you going?"

Kholiwe: "Town."

Philani: "Aunty dont sell my wife."

We walk down to where the cars are parked and she sees the car we came in, the Maserati.

Kholiwe: "Is that yours?"

Me: "Yes."

Kholiwe: "You have the keys?" I

go through my bag and show her the keys. She takes them and gets into the driver's seat. I get in. "Take those off."

Me: "What?"

Kholiwe: "The shawl and doek. You can't drive around in a Maserati dressed like that." I do as instructed and off we go. Its official my new favourite Biyela is Kholiwe.



PHILANI

Since I got here I haven't had a chance to talk to my dad cause there has been people all around us. I see him standing by the

kraal with Theo and I figure this is my opportunity. I walk over to them and he is busy showing him the cows one by one.

Me: "Baba, he is five months old he doesn't care about cows." He laughs.

Dad: "Well it's never too early to teach him. He must know how to slaughter a cow and to know that he must first know the cows." I smile, I think he is enjoying this grandpa role.

Me: "Baba can I ask you something?"

Dad: "Of course, what's wrong?"

Me: "What were you doing in

Europe? Sweden to be precise?"

Dad: "Backpacking."

Me: "Then why do we have a hospital bill for almost five hundred thousand, what were you doing there?" He takes a deep breath.

Dad: "Do you really want to know the truth?"

Me: "I wouldn't have asked if I didn't."

Dad: "I went there to get treatment, for cancer." He can't possibly be serious right now. I really hope this is not some type of joke.

Me: "Dad I am serious, what

were you doing there."

Dad: "Nami I am serious, I went to get chemotherapy."

Me: "You have cancer?"

Dad: "Had. It's in remission now."

Me: "And you chose to keep this from us? Why? When did you even find out?"

Dad: "It doesn't matter anymore. What matters is that I got the treatment and I am healthy again."

Me: "Baba that's beside the point, you could have died and we wouldn't have known."

Dad: "If I was supposed to die I would have died anyway, you

knowing would not have made a difference."

Me: "Why didn't you tell us?"

Dad: "The Gods honest truth, I didn't think you'd care." The fuck is wrong with this man, why would we not care about him being sick.

Me: "Baba, of course we care, why would you even think that."

Dad: "You didn't care when your mother was dying so why would you care now?" He can't be serious right now.

Me: "Baba....."

Dad: "Son, when your mother was sick I asked you so many times to

come home and see her, she knew she was dying and all she wanted was to talk to you guys one last time, to say goodbye but you were too busy doing whatever you wanted to do somewhere in the world. You literally came home a day before she died, a day Philani and even then she had tubes and machines keeping her alive so she couldn't tell you what she wanted to say. So yeah, if you didn't care about your own mother why would you care about me." He walks away.

Maybe he is right, I failed to show up for mum when she

needed me, we all did, and even if you asked me why I wouldn't give you an answer. I failed her, after all the times she had shown up for me I failed to show up for her. And now my dad thinks I don't care about him. I am brought back to reality by the sounds of the kids playing. I need to be alone. I walk away from where I was and just head out the gate with no idea where I am going.



LANDO

This woman sure knows how to shop, I mean we are in Eshowe

but you would think we are in Sandton. She goes into every shop and she'll buy at least one thing from there. I am tired and luckily for me we are at Spar buying groceries and hopefully this is our last stop so we can get home before it gets dark.

When we are done paying we go out to the parking, good thing we parked next to the entrance. As we are packing things in the boot a woman comes to us.

Lady: "Aunty Kholiwe, sawubona."
Aunty Kholiwe looks up at her and I don't miss the look of annoyance on her face.

Kholiwe: "Nokukhanya, sawubona."

So this is the famous
Nokukhanya.

Nokukhanya: "You are still
beautiful and fashion forward as
ever. You know I learnt how to
dress proper from you." I look at
her and she is wearing black
sandals, a red maxi dress with an
open back, she has on a short Bob
weave and a straw hat on.

Kholiwe: "I am glad I could help."

Nokukhanya: "Did Philani drive you
here, I would like to see him."

Kholiwe: "No he didn't why are you
asking?"

Nokukhanya: "Oh I just saw the

car and assumed, it's his right?"

Kholiwe: "Not quite, he bought it for his wife."

Nokukhanya: "I did hear about that, so where's the bride?"

Aunty Kholiwe looks at me with a smirk on her face then looks back at her.

Kholiwe: "She is right next to you." She turns to look at me, from my toes all the way to my head I can feel her eyes piercing through my skin. After her appraisal of me she extends her hand for a handshake. I take it.

Nokukhanya: "Its nice to meet you MRS Biyela."

Me: "It's nice to meet you too Mrs....."

Kholiwe: "Miss, it's Miss Mkhize."
Obviously she is enjoying this.

Me: "Oh. It's nice to meet you too Miss Mkhize."

Kholiwe: "Are you going back home? We can give you a lift if you want." She smiles.

Nokukhanya: "No thanks, I drove here in my car. I will see you guys around." She walks away. We get into the car and drive off.

Me: "You don't seem to like her."

Kholiwe: "Mxm I don't, she broke Philani's heart when they were teenagers."

Me: "Oh." This is interesting, Philani with a broken heart?

Kholiwe: "She married some Nigerian guy when she was 19 and studying at DUT while Philani was overseas, five years later guy got his SA ID and brought a wife from home with four kids, threw her out in the cold."

Me: "That's sad."

Kholiwe: "Not really. If you had seen her in those five years being a slay queen around here looking down on people. Mxm she got what she deserved cause her mother told her not to marry that guy. But she wouldn't listen."

And now she thinks she can come back into Philani's life and all will be forgotten. Over my dead body shame." I laugh.

We got home just after five, the kids helped unpack the groceries. I started cooking and Philani wasn't there, by the time I went to bed he still wasn't home. I just took a bath and slept, hopefully he is safe wherever he is cause even his phone goes straight to voicemail.

INSERT 26

It's been a tense few days, Bab'Biyela finally told Philani about his treatment, I am not sure what was said though because Philani did not come home that night and he has been sulking since.

Its Christmas eve and preparations are going very well. I haven't had a proper Christmas in years but this looks like it will be a good one, everyone has been assigned their duties for tomorrow which makes things easier and organized.

We were sitting outside by Bab'Zweli's house with aunty

Kholiwe, Kazi, Hlengiwe, aunt Kholiwe's daughter, Zuzu, aunt Bonakele's other daughter, MaSibiyi and MaKhumalo who are Bab'Zweli's daughters in law together with MaZulu, MaBhengu and Mamkhize, they are Bab'Nqoba and Bab'Goodwill's daughters in law. Mamkhize also happens to be Nokukhanya's sister. She seems like a nice person so I have chosen not to bundle her with her sister. We are all drinking wine from coffee mugs, blame aunty Kholiwe, apparently she enjoys corrupting everyone. She actually brought a suitcase

full of wine and I mean a suitcase. But Gogo doesn't allow alcohol so we have to hide it.

We were talking and laughing about silly things when Nokukhanya made her way to us. As soon as she stood before us we all went silent.

Nokukhanya: "Sanibonani. (Hello)"

All: "Hi."

Nokukhanya: "Ukhona uPhilani? (Is Philani here)" She asks and everyone gives her a look that says fuck off, including her sister.

Me: "He is sleeping. I can take you to him." She smiles.

Nokukhanya: "Its okay, I know

the way."

Me: "Please, i insist." I get up and lead the way and she follows. I can feel everyone looking at us. We get to the house and I open the door for her. She walks in and stands in the lounge. "Wait here, I will tell him you are here." I go over to the bedroom open the door and close it. Philani is not here, he never was but she doesn't know that. I walk back to the lounge. "I am sorry it seems my husband is not here, maybe he woke up while we were sitting outside. Is there anything I can help you with?"

Nokukhanya: "Oh I just came to give him his watch, he left it at home the other night so I thought I should bring it to him." I take the watch from her.

Me: "Thank you, I will make sure he gets it." She turns around and walks towards the door before making a u-turn and coming back to stand in front of me.

Nokukhanya: "You are not his type, you know that right?"

Me: "I know, he is also not your type, I heard you like them rich, married and foreign.

Unfortunately for Philani he is only two of those things." She

chuckles.

Nokukhanya: "I enjoyed spending time with him the other day, and he seemed to have fun too. I am sorry he didn't come home, we just.....got caught in the moment."

Me: "That's okay." I had to control my urge to break her nose right there and then. But I have also never been the "deal with the other woman" type of girl. If Philani did cheat I know to deal with him, after all I married him not the other woman.

Nokukhanya: "He is the love of my life, and I am his, if you think you

can use that bastard child to hold on to him think again. He will leave you and come back to me like he always does."

I was about to say something when Aunty Kholiwe came rushing into the room.

Kholiwe: "Nokukhanya leave her alone." She shouts, Nokukhanya and I look at her shocked, not knowing what's happening. She rushes over to me and hugs me.

"Cry and just go with everything." She whispers in my ear. I do as I am told and I start sobbing on her shoulder. Just then Philani, Bab'Biyela, Bab'Zweli, Bonakele

and Banzi, Mamkhize's husband come rushing into the lounge.

Philani: "What the fuck is happening?"

Kholiwe: "uNokukhanya ushaya uLando. (Nokukhanya is beating Lando)"

Bonakele: "Kholiwe stop lying, Khanya would never do that."

Banzi: "Nokukhanya what's going on here, what are you doing here?"

Nokukhanya: "Sbali I swear I did not hit her, I just came to give Philani his watch, I promise you I did not do anything."

Bab'Biyela: "Makoti, what

happened?" I should not have gone with Kholiwe's plan, but there's no going back now, it's time for Mrs Swanepoel's drama lessons to come into play. I lift my head from aunt Kholiwe's shoulder and wipe my crocodile tears, I look at everyone and their eyes are fixed on me.

Me: "We were sitting outside when Nokukhanya came in looking for Philani so I offered to bring her here cause when I left he was sleeping but when we got here he wasn't in. When I told her that she gave me his watch and said he left it at her place.

Then I asked what's happening between them she started telling me that she was the love of his life and that I am just a gold digger and he would leave me and my bastard child. Then I told her to stop calling my child a bastard that's when she hit me and called me a whore, if aunt Kholiwe hadn't come in I don't know what would have happened." I say a silent prayer asking God to forgive me for lying to my elders. Aunt Kholiwe side hugs me and wipes the tears running down my face. Aunt Bonakele claps her hands and looks at me.

Bonakele: "Hhay sisi Nomzamo Mbatha has nothing on you, you can act shem."

Bab'Zweli: "Nokukhanya I think you should leave, and dont ever come back here uninvited again syezwana."

Nokukhanya: "Kodwa baba angenzanga lutho. Ngyafunga. (I didn't do anything, I swear.)"

Banzi: "Hamba Nokukhanya." She leaves followed by aunt Bonakele.

Bab'Biyela: "Ncese Makoti. (Sorry)" He says as he walks out followed by Banzi and Bab'Zweli. As soon as they leave Philani turns to us.

Philani: "So who's idea was this."

Kholiwe: "What do you mean Philani?"

Philani: "I know she didn't hit you Landokuhle so who came up with this stupid idea."

Kholiwe: "Ima ke Philani (hold on), so what you are saying is that I am lying, mina, your aunt and your elder, I am lying? Okay." She walks out leaving me with my husband looking at me like I ate his chocolate cake.

Philani: "Lando, are you seriously going to lie to me." I am not about to admit to shit so I decide to change the subject.

Me: "Are you sleeping with her?"
He looks shocked, like he wasn't expecting that.

Philani: "What the fuck are you talking about?"

Me: "She brought your watch, said you left it at her place, how did it get there, unless you were there too."

Philani: "Nothing happened."

Me: "So you were with her? was this the night you didn't come home?"

Philani: "I was upset okay, I had just found out my father almost died, I just needed someone to talk to and she was there but

nothing happened."

Me: "So you couldn't talk to me or anybody else in this yard. There are about a zillion people walking around here and you couldn't talk to anyone of them, you had to go to her?"

Philani: "I swear nothing happened Landokuhle." I throw the watch at him and leave him there.

NARRATED

Bonakele and Sindiswa decide to walk Nokukhanya out. They walk along the road oblivious to Kholiwe

who is quietly following behind them.

Nokukhanya: "I can't believe that girl lied like that. And everyone believed her. Mxm."

Sindiswa: "Dont worry about it they will see through her very soon. That woman is a gold digging snake, I can't believe they let bhut Philani marry her."

Bonakele: "Tell me something I dont know, and now Kholiwe is stuck to her like glue."

Sindiswa: "That one goes where the wind blows. She is just going along with this stupid marriage because malume Busani gives her

money."

Nokukhanya: "And this whole thing was her idea futhi, she is the one who told that girl to lie."

Kholiwe: "So what if I did?" They turn around quickly shocked to find her there.

Bonakele: "You are following us now Kholiwe, you should be ashamed of yourself."

Kholiwe: "Me, ashamed? For what? Mhm. For what Bonakele? When will you grow up? Scheming and planning with children. You should be worried about that husband of yours who is in Mauritius with his side chick."

Sindiswa: "Hhaya aunty don't talk about my father like that. He would never cheat on mama."

Kholiwe laughs clapping her hands.

Kholiwe: "Oh sthandwa Sam, mama didn't tell you. Your father is leaving her for a twenty five year old. While your mother is busy trying to break up people's marriages instead of fixing her own."

Sindiswa: "Mama, she is lying right?"

Kholiwe: "Hhaya you can discuss that later. For now I will tell you this, stay the fuck away from

Philani and his wife. Wena
Nokukhanya uravazwe ma
Nigerians eDurban now you think
you can come here and pick up
where you left off with Philani,
forget and smile moghel. Wena
Sindiswa I would say go find
yourself a man but the way you
are so fertile you will end up
overcrowding the full box of
crayons you already have so maybe
focus on getting your degree.
Wena Bonakele, grow up man. Nx."
She turns and walks away and
then comes back and stands in
front of them again. "Also, if my
brother wants to give me money

how exactly does that bother you? Is it yours? Leave Lando alone, or you will have me to deal with." She walks away leaving them shocked.

Sindiswa: "Ma, is it true?"

Bonakele: "Hhay man Sindiswa, this has nothing to do with you. Let's go."

They continue on their way.



LANDO

I haven't seen or spoken to Philani since I threw his watch at him earlier. I can't believe he went to that woman, I know he

is hurting because of what his father said to him but that does not excuse him spending the night with another woman. Although he says nothing happened a part of me refuses to believe him.

I walk into the bedroom after leaving Theo with Qhawekazi, and find the shower running. I didn't know he was back already. I take off my clothes and put on a gown, I need a shower too before I sleep. I decide to lay on the bed going through my social media pages, liking and commenting where necessary. After a while the shower stops

running and he comes out in his birthday suit. I swallow the lump in my throat as I look at him through the dressing table mirror. The droplets of water on his chocolate skin makes him look like a walking talking art piece. And then I remember I am still mad at him.

Me: "Philani the carpet is getting wet." He looks at me through the mirror.

Philani: "The carpet or you?" He says turning around and putting his hands on his waist with his dick dangling around. Jesus Christ! I got up and went to the

bathroom leaving him standing there laughing. I closed the door and just took a deep breath. I got into the shower and the water was cold. He finished all the hot water. Oh what the heck, I do need a cold shower to extinguish the fire burning between my thighs.

I get out the shower and cover myself in a towel before going back into the bedroom. I find him sitting on the chair by the open window busy on the phone texting someone. I really hope it's not that woman. He puts the phone away as soon as he sees me and

smiles. I sit on the stool by the dressing table and lotion myself while he watches me. I get up and turn my back to him, I lift my leg up and put it on the stool and lotion my legs, I know he is watching cause the towel rises up to reveal my butt cheeks. I finish with the one leg and move to the other one. By the time I am finished with the other leg he is behind me holding my waist.

I arch my back allowing my butt to grind on his dick as he kisses my neck. He untangles the towel around my chest and let it fall to the ground. I turn around and

push him back to the seat he was on before straddling him.

Apparently when a man is horny he can tell you the secret codes for the nuclear weapons. I decide to test out that theory.

Me: "Why did you go to her?" He stops sucking my boobs and looks at me.

Philani: "I didn't go to her. She found me by the river."

Me: "And what were you doing there?"

Philani: "Thinking! After what my father said to me I needed to digest everything so I went to the river, maybe she saw me

going there so she followed me."

Me: "So why didn't you come home afterwards?"

Philani: "It started raining so we ended up at her house, it's close to the river. I thought I could wait for the rain to stop but it didn't."

Me: "And you couldn't call anyone to come pick you up?"

Philani: "Lando look, I realize there are about a zillion options that I could have taken and unfortunately I chose the wrong one, I am sorry baby. My mind was all over the place."

Me: "You didn't sleep with her?"

Philani: "As God is my witness, I did nothing with her." I believe him, i dont know why but I do. Tomorrow is Christmas, a joyful time.

Me: "I know you are upset about your father and you feel guilty for not being there for him, but I can assure you right now he was in good hands, Dr Ahlberg is one of the leading oncologists in the world."

Philani: "I know." He says while planting small kisses on my chest. But then he stops and looks at me. "How do you know my father's doctor?" Oh shit. I close my eyes

silently cursing myself and my big mouth. I should have just let it go. "Landokuhle?"

Me: "Uhm..... I..... I am..... I am the one who found him."

Philani: "You knew my father was sick and you didn't think to tell me?" He tries to push me off him but I hold on to the back of the chair with my hands and feet.

Me: "It wasn't my place to tell you Philani. He wanted to tell you himself."

Philani: "You are my wife Lando, you should have told me." He tries to push me off again but I hold on to the chair. "Get off me."

Me: "No. We need to talk about this and you are not walking out on me."

Philani: "Lando!" He pushes until my one hand is free, but instead of letting him go I lock my legs around his waist and my hands around his neck. He gets up and tries to free himself from me but I refuse to let go. "I want to get dressed."

Me: "Its late, where are you going? To her? If you are leaving then we are leaving together."

Philani: "You are naked."

Me: "I was born naked. And I am not ashamed of my body so let's

go." He walks to the door, opens it and stands there.

Philani: "Lando."

Me: "Let's go!" I feel my heart beating fast as he takes the first step out, my mind says let him go but the alcohol in my system says go where he goes. I didn't realize how drunk I was until now. He walks down the passage towards the lounge. He quickly turns around and goes back to the bedroom when we hear laughter coming from the lounge, I think its Sihle and Banele and some other voices I didn't recognize. He gets to the bedroom

and quickly shuts the door.

Philani: "Lando get off me man."

Me: "Not until we talk. I know you are upset with me right now and I would rather you yell and scream at me than go and talk to that woman."

Philani: "And what makes you think I am going to her?"

Me: "That's what you did last time."

He tries to throw me onto the bed but because I am holding on tight he follows and falls on top of me.

Philani: "I want to sleep."

Me: "So we are not going to talk

about this,"

Philani: "I want to sleep."

I take a deep breath and let him go. He gets under the covers and switches off the lamp on his side. I get under the covers and switch of my lamp.

Even though we didn't talk I am grateful that he is here and not wherever the fuck he wanted to go. Maybe in the morning he will be feeling better then we can talk. I turn on my side and doze off sooner than I wanted. Alcohol will do that to you.

INSERT 27

I woke up alone. This is really tiring. One moment I am angry at him and the next he is mad at me, honestly this back and forth is getting a bit much. I get up and go to the bathroom, I take a shower, brush my teeth and walk into the bedroom. I find his phone on the dressing table, he must have forgotten it there. I lotion and get dressed. I wear an A line denim skirt with a white short sleeve tshirt and some gladiator sandals. I wrap my head in a colorful doek and I put on a white shawl over my shoulders. Honestly

I am glad I only have to do this for just a few days, I would not survive wearing this every single day of my life.

I take Philani's phone and put it in my pocket and put mine on the other side. I walk out to the kitchen and find him sitting at the kitchen counter eating cereal. Me: "You know you could have woken me up, I would have made you breakfast."

He looks up at me and goes back to his food. I guess silent mode has been activated. "So vele you are not going to talk to me?" He

gets up and puts the bowl in the sink before walking out.

I go to Kazi's room and it's empty. I guess she took Theo out. I go back to the kitchen and find aunt Kholiwe.

Kholiwe: "Makoti, I have been waiting for you let's go."

Me: "Where are we going?"

Kholiwe: "To the school hall to distribute the food parcels."

Me: "Ok. Let's go."

We walked out and found Kazi and the others waiting. We got into the different cars and drove to the school.

Turns out they do this every year. Give out food parcels to the needy. And it's not just food, they also give toys and clothes to the children. And those who did well during the school year were given presents. It was something beautiful.

I was outside the hall with Theo on my back trying to get him to sleep when Gogo called me. She was sitting under a tree with some other gogo's. I went over to them and she introduced me to them. After some time the oldies left and it was just us.

Gogo: "So what's bothering you?"

Me: "Nothing gogo, I am fine."

Gogo: "Dont lie to me makoti, I can see something is wrong. What is it?"

Me: "My husband is not talking to me. I didn't tell him about ubaba being sick now he is angry."

Gogo: "Dont worry about that one, he is not angry at you he is angry at himself. And he feels guilty for not being there for his father or even his mother so now he is taking it out on you."

Me: "Wena you are not angry at me?"

Gogo: "Why would I be angry at you? You saved my sons life." She

takes a deep breath. "One thing I have always prayed for is to never bury any of my children. God has been faithful in that regard, Philani's mother was the first child I had to bury, even though she was just my daughter in law it still hurt. You forcing Busani to get treatment just proved that uMa kaPhilani was right about you. And that is why her dying wish was for Philani to marry you."

Me: "wait but I thought his father was the one who wanted that." She chuckles.

Gogo: "He did too but his mother

also wanted it. In fact she made him promise that he would make sure you two got married."

Me: "You all have so much faith in me."

Gogo: "You are a good person Landokuhle, any one who knows you can see that. And you are good for Philani too. He is happier with you."

Me: "I don't know about that. He isn't even talking to me."

Gogo: "He will come around. Let's go see why those kids are still not done. I am hungry and its almost lunch time."

I help her up and we walk back

to the hall. We find everyone cleaning up. When they are done we go back home. Lunch is served. Its really good, turns out Zuzu was the supervisor, she is studying to be a chef after all. She is different from her mother and sister so I like her. After lunch the drunkards gather in Mamkhize's house and we drink our 'tea'. We laugh and chat about anything and everything. I called Gugu and Ntombi and they seem to be enjoying themselves. In spite of everything I am happy to have my sisters back in my life. Buli and

Nate are vacationing somewhere in the Maldives and Faith is on Makoti duties in Mtubatuba.

Overall we had a great Christmas. I think I enjoyed being a part of a family more than anything. I can feel the love, even though there has been some negativity, all in all I think my in-laws like me, that's all a girl can ask for.

After our drunk meeting I decided to go to bed. Qhawekazi is bonding with Theo so she wanted to sleep with him.

I got to our room and Philani wasn't there. I dont know why

that made me sad or maybe I was hoping he would be here, even though he is mad at me. I go to the bathroom and take a shower. When I am done I go into the bedroom and find him sitting on the bed with his head bowed. He looks up when he notices me standing there and not saying anything. He holds out his hand and I walk over to him and stand between his open legs. He hugs me and wraps his hands around my waist with his head on my stomach. My hands go to his head and just hold it.

Philani: "I am sorry."

Me: "It's okay."

Philani: "No it's not, I shouldn't be taking out my frustrations on you." He takes a deep breath. "I just wish I was there for him. My mother needed me and I wasn't there and now my father could have died and still I wasn't there for him, now he thinks I don't care."

Me: "Maybe you two need to sit down and talk about this. I know it's just as hard on you as it is on him."

Philani: "He thinks we don't care and maybe he is right, we are just ungrateful spoiled brats." I lift his

head up and he looks at me.

Me: "You know that's not true, and he knows it too." I sit on his lap. "You two need to sit down and talk, properly, because regardless of what happened before you need each other. You both have unresolved pain that you need to let go."

Philani: "What if we can't? Or maybe everything that's happening is our punishment. Maybe we deserve all the bad things that's happening to us."

Me: "Baby nobody deserves to have bad things happen to them, except maybe Vusi. But you need

to stop feeling guilty about this. Your mum loved you, you know that. The fact that you saw her before she died is enough. You got to tell her you were sorry while she could hear you, she might not have been able to reply but she heard you. Stop punishing yourself for this."

Philani: "My dad thinks we don't care. That's why he didn't tell us. He thinks we don't care."

Me: "That's just his pain talking. He knows you care and you love him."

Philani: "I wish I could believe that."

Me: "Well mine I do, since you dont believe it I will believe for the both of us until you catch up." He laughs.

Philani: "I just realized something?"

Me: "What?"

Philani: "We haven't had sex since we got here and it's been a whole week, hhay ke uyanglambisa manje.(you are starving me now)."

Me: "Hha Philani, we are not having sex in your father's house."

Philani: "But we almost did it yesterday!"

Me: "I was drunk." He laughs again. I love it when he laughs.

He's like an innocent little boy.

Philani: "If you keep hanging around aunt Kholiwe she will corrupt you."

Me: "She's a drama queen that one. Go take a bath so we can sleep."

Philani: "Uyangncisha vele." He says as his hands made their way up my thighs, under the towel. As much as his hands were doing things to me I was not ready to be moaning and screaming while his father was in the other room. Even his ancestors would turn their backs on him. I put my hand over his and he stopped.

Me: "Hamba uyogeza Biyela." He sighs and places me on the bed before standing up. He looks at his now erect dick and then he looks at me and he looks at his dick again.

Philani: "Hhay asambe Ntshangase siyogeza bathi awudli namuhla. (Let's go bath, you are not eating today.)" I laugh as he makes his way to the bathroom. While others were being blessed with husbands I got a lunatic.



I was woken up by the sound of kids playing outside. Seriously! It's barely six o'clock. I decide to wake up and take a shower before heading to the kitchen to make breakfast. I am sure everyone had way too much yesterday so I decide on making oats. As I am busy cooking the front door opens and Sindiswa walks in. She walks over to the kitchen and takes a seat on the high chair. She doesn't even greet, and if she thinks I will open my mouth and greet her first then she has another thing coming.

I go about my business and just flat out ignore her, but I can feel her eyes burning holes in my skin. When I am done I dish up for Philani in a bowl and put it in a tray. I take his food to the bedroom. When I come back I notice Sindiswa is sitting on the other high chair. My gut tells me she is up to something but I decide to put that thought out of my head. I decide to dish up for Kazi too and serve her in her room. She takes the food and I take Theo and go back to the kitchen.

When I get back Sindiswa is now in the lounge flipping through channels on the TV. I make Theo's bottle and feed him. Kazi comes into the kitchen and I notice she didn't even touch her food. In fact she looks like she is nervous about something.

Me: "I thought you said you were hungry."

Kazi: "I am."

Me: "Then why aren't you eating?"

Kazi: "Have you eaten?"

Me: "Not yet. Why what's going on." She takes a bit of the oats and puts it in my mouth. I spit it

out as soon as I taste it. Its salty. What in the actual Fuck. And then it clicks. Sindiswa! I walk over to her and stand in front of the TV.

Sindiswa: "I was watching that."

Me: "Why would you do that?"

Sindiswa: "What did I do?"

Me: "You put salt in the food."

Sindiswa: "Hhay bo sisi, if you can't cook dont shift the blame on me." I take the remote and

switch off the TV. She stands up and stands in front of me. "Don't try me wenja. Open the TV."

Me: "Not until you admit to what you did."

Sindiswa: "I. DID. NOTHING."
She tries to grab the remote from my hand. Kazi comes to where we are and takes Theo from me. "Yewena sfebe bring that remote." She tries to fight me for the remote but I keep moving it away from her. Next thing i know she slaps me. Oh Hell No! I throw the remote on the other couch and pull her by her weave and she ends up on the floor. I get on top of her with my knee on her chest and slap her one too many times. She screams and hurls insults at me but I refuse to stop. While I am busy doing

that I feel strong hands pull me back from her but I pull her weave to wherever i am being dragged to as she follows head first.

Philani: "Lando let go of her!" I let go and Philani places me in the kitchen where Banele, Sihle and Kazi are watching us fighting, while Sindiswa stays in the lounge. I look down at my hands and I have a large pile of her hair in my hands. Just then the front door opens and a bunch of people run in, including Bonakele, Kholiwe, Bab'Zweli, Bab'Biyela and Bab'Nqoba. Sindiswa cries harder

when she sees her mother.

Bonakele rushes over to her and comforts her as she sits on the floor.

Bab'Biyela: "What the fuck is going on here?" He asks looking from Sindiswa to me and back to her again.

Sindiswa: "Lando started fighting me for no reason." I keep my mouth shut because I have embarrassed myself enough by fighting at my in-laws.

Bonakele: "Yiyona inhlobo yabafazi eniyfunayo laykhaya bhuti? (Are these the kinds of wives you want in this home.)"

Bab'Biyela: "Makoti?"

Kazi: "Hhay baba leave Lando alone. Lomthakathi lo (this witch) put salt in the food that Lando cooked." Everyone turns to look at Sindiswa.

Kholiwe: "Abathakathi sebesebenza emini libalele.

(Witches operate during the day now)"

Bonakele: "Musani ukubiza ingame yam ngomthakathi. (Dont call my child a witch)"

Kazi: "Yiciniso njena aunty (it's the truth)"

Bab'Zweli: "Sindiswa is it true?"

Sindiswa: "Malume bayangphoca

(they are lying). Its not my fault Lando can't cook."

Philani: "Yikuphi lokudla okufakwe usawoti. (which food had salt.)"

Kazi: "The oats Lando made for breakfast."

Philani walks over to the sink.

Opens the pot and closes it.

Philani: "Lando how many pots of oats did you cook." He asks coming back to stand in front of me.

Lando: "Just one." I say not looking at him.

Philani: "Is that the same pot you dished for me from."

Lando: "Yes."

Philani: "I just finished that oats

and it was fine."

Kazi: "So if you dished for me and Philani from the same pot how did my oats end up being salty while Philani's was fine?"

Lando: "Sindiswa can answer that. When I left to give Philani his food I left her here. I came back and dished for you and suddenly it was salty."

Kholiwe: "Sindiswa explain."

Bonakele: "Explain what? Leave my child alone and teach that gold digger how to cook. Get up let's go." She drags Sindiswa out leaving everyone gobsmacked.

Kholiwe: "Hhayike I give up!" She

says clapping her hands and walking out followed by everyone except Philani, Sihle, Kazi and Banele.

Banele: "Your cousin is full of shit yerrr."

Lando: "I am sorry you had to see that."

Sihle: "Dont worry about it Mike Tyson, we understand." Everyone bursts out laughing.

Kazi: "I am never getting on your wrong side shem." I smile and take Theo from her and head back to the bedroom.

Philani walks in after a while and finds me sitting on the bed

playing with Theo.

Philani: "Are you okay?"

Me: "Can we go home."

Philani: "We are home."

Me: "I mean our home. Our house. Can we just go back." He comes and sit next to me.

Philani: "Baby this is your home. I won't let you run away because of Sindiswa. This is just as much your home as it is hers."

Me: "Philani I got into a fight in your father's house. Do you know how wrong and embarrassing that is? How is everyone supposed to look at me? How am I supposed to look at your father

or even your grandmother? It's not right."

Philani: "Baby you were defending yourself. No one will judge you for that, and everyone knows Sindiswa had it coming anyway."

Me: "It still doesn't make it right Philani."

He side hugs me and kisses my forehead.

Philani: "Everything will be fine you will see."

Just then we hear a knock and Kazi pokes her head in.

Kazi: "Gogo is calling Lando." She smiles before closing the door

again.

Me: "See what I mean?"

I try my best to respect people, especially my elders. And after what happened today, I don't know how I will be able to face the Biyela family. Did Sindiswa deserve what happened? Most definitely. Should I have let my anger get the best of me? No. And now I am about to face the consequences of my actions. And here I was thinking I will have the best festive season in a long time.

INSERT 28

I walked into the main house with my hand firmly on my husband's hand. As nervous as I was knowing he has my back made me happy. Gogo was sitting on a couch with Bab'Zweli, Bab'Biyela, Bab'Nqoba, Banzi, Sihle and Banele on one side while Bonakele, Kholiwe, aunty Sphelele, Sindiswa and Qhawekazi were sitting on the other side. We got in and sat on a two sitter couch that was reserved for us. I sat down and I couldn't bring myself to look at anyone in the face so I kept my head down.

Gogo: "Now that everyone is here, I need to know what is happening, early in the morning and you are fighting. What's going on?" No one says anything. I guess even Sindiswa and her mother are going to be silent. "Am I talking to myself? Makoti."

Me: "Ngyacolisa gogo. (I am sorry)" I feel Philani gently squeezing my hand.

Gogo: "Ucoliselani? (Why are you sorry) what happened?" I take a deep breath and start telling her all that happened. I look at her and I can tell she is pissed. She looks at Sindiswa.

Gogo: "Sindiswa! Speak." Sindiswa looks at me with such venom in her eyes before telling her side of the story.

Gogo: "So the salt magically sprouted legs and made it's way to the food? Do you know how stupid that sounds Sindiswa."

Bonakele: "Hhaybo ma, she said she didn't do it."

Gogo: "Angkhulumi nawe Bonakele, (I am not talking to you.)

Sindiswa is an adult with a mouth she can speak for herself."

Bonakele: "But ma....."

Gogo: "But ma nothing. You allow Sindiswa to do whatever she

wants, half the people in this compound don't like her, they tolerate her because you can't throw a person away and it's all your fault. She terrorizes everyone and you stand behind her cheering her on. Why Bonakele? Where did I go wrong with you? Why do you two find so much pleasure in hurting your own family? Your brothers and cousins are afraid to bring their wives here because of you two, I can't see my great grandkids anytime I want because bomakoti don't like being here. They come once a year or when there is a need. Sindiswa

tell me what needs to happen for peace to reign in this home? What?"

Aunty Sphelele: "Mama the only way to stop a tree from growing is to dig up its roots. Everyone here knows that all that Sindiswa does is because sis Bonakele is always behind her shielding and protecting her knowing she is wrong."

Bonakele: "Sphelele dont try me....."

Sphelele: "Dont try you? Bonakele you are rotten and now your rot is spreading to Sindiswa. All your other children are nice and

respectful and then there's this spoilt brat you raised."

Sindiswa: "Aunty....."

Sphelele: "What? Am I lying? You are a spoilt brat."

Bonakele: "Sphelele I am warning you."

Sphelele: "Or what? You'll beat me? Never, Lando ukhona uzoypaka manje. (Lando is here she will beat you up now)"

Everyone bursts out laughing.

Seriously this family is nuts.

Gogo: "Ok that's enough. Sindiswa colisa ku makoti (say sorry)"

Sindiswa: "Hha gogo!"

Gogo: "Now!"

Sindiswa: "I'm sorry." She mumbles.

Gogo: "Louder!"

Sindiswa: "I Am Sorry!" She says. I know she doesn't mean it cause the attitude in her voice is visible to all.

Gogo: "That's better. And if I hear that you did something like this ever again, I still have my sjambok. You seem to have forgotten about it. You can leave." We wait for the others to leave first. Just as Philani and I get up gogo calls me. I go and sit next to her.

Gogo: "Listen I know what you

did was you defending yourself, but we dont use violence to solve problems in this family ok."

Me: "Ngyacolisa gogo, I didn't mean to be disrespectful." I say not looking at her.

Gogo: "I know. Sindiswa can be very rude and disrespectful and I am glad that you can stand up for yourself and not let anyone bully you. This is just as much your home as it is hers. So I want you to be comfortable and happy being here. Ok."

Me: "Thank you gogo."

I get up and leave her there. As I walk out the door I find aunty

Kholiwe waiting for me and she drags me to her house. As soon as she opens the door and we walk in the drunk squad starts ululating. I told you these people are crazy.

Zuzu: "Hhay no ngyakuvuma makoti, I yes you shem. Early in the morning and someone is already bruised." They laugh.

Me: "Wena shouldn't you be comforting your sister?"

Zuzu: "She has her mother for that my sister, she's the golden egg so trust me mama won't let her break."

Mamkhize: "You did the Lords work moghel." She hands me a

glass of wine. Just so you know it's not even 12 o'clock yet.

MaSibiyi: "Nje sisi, you did what most of us have been afraid to do for years."

MaKhumalo: "Now I know if she messes with me I call you." They laugh.

Kholiwe: "I don't know why you are all being so dramatic, I told you before don't let Sindiswa walk all over you. Just cause ningo makoti laykhaya doesn't mean people should walk all over you. Lobola was paid for each of you. You did not come in here via backdoor. You are Biyela's, even our ancestors

know you."

Me: "Except for me."

Kazi: "Trust me today they know you." We laugh. I guess I was just being dramatic wanting to go back home early.

After my encounter with Sindiswa the rest of my stay was smooth sailing. She stayed away from me and I stayed away from her and her mother too. I chose to focus on the good people in this family and leave the negative ones alone. We decided to go back to Joburg two days before new years, my husband decided we would host our friends for new years eve and

ring in the new year together. I missed them so I had to agree. We got to Joburg and it was actually calm, I know it's because most people went home. We decided to have dinner at San Deck in Sandton because I am not cooking when we get home. We were shown our table which overlooked the city, and it was beautiful seeing the lights of the city. Lights are my weakness after all.

We ordered drinks and some starters. When we were done we placed the orders for the main and while we waited I decided to

go to the bathroom and change Theo. When we came back i noticed Philani was sitting with someone, a female. They seemed way too close for my liking. I walked closer and noticed it was Ayanda. She had on a dress, I can't call it mini, more like micro. She was sitting with her legs crossed and her butt cheeks were visible to everyone. I am all for women dressing however they want but that dress should be against the law.

Me: "Hello Ayanda." She looked up at me with disdain in her face.

Ayanda: "Cute kid. Where's the

daddy?"

Me: "Probably the same place you left the rest of your dress. You on my seat."

She gets up and I take my seat. She stands beside me with her arms crossed. I look at her with an annoyed look on my face.

Me: "What can we do for you Ayanda?"

Ayanda: "I was actually talking to Philani. But we done now."

Me: "Good, now you can leave, we are trying to have a family dinner if you dont mind." She clicks her tongue, turns and walks away. I look back at Philani and he has his

elbow resting on the table and his face on his palm with a huge smile on his face.

Me: "What?"

Philani: "Do you know how sexy you look when you are jealous?"

Me: "I am not jealous."

Philani: "Ok." He says with the smile still plastered on his face.

Mxm man and their ego.

NARRATED

Ayanda got to the parking lot and got into her car and drove off.

She decided to call her friend Cebo.

Cebo: "Hey babe, where you at, we are running late."

Ayanda: "I am driving out of the

mall right now. You won't believe who I just ran into."

Cebo: "Who?"

Ayanda: "Philani and his stupid wife. They were having dinner at San Deck."

Cebo: "Okay, what happened?"

Ayanda: "Nothing much. I talked to Philani a bit before that idiot came back from changing her stupid baby."

Cebo: "Is the baby cute?"

Ayanda: "Focus Cebo."

Cebo: "I am just asking. You know I love babies."

Ayanda: "Speaking of babies. Is there a boarding school for

babies?"

Cebo: "Really Ayanda?"

Ayanda: "When I get Philani back I am sending that bastard child packing. It's a good thing they have family in the rural areas."

Cebo: "We are still going ahead with that?"

Ayanda: "Yes, and now that they are back it seems the security has been sent packing so we can carry out our plan."

Cebo: "Cool. I'll call the Thai contact. Mrs Biyela will be out of the country very soon."

Ayanda: "How will you get the guy cause Ngcebo was the one with

his number?"

Cebo: "I stole the number from his phone. He called him once when we were with him so..."

Ayanda: "Music to my ears. This is why I love you bitch. I will see you in five. Please be ready."

Cebo: "Duh I stay ready." She hangs up.

Ayanda opens the radio and starts singing along to Ella Mai's Bood up.



PHILANI

We got home a little past seven. Lando went up to bath Theo and put him to sleep so I decided to

go to my study to catch up on some work. Being home I didn't get the time to check my emails or even watch the news. There's so much yet so little to do, if that even makes sense. Being home also gave me a chance to see how my family feels about Lando and I am happy because they love her, except a couple of people but overall they loved her.

I get to the study and switch on my computer. I open my drawer and there's a little envelope. I open it and there's a handwritten note inside.

Dear Bhuti Philani

Thank you for opening up your home for me and allowing me to be a part of your family. Thank you for protecting me and being there for me and my sister through all that we've been through. You are an incredible human being and I am happy to call you my brother. I don't know how I will ever repay you for everything you have done for me but I know God will repay you for me. Thank you for being my angel on earth.

Love

Gugu

I put the note back in the envelope and I swear I felt a tear fall down my face. I wipe it away and focus back on my emails. I check my emails, respond to the urgent ones and delete the useless ones. I was about to log off when a news article popped up. I click on it and it's a TV segment on YouTube. I raise the volume and listen.

TV presenter: "Notorious Drug Cartel leader Raymond Rodriguez has been shot and killed. Police reports say the drug lord was assassinated at his home in Silicon Valley, California, USA on

Christmas day. The assassin has not been found and no one knows who it is. The FBI have taken over the case as Mr Rodriguez has slipped through their fingers for a long time now after investigating him for drug trafficking, money laundering and countless murders. The FBI have put out a reward for anyone who can lead them to the killer."

I switch off the computer and call my dad. He answers after the first ring.

Dad: "Son. Did you make it home safe?"

Me: "we did thanks. Have you

watched the news?"

Dad: "Not really, why?"

Me: "Mr Rodriguez is dead.

Apparently he was assassinated on Christmas day."

Dad: "Do they know who did it?"

Me: "Nope they say the killer is unknown."

Dad: "Oh well, may his soul rest in peace."

Me: "Is that all you are going to say?"

Dad: "What else can I say. He is dead, I can't bring him back. Try to find out who killed him though."

Me: "You think we know who killed

him?"

Dad: "No, but it might be favourable for us if we can find the person and deliver him to the cartel." Just then Lando walks in wearing close to nothing.

Me: "Dad I will call you when I get the info. I have to go."

I hang up just as she sits on the desk with her feet on the sides of the chair. I drag the chair closer to the desk and bury my face in her warm coochie. And I can feel UNshangase waking up. It's been too long.

INSERT 29

New year, new me. There's something refreshing about the start of a new year. It gives one the idea that they can be and do anything that they want and I guess I am one of those. It's the 31st and I am already writing my new year's resolutions, and top of that list is getting in shape, I am not totally out of shape but I could do with some toning and some squats.

Philani, Lindani and Theo went to buy meat for the braai later while Buli, Faith and I were busy making salads. Philani said this would be a formal braai, i have

never heard of it and quite frankly it's a stupid idea but since he is so excited about it I have to play along too. I already have my dress and shoes and i am just waiting to see how these men will be braaiing meat while wearing tuxedos and suits. I am ready to laugh.

We were busy in the kitchen sipping on some wine and chatting over stupid stuff when Faith leaned on the counter.

Me: "Are you okay?"

Faith: "I will be. I just have this nagging pain on my back."

Buli: "Have you seen a doctor? I

can ask Nate to check you out if you want."

Faith: "No, it's fine I am sure it will go away soon." She stands up straight again.

Me: "Are you sure?"

Faith: "Guys I am fine stop worrying. It comes and goes anyway. Let's finish up here so I can go home to change."

Buli: "No need, I asked your hubby to bring your dress here so we will be getting dressed upstairs."

Faith: "Thanks. Let's finish up so we can get ready."

Me: "It's not even 4 o'clock yet. We still have time."

Faith: "Okay."

We finish making the salads and place them in the fridge. By 5:30 the boys are back and getting the fire ready. Faith and Buli go to the guestrooms to change and I decide to bath and feed Theo first before getting ready. When I am done with him I take him downstairs and Mbusi is more than excited to see him and play with him.

I go back upstairs and take a shower. I lotion and put on my red evening dress. It is a mid length pencil dress with ruffles at the bottom. It hugs my body just

right and the top part of it has a sweetheart neckline and a lacy see through back and long sleeves. I put on my black YSL heels that have diamante detail on the straps. I brush my curly weave a little and pin one side so the curls fall on the other side. I put mascara and lipstick on and I am ready to ring in the new year.

I look in the mirror and I must admit, this dress is amazing, my husband really did a great job picking this out. Its perfect. I hear a knock on the door before Buli and Faith walk in looking amazing too. We stand in front of

the mirror just admiring ourselves and taking selfies.

Buli: "We look amazing ladies."

Faith: "Indeed."

Me: "Can we pray?" We hold hands and bow our heads. "Dear God,

Thank you. Your love and mercy upon our lives never ceases to

amaze. We are grateful for

blessings you have bestowed upon us, we are grateful for your

protection throughout this year

and we ask Lord that you continue to be our guide and our shining

light even in the next year.

Amen."

Amen.

We walked out the room and down the stairs to find the guys in the lounge ogling us as we descended the stairs. There were whistles and damns all around. The guys looked good in their tuxedos and suits. Philani walked over to me with Theo in his arms.

Philani: "You look amazing Mrs Biyela." He kissed me on the forehead.

Me: "Well you have great taste in fashion Mr Biyela so I should thank you for the dress."

Philani: "Thank you but you make the dress look exquisite. Like it was made just for you." I blush

as he plants small kisses on my face.

Lindani: "Hello! Some of us are single please respect us." Trust Lindani to spoil the mood. We walk outside to the braai area where we have also set up the table. It's summer and it's a perfect place to watch the fireworks at midnight. We decide to take pictures by the pool while the boys braai. Sizwe has turned into our personal photographer.

Sizwe: "How much am I getting paid for this?"

Buli: "We will get you a girlfriend." He laughs.

Sizwe: "I dont need a girlfriend. I am fine with the girl I am with thank you very much."

Faith: "We mean a proper girlfriend, one you can turn into a wife not these fly by nights you have."

Sizwe: "I think I will go back to the boys now before you girls marry me off." He hands the camera to Buli before running off.



PHILANI

I have been watching Lando take pictures by the pool and I must admit she looks good. The assistant at that boutique was

right, the dress really does compliment her complexion and makes her glow. As crazy as this year has been I am really grateful to have her in my life. I was busy watching her laughing and giggling when Nate joined me. Nate: "I know she's pretty but you are starting to look like a stalker." I laugh. "What's happening?"

Me: "What do you mean?"

Nate: "Something is bothering you, what is it?" I sigh.

Me: "Mr Rodriguez's death. My dad wants me to find out who is behind the assassination."

Nate: "Whoever did it needs a medal of honor." I smile.

Me: "I know, but I still need to find out who it is."

Nate: "The man has a lot of enemies bro, even in his own inner circle. Think about it though. He was at his home. That house has more security than the White House. And the fact that it took just one shot straight to the head, this person is a pro man."

Me: "I know. And no one knows where this person was when they took the shot, cause we know it couldn't have been inside the compound, he would have been

caught easily."

Nate: "This whole thing is baffling honestly. Clearly whoever did this is well trained and knows their story. Taking out a cartel boss in his home is the shit movies are made off." Lando walks over to where we are standing and wraps her hands around my waist.

Lando: "Baby we want to get to the new year full, what's taking the meat so long?"

Me: "You dont rush perfection baby."

Lando: "Right! Just dont burn the

meat." She slaps my butt before walking away.

Nate and I finish braaiing then we take the meat to the table.

Nate says grace, which is surprising cause he doesn't seem like the type that believes in God, but I guess you can't really judge a book by its cover.

At midnight we all wait by the pool and watch the fireworks, and welcome the new year. I hold my wife and kiss her when the clock strikes twelve.

Me: "Happy new year Mrs Biyela. May we see many more together."
"

Lando: "Happy new year Mr Biyela."



LANDO

While we were busy watching the fireworks I noticed Faith walking back to the house. I figured maybe she just wanted to pee, we have been drinking after all. A few minutes after she goes in I get a text from her asking me to come to the bathroom. I quickly rush into the house and go upstairs, I find her in the guest bathroom. I knock.

Me: "Faith it's me. Open up." She opens the door and I walk in to

find her leaning on the sink in pain.

"Friend what's going on?"

Faith: "Something is coming out of me. I don't know what it is."

Dear Lord I hope she is not about to soil herself.

Me: "Faith if you want to poop use the toilet."

Faith: "Poop doesn't come out of your vagina Lando." What the fuck is happening right now.

Me: "Ok get into the tub, let's see what's happening down there." I pull the zip of her dress down and the dress falls to her ankles. She tries climbing into the tub but it proves to be mission

impossible. "Ok this is not working, let's go to the bed." I help her walk back into the bedroom and help her climb up the bed. I pull down her panties and holy Mary mother of Jesus.

Faith: "Lando what is it?" She asks starting to panic. I text Buli to come upstairs and bring Nate. I also text Mbusi. "Lando! Please just tell me."

Me: "Nate is coming, he'll know what to do."

Faith: "Lando am I dying?" I see tears fall down her face. She is in pain and she is scared.

Me: "Of course not." Just then

Nate and Buli walk in giggling and being lovey dovey. Ok this is not the time. "What the fuck took you so long." They look up at me and then their smiles fade when they see Faith. Nate rushes to her.

Nate: "What the fuck?"

Faith: "What? Ow ow ow ow.

What the heck is happening to me." Mbusi walks in and rushes to his wife's side.

Mbusi: "Baby what's wrong?"

Faith doesn't answer him instead she sobs some more. "Nate what's happening?"

Nate: "She is in labour."

"WHAT?" We all scream at the

same time.

Nate: "Yes and if we dont get that baby out now....." He says grabbing the first aid kit from the closet. I dont know who told Philani to have one in every room but boy am I glad he did.

Mbusi: "Let's call an ambulance then."

Nate: "We can call it but by the time they get here the baby will be dead." I text Philani and tell him to get an ambulance here fast. He calls me but I cut the call.

Faith: "NATE JUST GET IT OUT!" she yells in between her

painful screams.

Nate: "Okay, the baby is already crowning so I need you to push okay." She nods. "Ok take a deep breath and push." She does as she is told and soon the baby's head comes out, followed by the shoulders and then the rest of its body. "It's a boy." I thought a baby is supposed to cry when it's born but he's not crying. Nate does a bit of CPR on him and after some time his cries fill the room. I have never been so relieved in my life. He wraps the baby in a towel and is about to hand him over to Faith when we

notice she is still in pain. Nate checks her out while Mbusi holds the baby and Buli and I are busy looking at the newborn with tears in our eyes.

Nate: "You need to push again cause theres another baby." We all look at him in shock. I mean one baby is understandable but two? Where the fuck were they hiding all this time. She pushes a few more times and out pops another baby. This time it's a girl. I think she is a bit dramatic this one cause the moment she is out her cries just fill the room. I keep wiping tears from my eyes

but the more I do that, the more they fall. We have prayed for a moment like this so many times, and just when we have given up God shows off. Two babies we didn't even know were coming.

I look at Mbusi and he is crying. Strong as he is, he is in tears. I know its tears of joy. They have wanted this for so long and now its here. We are all brought back to reality when the Philani knocks on the door and the Paramedics walk in with a stretcher. Nate explains to them everything that happened. They put Faith on the stretcher and wrap the babies in

that foil thingy, I guess it's to keep them warm. They take them away. Nate and Buli go with them to the hospital.

As soon as they leave Philani walks over to me and hugs me from behind.

Philani: "I thought miracles only happened around Christmas time."

Me: "Technically speaking it still is around Christmas so....."

Philani: "I guess so. Talk about starting the new year right."

Me: "Yeah."



NARRATED

Early in the morning, Mbusi, Buli and Nate are at the hospital waiting for news on Faith and the babies. A doctor appears from the emergency room. The three stand up when the doctor gets close to them.

Mbusi: "Doctor how is my wife? Can I see her? What about the babies, are they okay?"

The doctor raises his hand to stop Mbusi.

Dr: "One question at a time Mr Ngcobo. But to answer your questions, your wife and your babies are perfectly fine. The babies are healthy as they should

be. You can take them home later today or tomorrow morning."

Mbusi let's out a sigh of relief.

Mbusi: "Can I see them?"

Dr: "Of course. I'll take you to your wife first." Mbusi and the doctor walk away leaving Buli and Nate standing there.

Nate: "You want to see the babies?" He asks looking at Buli.

Buli: "Can we?"

Nate: "Of course. Let's go." He holds her hand and leads her to the nursery. They stand outside the window and look at the babies. Luckily for them the babies are close to the window so

they can see them perfectly.

Nate wipes away a tear that has fallen from Buli's eyes.

Nate: "You happy?"

Buli: "I always wished this day would come but after everything that Faith has gone through I didn't think it would come like this, like a huge surprise for everyone."

Nate: "God and His secret plans."

Buli: "Yep. You can't confirm that guy. He works according to his own schedule."

They stay and watch the babies for a while before they leave and go home. It's been a long night.

Meanwhile in Faith's room, Mbusi has just left to go see the babies. Faith turns over on her bed and is startled as she finds the old woman sitting on the chair next to her bed.

Faith: "You again."

Old woman: "Hi princess." She has a smile on her face.

Faith: "You are back. What are you doing here?"

Old woman: "I came to see the babies. They are very cute."

Faith: "How did you know about that?"

Old woman: She smiles. "I know everything about you princess."

Remember the last time I told you things would work out the way they are supposed to."

Faith: "But why couldn't you tell me then that I was pregnant."

Old woman: "It was the only way to protect you and the babies."

Faith: "Ok so what now?"

Old woman: "Now you wait seven days before letting your in-laws know about the babies. Make sure even your husband knows that too."

Faith: "He is too excited for that. I am sure he has already told them by now."

Old woman: "It is very important

that you wait for that seven days. If you dont something bad might happen. So find a way to convince him." Faith closes her eyes.

Faith: "I dont know how." She opens her eyes to find Mbusi standing next to her. She looks around but the old woman is gone.

Mbusi: "Baby are you okay?"

Faith: "Yeah I am fine. Who are you trying to call?"

Mbusi: "My dad, his phone goes straight to voicemail. I can't wait to tell him the good news."

Faith: "Please dont tell them just yet."

Mbusi: "Why? Baby this is good news they will be happy for us."

Faith: "I know they will be, but you know how grandparents are, they will be fussing over them all day every day, so maybe let's just have this one week to ourselves so we can bond with them. Just us and no interruptions."

Mbusi: "Fine. If that's what you want. But as soon as this week is up I am shouting it from the rooftops." He says getting into the bed with Faith. Faith laughs.

Faith: "I don't doubt that for a second." She rests her head on his chest.

Mbusi: "I can't believe we are parents."

Faith: "Right."



LANDO

It's the first of January and like many people I have resolutions and one of them is to get fit. I figure theres no time like the present to start. I will start by jogging up the street and back again. And then I can go and see Faith and the babies later.

I take a shower, lotion and put on my gym gear. I walk down the stairs and find Philani and Theo

playing in the lounge.

He looks up with a smirk on his face.

Philani: "I have never seen you in gym clothes before. Are you going to the gym?"

Me: "Nope, just jogging up the street and back again." I reply, stretching my arms.

Philani: "You do know there's a gym in the house right?"

Me: "I know that I just need fresh air."

Philani: "Ok. Call me when you need me to come pick you up." He says focusing back on Theo. Mxm this man thinks I can't jog the 4km

up the road. This will be child's play. I leave him there and stroll down to the gate. The security sees me coming and they open the gate. As soon as I am out I put on my headphones and start jogging. Halfway up the road I can feel my heart wanting to come out of my chest, but trust and believe I am not going back, if I do I will be giving Philani something to laugh about for the next year or maybe even forever. I mean I have barely ran 1km. Finally I make it up the road. I take a breather and sit on the pavement. After a few minutes I

decide to walk back, I am not running this time.

I walk down the road and notice a car parked in the middle of the road, it must be broken. I decide to mind my business and keep it moving. As I get close to the car the front door opens and a guy comes out.

Guy: "Sisters." I take off my headphones and look at him.

Me: "Hi!"

Guy: "Can I use your phone, my car just died and I need to call my insurance company to come tow it. My phone is also dead."

Me: "Sure." I walk over to him

and hand him my phone. He dials a number and puts the phone in his ear. As he begins to talk to the person on the other end I feel a sting on my neck. I touch my neck and find nothing, it must have been a bee or a mosquito. I look behind me and there's another guy with a needle in his hands. I look at the first guy and my eyes start seeing double. Before I know it its lights out.

INSERT 30

PHILANI

It's been two hours since Lando left. Going up and down the street even for an amateur cannot take two hours. Where could she be. I decide to put Theo in his stroller and walk up the road, maybe she is resting somewhere. We get to the gate and walk out. I look up and down but there is no sign of her. I walk up the road but still nothing. I go back down and walk the opposite direction, maybe she went the other route. I start to panic when I realize there is no sign of her anywhere. I go back to the house and try to call her but her

phone rings until it sends me to voicemail. Where the fuck could she be. I decide to text Sbu to trace her number.

I start pacing up and down while waiting for Sbu to call. I try her number one more time and still it goes to voicemail after ringing for a while. After some time the door bell rings. I go and open hoping it's her but it's just Nate, Lindani, Sizwe and Sbu. They walk in and follow me to the lounge.

Lindani: "Dude what's going on? Where is Lando?"

Sizwe: "Dont tell me she left you already?" He laughs. I look at him

and his laugh fades. "It was just a joke."

Nate: "This is not the time for jokes bra."

Sizwe: "You're right sorry."

Me: "What did you find?" I ask turning to Sbu who is busy on his laptop.

Sbu: "According to her phone signal, she is around the neighborhood."

Me: "I went up and down the street a few minutes ago there was no sign of her."

Lindani: "Let's follow the signal and see where it leads. Wena

David Kau stay with the baby."

Sizwe: "Really Lindani." We leave him there and walk out. We decide to walk up the road cause that's the route she said she would take. Sbu has his iPad and theres a beeping sound. It gets louder and louder. I guess we are getting close. It starts beeping non stop and Sbu stops so we stop too. He starts looking around so we look around too.

Nate: "I think I found something." We walk over to where he is standing and look down. Its a phone. But that's not the alarming part. There is a syringe next to the phone. I pick

up the phone and unlock it and there I am met by Theos smiling face. Its Landos phone. They took her. They took my wife.

Nate takes a handkerchief from his pocket and picks up the syringe.

Nate: "We need to get this tested."

We walk back to the house. I decide to call my dad and he offers to come home with Qhawekazi, which works for me cause I need to focus on finding Lando and Kazi can babysit. The boys left to start the search and since we have no nanny yet I have to stay

with Theo. I dont know who took Lando, but they just signed their own death certificate because I will not rest till I find her and bring her home. And then kill them.



LANDO

I woke up in an unfamiliar place. My head hurt, it was like I had a hangover. I opened my eyes a little but the room I was in was not well lit so I couldn't see properly. There was a window on the other side of the room. It had no curtains so I could see it was already dark outside. I looked

around the room and I saw a figure sitting on the floor, I am not sure if its a man or woman but I can hear someone sniffing, like they are crying. Where the fuck am I?

I lifted my head but it was so heavy. I sat up and realized I was lying on a sponge. It smelt bad, like someone had peed on it a number of times. I sat up and noticed theres another person next to me. She was sitting up with her legs up to her chest and her arms around her knees.

Groggy as I was I knew this is not where I am supposed to be.

Me: "Where am I?"

Girl: "I dont know."

Me: "You work here?" She chuckles.

Girl: "I wish. I am just in the same predicament as you." My heart starts beating fast at the realization. I have been kidnapped. What do they want? Money? Maybe they have called Philani to demand a ransom. Yes. I will be out of here soon.

Me: "How did you get here?"

Girl: "I wish I knew. Last thing I remember is walking down the road to the taxi rank after work, some guy offered me a ride. I

refused and kept walking,
someone put something over my
mouth and I woke up here."

Me: "So they drugged you?"

Girl: "Yep."

Me: "What do you think they
want? Money?"

Girl: "Money? Yes! From us? No. I
think they are going to traffic
us." I look at her like she just
turned into an alien.

Me: "What the fuck do you mean?"

Girl: "I have been here for a
week. If they wanted money they
would have contacted my family
by now but they haven't. So the
only logical explanation is human

trafficking." No. No no no. I can't be trafficked. What about my baby, my husband, Gugu. No. No. Me: "They can't do that."

Girl: "They can and they will. Unless someone out there is trying to find you, you're screwed."

Me: "I am sure my husband will find me."

Girl: "You're married?"

Me: "Yep."

Girl: "You look too young to be married." I laugh. "I am Takalani by the way but everyone calls me Taki."

Me: "Lando, short for Landokuhle." I look at the other girl who is

crying. "What's with her?"

Taki: "She was brought in yesterday. If she's not yelling and screaming she is crying. I got tired of trying to calm her down."

Me; "How come you dont seem phased by all this."

Taki: "Like I said I have been here for a week. I have gone through all the stages, grief, denial, shock, everything. I am just tired."

Me: "So you have given up, what about your family, won't they be worried?" She chuckles.

Taki: "If my family found out I was kidnapped they would

probably pay the kidnappers to keep me." Huh.

Me: "I don't understand?"

Taki: "My mum died when I was 7. I stayed with my aunt who turned me into a slave. After matric I left home and never looked back. I have been working at a club downtown for about two years now."

Me: "I am sorry to hear that." I know my own family is not the most perfect but surely they would want me back home. But then again theres my mother so maybe I am not one to judge.

Taki: "Dont be. Its life." She gets

up and goes to the other girl. She kneels in front of her. "Look you need to stop crying. You need to reserve your energy."

Girl: "I just want to go home."
She says sniffing.

Taki: "I know, we all do but crying isn't going to help. Come sit with us, maybe if we put our heads together we will come up with a plan and get out of here." She gets up and holds out her hand for the girl. She takes it and they walk back to where I am. They sit down. "I am Taki and this is Lando."

Girl: "I am Kelebogile. But

everyone calls me Kele."

Me: "Nice to meet you, so how did you get here?"

Kele: "I don't know. I was at a club with my friends, all I remember is some creepy guy groping me and my friends saying I should go along with it cause he was buying us drinks. I dont even drink alcohol. I tried to leave and one of my friends convinced me to stay for one more drink. I did and I woke up here."

Me: "Some friends you have."

Kele: "They didn't mean any harm."

Taki: "They let you be groped and

harrassed for alcohol that you dont even drink, how is that not meaning any harm?"

The door opens and a guy walks in. He turns on the switch on the wall and the room lights up. He looks at us huddled together. I recognize him. He's the guy I gave my phone to.

Guy: "Look at you forming a sisterhood. That's cute. But here's food. Eat." He places a plastic bag on the floor in front of us.

Me: "What do you want from us?"

Guy: "Nothing." He says walking out. Taki opens the plastic bag,

there is a loaf of bread, a
takeaway with chips and a 2 litre
bottle of coke. She starts eating
and we follow suit. We need to find
a way to get out of here.



PHILANI

Sitting in this house is driving me
nuts. I need to be out there
trying to find my wife not sitting
idle. I keep calling my dad asking
where they are and he keeps
saying they are close, seriously I
wish they could just drive faster.
I have been getting updates
from Nate and Lindani but I still

need to be out there helping them.

I turn on the TV and watch something. I don't know what cause my mind is not even here. Theo wakes up from his sleep. It's almost 10 o'clock at night. I know they say babies can sense when something isn't right so maybe he senses it too, he has been restless for a while now. I pick him up and put him on my lap. Me: "Hey big guy. You miss mummy? I miss her too, but I will find her and bring her home okay. I will bring mummy home my boy. I promise." I give him his

bottle and he falls right back to sleep.

Just as I put Theo back in his stroller the door opens and my dad walks in followed by the whole of Mandawe. At this point I don't care I am just glad they are here so I can go. I get up and hug my dad then Kazi. Bab'Zweli, Bab'Nqoba, Bab'Makhosi and Bab'Goodwill are here as well as aunty Kholiwe, Zuzu and Mamkhize and her husband Banzi. They all sit down in the lounge.

Dad: "Philani what happened? Where's Lando?"

Me: "I don't know yet but I have people looking for her."

Bab'Zweli: "What happened exactly?"

Me: "I don't know baba. She went out jogging and she didn't come back. We found her phone by the side of the road with a syringe, I think someone drugged her and took her."

Banzi: "No one has called to demand a ransom?"

Me: "Nope! Honestly that would have been better than the silence."

Dad: "Clearly they don't know who they are dealing with. I already

have my people looking for her too. The more eyes the better."

Me: "Thanks. But I have to go and meet with the guys at the lounge. I just hope they have a lead or something."

Kholiwe: "Come, I will walk you out." I get up and she follows me. I open my car door and turn around to look at her.

Me: "Thank you for coming."

Kholiwe: "I wouldn't be anywhere else." She puts her hands on the sides of my face so i am looking at her straight in the eyes. "Now listen to me, you go out there and bring your wife home. And then

show those sons of bitches who you are and what you are made off. Nobody crosses a Biyela and lives to tell the tale. Now go." I nod even though I feel tears prick my eyes. I blink to stop them from falling. I get into my car and drive off. Aunty Kholiwe is right. I need to show these people who I am and what I am capable off. I have been slacking and now people think they can walk all over me.



LANDO

I can't sleep. Taki and Kele have been sleeping for a while. I have

paced up and down this room trying to find a way out. As much as I know Philani will do anything and everything to find me, being a sitting duck has never been my strong point. I need to do something too, I need to find a way out. It's almost morning and still no sleep. The people on the other side are sleeping too, I can hear their snoring through the door.

How did I get here? How did being nice to someone on the street land me in a situation like this? This world is so screwed up. I watch the news all the time,

social media, everyday theres a story about someone missing, I never thought it would happen to me too. Am I now in one of those tweets, is there a [#bringLandoHome](#) being retweeted right now. Dear Lord help me.

I stood by the window watching the sun rise. The window has some bars on it so escaping through it will be impossible. This place looks like it's in the middle of nowhere. The only thing I can see beyond the fence is long dry grass and a forest in the distance. The door opened and another guy

walked in.

Guy: "Why aren't you sleeping?"

Me: "Why bother. You are going to kill us anyways."

Guy: "No one is going to kill you." I turned around and looked at him.

Me: "Then what do you want from us? If its money I am sure my husband can give it to you." He laughs.

Guy: "Sweetly we are not playing here. Your husband cannot afford to save you. We have people in Thailand ready to pay top dollar for an exotic beauty like you. If you are lucky you might end up as a sex slave in a mansion

somewhere and if you aren't that lucky you will end up in a brothel. Either way we make money."

Me: "My husband won't rest until he finds me. He will use every available resources at his disposal to find me. If theres one thing I know about Philani Biyela. He never gives up." The smile on his face fades away.

Guy: "What did you say? How do you know Philani Biyela?"

Me: "He is my husband."

Guy: "Oh shit." He quickly rushes out. I follow him and listen through the door. I hear him arguing with someone but I can't

hear what they are saying. I decide to sit back down and try to get some sleep.



NARRATED

The guy rushes into the other room where his friend is sleeping on the couch.

Guy 1: "Dude! Wake up!"

Guy 2: "What?"

Guy 1: "Dude we screwed up, big time."

Guy 2: "How? What did we do?"

He says wiping sleep from his eyes.

Guy 1: "One of those girls is Philani Biyela's wife." He falls of

the couch before getting up and looking at his friend.

Guy 2: "No! No! No!"

Guy 1: "Yep, she just told me that herself." He starts pacing up and down. "What are we going to do?"

Guy 2: "Do you think Zakes knows?"

Guy 1: "I don't know. All I know is that we are screwed. That guy never let's anything go, he will do anything to find his wife and when he does, all hell will break loose."

Guy 2: "Look all we have to do is lay low, the buyer will be here in a couple of days, they pay and take

the girls and we are off the hook. Simple."

Guy 1: "You did hear me say Philani Biyela's wife right? The man will not rest till he finds her and one thing I know for sure he will eliminate anything and everything that stands in his way."

Guy 2: "Not if he doesn't know."

Guy 1: "This is the same guy who killed Dr Dlamini's baby mama and child for planting drugs in his office. Do you really think he won't find out?"

Guy 2: "Yeah. We are screwed."

INSERT 31

"Rise and shine ladies, breakfast is served."

We woke up to this cheery guy. I wonder how many of them are there cause this is the third one we have seen. He places the food on the floor while he munches on an apple. I notice a knife dangling on the side of his pants. I need to get that knife. I stand up and pretend to stretch. He turns around to leave and I run and climb on his back. We get into a scuffle as he reverses into the wall and bangs me on it. I fall on the floor and grab the knife and

hide it under me. He kicks me a couple of times before his friend comes in and pulls him away. They leave the room after hurling insults at me and trying to hit me again. Taki rushes over to me once they leave and helps me up.

Taki: "Are you trying to get yourself killed? What is wrong with you?"

Me: "Nothing is wrong with me. I just wanted this." I show her the knife.

Taki: "So you are going to stab them one by one. You know they have guns right?" I roll my eyes and go back to sit with Kele.

Me: "No I am not going to stab them. I am going to unscrew those bars on the window then we can jump out and run." They look at me in disbelief.

Kele: "And what will happen when he realizes his knife is missing?"

Me: "I will hide it, I will try and unscrew those bars a little bit at a time and then tonight when they sleep we escape."

Taki: "How sure are you this will work? And besides you said your husband will find you so why can't we wait for him. If we get caught we will be in deep shit."

Me: "We are already in deep shit

Taki. If we dont do something soon we will end up in a brothel overseas with no way of ever coming back home. I have a son. I am not about to abandon him."

Kele: "I dont care how it happens I just want to go home. Whether your husband finds us or the police or we escape, I dont care as long as I get home."

Me: "Okay then, Taki are you in or out?"

Taki: "Do I have a choice? I am in."

Me: "Good, now let's eat, we will need the strength." We eat in

silence.

I really need this thing to work.



PHILANI

We have been up all night but there are still no leads. We even went to some brothel in Hillbrow cause someone said there's a possibility she might be there but she wasn't. I know this is personal, I really pray though that she is fine.

I have been sitting in this office at Phoenix Lounge for hours now trying to crack my brain on who

could have done this but I keep coming up empty.

Nate and Sizwe walk through the door and I look up, their faces tell the whole story. They found nothing. They sit down and say nothing. A knock comes through and one of the waitresses comes in.

Girl: "Sir there are two gentlemen here to see you."

Me: "Not right now, tell them to come back later." She nods and walks out. She comes back again after a few minutes. "What now?"

Girl: "Sir they refuse to leave. They say they have information

about your wife." Nate, Sizwe and I look at each other before I nod to her. A few seconds later two guys walk in. They are wearing your typical Tsotsi attire, dickies pants and shirts, all stars and bucket hats. They take off their hats soon as they walk through the door. As nervous as I am about this I can't show it to them. I just hope this is a good lead.

Me: "Apparently you have some information for me."

Guy 1: "Uhm..... yeah bozza.....we.....eish."

Me: "SPEAK!" I shout and hit the

desk. They are so scared right now they could shit themselves.

Guy 2: "Hhay bozza we know who has your wife." He says running his hands through his uncombed hair.

Me: "Who?" I say getting up and walking around the desk to stand in front of them.

Guy 2: "Before we tell you anything you have to promise to protect us. If that guy finds out we snitched on him he will kill us."

Me: "And you dont think I can kill?"

Guy 1: "We know you can bozza but we'd rather be on your good

side rather than your bad side."

Me: "Where is my wife? And who has her?"

Guy 1: "It's Zakes. Zakes Chuene."

Sizwe: "Zakes was Ngcebo's right hand man."

Me: "You think Ngcebo is involved."

Nate: "I doubt that. According to my sources he started work in one of the hospitals in Eswatini so I doubt it's him."

Me: "Maybe he is controlling the whole operation from there."

Guy 2: "He's not bozza, Zakes took over the operations after Ngceyke left. He is in charge now."

Me: "So what does he want with

my wife?"

Guy 2: "He is waiting for buyers from Thailand. They are coming in tonight so he will dispose of them probably tomorrow."

Nate: "Dispose of them how?"

Guy 2: "He'll sell them, they might end up in some brothels around Thailand." I feel my jaws clench. I will kill that man with my bare hands. But first things first I need to find my wife.

Me: "Where is he keeping them?"

Guy 1: "We don't know exactly boss. It's a secret location that only he knows. When they pick us up to go there they blindfold us."

Me: "Damn it. So how do we get there?" This whole thing is frustrating, I need my wife back.

Sizwe: "This Zakes guy, where does he live?"

Guy 1: "He stays in Protea Glen. He has a house there." Just then Lindani and Sbu walk in looking defeated.

Me: "Nothing?"

Lindani: "Nex. Who are these guys?"

Me: "They say they know where Lando is."

Lindani: "Really?"

Me: "Sbu, do you still have those tracking devices?"

Sbu: "Yep." He reaches into his bag and takes out two tracking devices. He hands them to me. I walk over to the guys.

Me: "Now here's what's going to happen. You are going to take these devices with you. When Zakes comes to pick you up you turn them on and we will be able to track you. When you get there you give one to my wife and you keep the other one. Are we clear."

Guy 2: "Bozza we want to help but they search us before we leave. If they find these they will kill us." I nod.

Me: "I understand. I guess you

are no use to me then." I take out my gun and point it at them. They take a few steps back before hitting the wall.

Guy 1: "Hardy bozza, we'll take the devices." I hand the devices to them and they put them in their pockets.

Me: "Good. Now that we have sorted that out, you can leave. And thank you for your help."

They turn around to leave. "One more thing. If you are lying to me, and this is just a trap, I will hunt you down and I will skin you alive and send bits and pieces to your families to bury. We have an

understanding right?" They nod and walk out. "We need to find Zakes."

Sbu: "Already on it bozza." He leaves.

Sizwe: "And what are we going to do with the snitches?"

Me: "Let's find Lando first then we'll deal with those guys." Nate laughs.

Nate: "But they asked for your protection."

Me: "They are still snitches who turned on their boss without thinking twice. Yes I am grateful for their help but I won't work with people I don't trust."

Lindani: "And we kill snitches."

Me: "Exactly."



LANDO

We have been fiddling with these screws the whole day, and they are finally loose. We took turns unscrewing them, luckily for us the knife wasn't just some ordinary okapi but it had all sorts of screwdrivers as well as knives.

The guy came in earlier and turned the whole place upside down looking for his knife, he even had the guts to tell us to strip down so he can find this knife, we did but he didn't find it. You are

probably wondering where we hid the knife. Well after the guy left the first time Taki took the knife, covered it in plastic and shoved it up her vagina like it was a tampon. I have never been that impressed about anything in my life. When he realized the knife wasn't there he left. We started unscrewing the bars soon as he left.

When it was almost 3 am we loosened the bars, one by one. Luckily the window wasn't glued shut, that was my biggest fear. When we were done we checked to make sure no one would hear us

jump out. I stood by the door and listened to make sure they aren't coming and all I heard were snores and laughter since someone was watching TV.

Taki jumped out first and then Kele. After sometime I walked to the window and jumped out too.

It wasn't too high so it was easy. Once outside we checked to make sure there weren't any guards outside. We climbed the fence and jumped to the other side. Just as I was climbing down the fence on the other side I noticed car lights coming towards us. We were close to the gate. I

quickly climbed down and we hid in the tall grass. Once we were outside we could see the building properly. It was like an old warehouse. It was a double story building and we were on the second floor.

Five cars passed us by the grass, a Mercedes Benz G63, a hummer, an Audi A3 and two Ford Rangers, one in front and one at the back of the convoy. I guess those were extra guards. I peeked through the grass to see who those guys were in those cars. Luckily the bright lights from the warehouse made it easy.

There were three guys who got out from the Hummer, the two in the front had guns. I guess they were protecting the one in the back cause he wasn't carrying anything, he just wore a suit. The G63 was carrying four guys, I think they are foreigners. From the Audi I saw a woman come out. I saw the stiletto boots first, and then she got out wearing all black. A black ripped jean, a black crop top and a black biker leather jacket. She turned around and I almost had a heart attack. What is Ayanda doing with these guys? I signalled to

Taki and Kele that we should leave.

We started running through the grass so we could get a headstart, I think those are the bosses or buyers and we had to go before they found out we escaped. We ran for a long while before we made it to the forest. We took a breather and kept going, we ran until we got to the other side of the forest. There were houses there, in some you could tell people were already up, probably preparing for work. We saw a washing line with clothes on it. I sneaked in and took a pair of

shorts and an oversized tshirt. I came back to the girls on the edge of the forest and gave the items to Kele to wear. She has been running in a party dress the whole time and I have to give her credit, she didn't complain even once.

After she was dressed we made our way to a church that was close by, hopefully they can help us so I can call Philani. We got to the church and opened the door, it was unlocked. We got in and found the pastor on his knees praying. He immediately got up when he heard us come in.

Pastor: "Hello. Welcome to the house of the Lord. What can I do for you?"

Me: "We are sorry to disturb you but we need help. We were kidnapped and we were able to escape, please can you borrow us a phone so i can call my husband. Please." He looked at me with a smile on his face.

Pastor: "My children, unfortunately in this church we dont use phones. We communicate with God through prayer. Tell you what, how about I give you a room to sleep for the next few hours and then when you wake up

I will give you money then you can take a taxi back home."

Kele: "A bed would be nice. I am so tired." She said taking a seat on one of the benches.

Me: "Taki what do you think?"

Taki: "As long as I get back to my life."

Pastor: "You will, now come, let me show you where to sleep." We followed him as he made his way out the church. There were rooms at the back and a shed, I think they used to keep chickens.

He opened one of the rooms and led us in

It had four bunk beds and two

small tables on the corner. As soon as i sat on the bed i could feel my body giving in. By the time the pastor left Kele was already sleeping.

Taki: "I have a bad feeling about this."

Me: "What?"

Taki: "This pastor, I have a bad feeling about him."

Me: "I get you. What church doesn't have a simple phone?"

Taki: "You think we should leave?"

Me: "I dont know. Kele is already snoring."

Taki: "Yeah, Let's just wait till the sun is up then we can leave. I

don't think I can get any sleep here."

Me: "Yeah, me either."

We sat on the beds with our backs on the wall, we need to be alert just in case anything happens.



NARRATED

Back at the warehouse, Zakes and Ayanda make their way in followed by the other guys. They sit down in the makeshift lounge on the first floor. One of the guards brings them a bottle of whiskey and glasses. He pours for them and hands the glasses over

to them. The guard stands back and turns the tracking device on without anyone seeing him.

Zakes: "Now gentlemen let's discuss business. Upstairs I have three girls, beautiful melanin queens who will bring you money."

Chai: "I hope this time you brought dark skinned girls, not like last time. My clients have a thing for chocolate." They laugh.

Zakes: "Of course. This time you were specific so I got you exactly what you wanted."

Chai: "Good. Now let's see them."

Zakes signals to a guard to bring the girls down. He walks up the

stairs to the second floor of the warehouse and finds the other guards sleeping. He kicks the chair and one of them falls, waking the other one.

Guard: "You are busy sleeping, the boss wants to see the girls."

Guy 1: "Eish, why did you take so long, you were supposed to bring the other guys to release us."

Guard: "Yeah yeah whatever. We are here now, get the girls." He gets up and goes to open the door, he turns the lights on and looks around. He runs to the window and realizes that they have escaped. He runs back to

the others.

Guy 1: "They are gone."

Guard: "Askies?"

Guy 1: "They are gone bra, ba jumpe nge fastere. (They jumped through the window.)"

Guard: "Boss is going to kill you." He says running into the room. He looks around and then runs down the stairs.

Zakes: "Why the fuck are you running and where are the girls?" He says getting up and the others following his lead. The guard runs his hand through his hair. "SPEAK!"

Guard: "Eish, they escaped."

Zakes: "Find Them. NOW!" The guards start running out and getting into cars.

Chai: "So you lost the merchandise?"

Zakes: "Relax bra we will get them back."

Chai: "You have 24 hours to bring me those girls. If you fail I am moving my business somewhere else. I can't believe you can be so incompetent." He signals his guards and they leave.

Ayanda: "You have to find them. If you dont and Philani Biyela finds them first we are screwed."

Zakes: "Why would Philani Biyela

want to find them?" He asks looking at her.

Ayanda: "Because one of them is his wife."

Zakes: "Jesus Christ, do you have a death wish? Why would you let us take his wife?"

Ayanda: "Oh for heavens sake stop being weak. We have to find them first before he gets to them and get them out of the country ASAP."

Zakes: "Eish mara Ayanda!"

Zakes' phone rings, he looks at the caller ID before picking up.

"Mfundisi."

Pastor: "Did you by any chance lose

three packages?"

Zakes: "Yes, do you know where I can find them."

Pastor: "They are here resting. Come get them."

Zakes: "I am on my way." He hangs up and turns to Ayanda. "Your ancestors must be watching over you. Let's go."

Ayanda: "No can do. You go get them. I am going home. I can't risk being seen by her."

They walked out together and got into their separate cars and drove off.

INSERT 32

I couldn't sleep, something just didn't seem right. I got up from the bed and started pacing up and down. Taki was right, this doesn't feel right. I decided to wake them up so we can leave.

Me: "Taki, Kele wake up we need to leave." Taki quickly got up, it took a while to get Kele up.

Taki: "What's wrong?"

Me: "We need to leave. Something doesn't seem right." They got up. We went to the door, I tried opening but it was locked. "Its locked."

Taki: "No no no." She pushed me aside and tried to open too.

Nothing. "No!"

Kele: "Great. Straight from the frying pan to the fire." She said as she crumbled against the wall.

Me: "We have to get out of here."

I am now panicking.

Taki: "I shouldn't have listened to you. We should have just stayed there. All this running for what? So we can go back to that hellhole again. Jesus Christ why have you forsaken us." She was now crying with her arms on her head.

We heard voices coming from the outside. One of them was the pastor.

Voice 1: "Where are they"

Pastor: "I'll take you to them."

We hear footsteps coming towards the room. I feel tears forming in my eyes but they wouldn't fall, we were so close, so so close. We hear keys in the door.

Pastor: "Shoot, I took the wrong keys. Let me go get the other keys." He walks away.

Voice: "Ladies, I know you are in there. This little game you wanted us to play, it's cute but it ends now. I have....."

We hear gunshots, they get closer and the owner of the voice on the other side starts shooting

together with the people he's with. We lay down on the floor as bullets fly right outside the window. We crawl to the little bathroom in this room and close the door. We tried opening the bathroom window but it just opened up to another wall. We sat there not sure what to do with ourselves. Kele just cried and Taki just gave up. We were so close. So so close.

After a while the shots die down, we get up and wait behind the bathroom door. The main door opens and someone walks in. Voice: "Theres no one here." I

know that voice. I know it.

Me: "I know that voice." I whisper to the girls.

Voice: "That stupid pastor said they are here but theres no one here."

I quickly open the door and come face to face with Lindani, Nate and Philani. They have their guns pointed at me. They put them down soon as they see it's me.

I quickly run to Philani and just hug him. I bury my head in his chest and just cry. For the first time since this whole thing started I allowed myself to cry.

Philani: "It's okay baby I am

here. I am here." I can feel his arms tighten around me.

Nate: "We need to go before the cops get here." I look up and wipe my tears. I look behind me and Kele and Taki are standing by the bathroom not sure what to do. I look back at the guys and they have smiles on their faces.

Me: "What the fuck took you so long?" They burst out laughing and Philani just pulls me to him.

Lindani: "We missed you too Mrs Biyela."

Nate: "Seriously though guys we need to go. The sun is up already and we dont want people to see

us."

Philani: "Tell Sbu to bring the car around. We can't go to the street its already full of people." Nate makes a call and soon there is a VW polo waiting outside.

We all quickly get into the car.

Taki, Kele and Lindani sit in the back while Philani and I take the front seats with him driving.

We drive out of the church with two more cars following us. I dont know where we are but if I never see this place again it will be too soon. We drive for a while before I fall asleep.

Philani woke me up when we got home. I rubbed my eyes and looked around me. I am home. I felt tears prick my eyes, I quickly blinked them away when I saw Gugu running out the house followed by pretty much everyone. I got out the car and she threw herself at me. I just held her.

Gugu: "I thought I would never see you again." I chuckled.

Me: "You are not getting rid of me that easily. I am still going to annoy the hell out of you." She pulled away and wiped her tears. "When did you get back?"

Gugu: "Yesterday. Bhuti Philani

told me you were missing so I came back."

Me: "I am glad you are here. I missed you."

We walked to the front door with Gugu's arms around my waist and mine on her shoulder, and got hugs from everyone, I guess they missed me. We got into the house and Theo was sitting on his grandfather's lap. He held out his hands and cried soon as he saw me. I went over to them and picked him up. I gave Bab'Biyela a hug before sitting down. Gugu came and sat next to me while

Philani sat on the armrest with his arm around me.

Bab'Zweli: "What happened to you makoti, you gave us such a fright." I was just about to answer when Philani cut me off.

Philani: "We will tell you all about it later. Right now Lando needs a bath and a nap."

Lando: "And food." They laugh.

Kholiwe: "Lucky for you there's a chef in the house. Zuzu Makoti needs food." She shouts. Zuzu was busy in the kitchen.

Zuzu: "I'll bring it up, just five more minutes." She shouted back. I got up and went upstairs

followed by Philani. As soon as we got to our room he went to the bathroom to run me a bath while I played with Theo. He came back into the room wearing a white vest. I noticed on his left shoulder there was a wound. I got up and went to him.

Me: "They shot you." I said moving my hand around his wound.
Philani: "It's nothing, I've seen worse." I am sure he meant for that to comfort me but it didn't. He put his hands on my waist and kissed my forehead, before going back to the bathroom. He came back and took Theo and went out.

He came back just as I was taking off my dirty gym clothes, I have been in these for almost three days now and they stink. He sat on the edge of the tub and watched me undress. When I was done he pulled me close to him and ran his hands over my bruised ribs. That guy did a number on me, I was blue and purple.

Philani: "Who did this to you?"

Me: "One of the guys."

Philani: "Its a good thing they are dead otherwise I would break his ribs one by one."

Me: "It doesn't matter anymore. I am home. You brought me

home."

Philani: "Next time you want to jog use the gym or if you want fresh air run around the house, we have plenty of space." I chuckle and get into the tub and he decides to join me.

Me: "Taki and Kele, where are they?"

Philani: "Lindani took them to a safe place. Until we are sure that these people won't come after them we need to make sure they are safe." I nod my head, at least I know Lindani won't let anything happen to them.

After a while we get out of the tub and head back to the bedroom. We lotion and I put on my pajamas while Philani puts on a tracksuit, he's going out. Philani: "Let me go get you something to eat." He leaves. I get under the covers. A few minutes later Philani, with Theo in his arms walks in followed by aunt Kholiwe, Zuzu, Kazi, Gugu and Mamkhize. Zuzu is holding a tray, it has tripe, pap and chakalaka and a glass of juice. She puts it on the side table. Philani hands Theo to me, kisses me on the forehead and walks out again.

Kholiwe: "You know if you're going to disappear invite us along to keep you company." I smile.

Me: "Next time, it's a date."

Kazi: "Seriously though Lando, please be careful, we still need you."

Me: "And I need you too. I am sorry I scared you."

Mamkhize: "It's okay, we are just glad you're home safe and sound."

Zuzu: "You also need to call gogo, poor woman almost had a heart attack when she found out you were missing."

Me: "I will soon as I get some rest."

Kazi: "Then eat before your food gets cold." I take the tray and eat while we talk about a whole lot of nothing. After I am done they leave and I sleep. I missed my bed.



PHILANI

As much as i didn't want to i had to leave Lando so I can come finish these guys off. I drove into the safehouse and the guys were already there. I walked in and they were down in the basement so I joined them.

Me: "Having fun without me." I said walking into the basement.

Nate: "You snooze you lose. I need to check on your wound."

Me: "Yeah let's finish up here first." I turn to Zakes and the pastor. They are tied to chairs in the middle of the room. Zakes has a gunshot wound on his leg. He looks like he is in pain. "Gentlemen, I am sure my friends have given you the welcome speech so i won't waste your time. Who sent you to take my wife." They keep quiet. I decide to focus on one at a time, I turn to the pastor. "Mfundisi, I am sure you always preach about judgment day, well today is your day. Who sent you to take my

wife?"

Pastor: "I dont know anything
mina I just tried to help the
girls."

Me: "Is that why you locked them
into that room, to help them?"

Pastor: "They needed a place to
rest."

Me: "So you locked them into a
room and then called this idiot
over here to come get them. Is
that your way of helping
Mfundisi? So people can't come to
the house of the Lord to seek
shelter anymore?"

Pastor: "All I did was help. I
didn't mean for anyone to get

hurt."

Me: "Ok you are no use to me right now. I will deal with you later." I turn to Zakes. "Zakes, are you going to tell me the truth or what?"

Zakes: "We didn't know she was your wife. If we had known we wouldn't have touched her."

Me: "So you are telling me that you just randomly walked into one of the most exclusive estates in Joburg, armed with access codes and took a woman you didn't even know. You really want me to believe that?"

Zakes: "Brazzo I swear, you know

I would never want to cross you. I promise you we didn't know."

Me: "Obviously you are not going to tell me the truth so I have no use for either one of you." I call the guys and they load them up in the cars, Nate and I drive together with the Pastor tied up in the back while Lindani and Sizwe drive behind us with Zakes. We drove all the way to Kruger National Park. We drove in through an illegal opening and drove until we saw a pride of lions. It's the middle of the night so Lions are on the hunt. We get close enough to them and they

see us.

Me: "Pastor, remember the story of Daniel in the bible, he was thrown in a lions den and he came out alive. Do you believe that story?"

Pastor: "Please dont do this, I swear I didn't do anything. I knew nothing about your wife, I swear."

Nate: "You are making noise. When we needed you to speak you failed. Now shut the fuck up."

Pastor: "Please, I will tell you everything you want to know please." He says crying.

Nate: "We are listening."

Pastor: He takes a deep breath.

"Okay, yes I work with Zakes, but I don't know the girls and where he gets them."

Me: "So how are you involved then?"

Pastor: "Sometimes he will bring the girls to the church, especially those he finds on the streets addicted to drugs who have not been in contact with their families, he brings them there and makes them believe he will help them get clean and get jobs then once they are he sells them. He took over Ngcebo Dlamini's contacts overseas."

I feel myself boiling with rage, people come to church to seek solace and comfort and now people like this have turned it into a hellhole.

Me: "So Ngcebo was trafficking girls?"

Pastor: "Yes, some are sold to brothels or people who use them as sex slaves and others are used to traffic drugs and....."

Me: "I think I have heard enough. Get out."

Pastor: "Bhuti ngyacela, don't do this, I am a man of God. Please."

Me: "The bible also says dont use Gods name in vain. You have been

using Gods name to hurt people when you should be comforting and helping them. I am not Jesus and it's not my place to judge, that is why those lions will send you to God so you can stand judgment for your sins, now get out."

Pastor: "Please just shoot me, just kill me and get it over with."

Nate: "We dont want your blood on our hands so GET THE FUCK OUT." He opens the door and pushes him out. Just then my phone rings and I put it on speaker. Its Lindani.

Me: "Bafo."

Lindani: "Kruger should start paying you, you keep feeding their lions." I laugh.

Me: "They should. Release the meat." He hangs up. I reverse the car till Lindani and I are side by side, the Pastor keeps walking with the car until him and Zakes are between the two cars. I open the window.

Me: "Gentlemen March forward please." They stand still, Nate who is at the back of the car, opens the window and whips them with a sjambok and they scream drawing the lions attention. They start walking towards the cars.

The closer they get the further we reverse until Zakes and the pastor are in the front of the cars with the lions in front of them. The pastor tries to run but the one lion gets to him and starts ripping him apart while the others go after the limping Zakes. We leave soon as their screams die down and the Lions feast.

We get to the edge of the park and find the two rangers who let us in through the fence, we pay them and we get out and drive back to Jozi. They might not have said anything but I know

Zakes didn't take Lando by chance. There's no way they got access to an estate with high security just to kidnap a stranger. I need to find out who is behind this and soon.

By the time I get home it's almost sunrise. I walk into the house and everyone is sleeping. I walk upstairs to our bedroom and find Lando sleeping with Theo next to her. I walk into the bathroom and take a quick shower. When I am done I take the sleeping baby and take him to his room. When I get back I find Lando awake.

Lando: "I want my son back." I smile.

Me: "He had his time now its mine." I get into bed and she lays on my chest. "I missed you baby. I am sorry I wasn't there to protect you." I kiss her forehead.

Lando: "I missed you too and thank you for bringing me home."

Me: "No more jogging on the street." She laughs.

Lando: "I heard you the first time Ntshangase and trust me you dont have to tell me twice."

Me: "Good, cause I still need to find the person behind this mess. I know this wasn't a random

kidnapping." She sits up and looks at me.

Lando: "I am not sure if this is a stretch or anything but I think I know who is behind this."

Me: "Who?"

Lando: "Ayanda."

Me: "Ayanda as in Ayanda my ex?"

Lando: "Yes."

Me: "Lando are you telling me that Ayanda is behind this?"

Lando: "I am not sure if she's the one who orchestrated the whole thing but when we were running I saw her there, she came with the boss guy and four guys, I

think were the buyers cause they looked foreign."

I feel my jaws clench and the vein in my head about to pop. It makes sense, estate security said those guys had residential access to the place and Ayanda has that, I gave her the access code when we were still together. I pull my wife close to me and just hold her. I need Sbu to get me all the info I need, I dont hurt women but if Ayanda really is behind this, Lord have Mercy on her soul.

INSERT 33

FAITH

It's been almost 2 weeks since these babies came unannounced. I am happy though, even the late nights and lack of sleep is not bothering me much. I am enjoying motherhood. Mbusi decided he would go back to work after three months, he calls it paternity leave, I don't know a company that would allow this but I guess owning your own business helps. We named them Ayabonga Melokuhle Ngcobo and Princess Avumile Ntombikayise Ngcobo. Yes, we named her after

Lando, because Her and Buli both wanted to be Godmothers so I had to compromise, there are two babies after all so two Godmothers makes sense.

Lando's kidnapping gave everyone anxiety, we cried and prayed every hour she was gone, and thanks to Philani she is home safe and sound. It would not be fair celebrating my babies without her, her and Buli have carried me through every miscarriage when I couldn't do it. Even though Mbusi was there and supporting me but having friends like these

two really gave me more strength.

Speaking of those two, they decided to walk into my house without knocking. A bad habit if you ask me. Today, My in-laws are coming over, they dont know about the babies yet so my husband decided we should surprise them. I can't wait to see the look on that Monster-in-law of mine, she has taken pleasure in calling me barren every chance she got, let's see who she'll call barren now.

Lando and Buli helped me with the cooking and setting the table.

When we were done we sat in front of the TV and waited for Mbusi to bring the family from the airport. My babies, I think they knew about the surprise because they fell asleep exactly 10 minutes before the family came.

As soon as the family walked through the door we got up to greet them. My father in law was happy to see me, and so were my sisters in law Zethu and Aphelele, we were just missing Zama who was studying overseas. We sat down at the table and lunch was served.

Mrs Ngcobo: "I thought this was

a family lunch?" She asked moving her eyes from Buli to Lando.

Lando just looked away from her and kept eating while Buli looked at her straight in the eyes. Buli is ghetto like that.

Mbusi: "It is a family lunch mother."

Mrs Ngcobo: "Are you sure, cause I see unfamiliar faces in this table."

Mbusi: "Mother, Lando and Buli are family, to me and my wife, that is why they are here." She just clicked her tongue and looked away.

Zethu: "Okay the suspense is

killing me, why did you two call us here, what's going on?"

Mbusi: "Uyaphapha Zethu but since you have asked we have a surprise for you."

Aphelele: "You are pregnant right?" She asked looking at me, I could see the excitement in her face. I didn't even get a chance to answer before her mother burst out laughing.

Mrs Ngcobo: "We all know even if she is pregnant her womb is too weak to carry a Ngcobo child, that job needs a strong woman."

Zethu: "One day when Faith gives you a grandchild you will swallow

your words."

Mrs Ngcobo: "Please, that day will never come."

Do you know that feeling when you confront someone and you pretend not to know anything, meanwhile you know the whole truth but they keep lying to you, that feeling of wanting to drop the files but holding back for the perfect time, yep that feeling? That's what I was feeling right at that moment. I decided to excuse myself from the table and went to the nursery. The nursery was done in two days, turns out money can buy you everything, the

interior designer literally worked for 48 hours straight, but then she did charge us an arm and a leg. But it was worth it though. The nursery was amazing. I just watched my sleeping babies for a while before I felt my husband's hands around my waist. I leaned back and put my head on his shoulder.

Mbusi: "I think maybe it's time my mother swallowed her words."

Me: "I thought we'd wait until after dessert?"

Mbusi: "Nope it's too far. Let's go."

He let go of me and picked up Aya

and I picked up Avumile. We walked downstairs with the babies in our arms. We got closer to the table and we could see the shock on Zethu and Aphelele. Mrs Ngcobo wasn't sure how to act and Mr Ngcobo showed no emotion at all. He is a man of very few words. We handed the babies over to him and he smiled and looked at Mbusi.

Mr Ngcobo: "Son what's going on? Who are these cute people?"

Mbusi: "Those are your grandkids baba." Zethu and Aphelele started screaming so loud the babies woke up.

Mrs Ngcobo: "So you finally resorted to adoption. Cute but that means your child will not take over from you. We need a proper prince to take over the throne Mbusi not this. And I am sure this wife of yours talked you into this foolishness."

Faith: "Actually ma, we didn't adopt. I gave birth to them." The shock on their faces were priceless.

Mr Ngcobo: "MaDlamini, you were home on Christmas just a few days ago, you didn't look pregnant, so how did this happen?"

Mrs Ngcobo: "Obviously it didn't

because....."

Mr Ngcobo: "Shut up!"

Mrs Ngcobo: "Excuse me!"

Mr Ngcobo: "I said shut up and let them speak." He turned to look at her and she cowered in her seat.

Faith: "Baba I didn't know I was pregnant until I went into labour on New year's day. I actually gave birth at Lando's home." He smiled his rare but beautiful smile. He gave Ayabonga to Zethu, got up and sat on the couch and laid Avumile on the couch too and started undressing her. I knew what he was looking

for, their birthmark. Everyone in the Ngcobo family has it on their back. He picked her up and turned her around, and smiled when he found what he was looking for. He laid her back on the couch and dressed her before taking Aya and doing the same thing.

He laid them in the couch side by side and started singing their clan names. I feel tears streaming down my face. I look over at my mother-in-law and her face is unreadable. It's like she is shocked but numb at the same time. She sees me looking at her and quickly gets up and run

upstairs. I wonder what's wrong with her. I look back at my happy family.

Mr Ngcobo: "What did you name them?"

Mbusi: "Ayabonga and Avumile."

Mr Ngcobo: "Mhmmm. I like them. Next week you have to come home so we can have imbeleko done for them."

Mbusi: "Of course." That went better than I thought.

Mr Ngcobo: "Where's your mother?"

Zethu: "She ran upstairs. I don't know why, she hasn't even held the babies."

Mr Ngcobo: "Let her be, maybe she's busy swallowing her words."
We all laugh.

Lando: "I think it's time for us to go." She says grabbing her bag followed by Buli. They walk over to Bab'Ngcobo and shake his hand before I walk them out. We stop by their cars.

Buli: "That witch you call a Mother-in-law, I would be careful of her."

Faith: "Buli you have never liked her."

Buli: "Because she is evil. She didn't even want to see her grandkids instead she ran

upstairs, for what?"

Lando: "Buli is right friend, what kind of a person finds out she has grandkids and instead of dotting over them she runs away instead. Something is shady about her."

Buli: "Are they sleeping here tonight?"

Faith: "I dont think so. They always sleep at the hotel."

Lando: "Good, before you sleep though leave drops of Jeyes fluid on every corner of the nursery and then pray over your kids before you sleep." Ok these two are scaring me now.

Me: "Ok and what is Jeyes fluid

supposed to do?"

Lando: "I dont know, that's what gogo said I should do in Theo's room and mine I take instructions." We laugh. "Mine I need to get back to my babies so I will see you later." We hug and they get into their cars and drive off.

I walk back into the house and everyone is still busy with the babies but mother-in-law is still not back. As weird as what Lando suggested I must do, I think I will do it, I dont know what that woman is up to.



LANDO

I got home and found Gugu playing with Theo, I seriously need to find a nanny, Gugu is going to school in a few days. I will miss her but the only thing that makes me happy is that she'll be far away from our mother so she can focus on herself and her education. And maybe make a few friends.

Me: "Hey, I am back." I sat on the floor with them. "Did you miss me?"

Gugu: "Not really, right Theo, we didn't miss her right?" He laughs and so do I. "How was lunch?"

Me: "Good. Where's Philani?"

Gugu: "He is not back yet."

Me: "Okay, let me order some food, I am too lazy to cook. What do you feel like?"

Gugu: "Ribbs please." I took out my phone and ordered.

Our order arrived 30 minutes later and we ate in front of the TV. When we were done I took Theo to have a bath and then put him to sleep before bathing myself. When I was done I lotioned and wore Philani's vest and got into bed. After about an hour of waiting for Philani to come home I decided to call Buli,

maybe he is at Nate's place. She picked up after the second ring.

Buli: "Hey hey, wassup?"

Me: "Is my husband there?"

Buli: "Why would your husband be at my place?" I could feel the frown she was making over the phone.

Me: "Bitch please, I know you are at Nate's place." She burst out laughing.

Buli: "Am I that predictable?"

Me: "Predictable? No.

Dickmatized? Most definitely."

Buli: "Mxm whatever. You and I are in the same boat. Have you tried calling Philani?"

Me: "His phone goes straight to voicemail. Do you think he is cheating?"

Buli: "If he is then him and Nate must be screwing the same girl coz his phone also goes straight to voicemail." I wonder where they are. And then it hit me.

Ayanda. Maybe they are out looking for her, ever since I told him that she was there that night he has been out late every day.

Me: "Do you think he is looking for Ayanda?"

Buli: "He better be."

Me: "He is going to kill her isnt

he?"

Buli: "As he should. After what she did, she doesn't deserve pity. I mean I understand she was hurt when Phila married you but what she did was way worse.

Trying to sell you off to the highest bidder? Nah friend, that girl needs to be taken care off and I really hope Philani is doing that right now." I take a deep breath, maybe Buli is right, even if she wasn't, I already told Philani about Ayanda, and knowing him he won't rest till he makes her pay. After a few more minutes of chatting and laughing we hang

up. I tried Philani's phone one more time and again it sent me straight to voicemail. Oh well, at least I know he is not cheating wherever he is.



PHILANI

It's been a whole week now trying to find Ayanda, she and her friend Cebo have been MIA. I got a call earlier from Sbu saying these two have landed at OR Tambo airport, apparently they were in Dubai. It's a pity they'll never see it again.

Nate and I have been parked outside her house, actually my house since it's in my name and I let her live here, and in spite of all my kindness towards her she decides to repay me by doing the shit that she did. Some people are ungrateful.

I see her car drive in and park outside the garage. She and Cebo step out of the car and unpack their things and take them inside the house. It's almost midnight and I am glad they came back this late, no one will see us take them.

As soon as they get into the house Nate and I get out of the car and walk inside. It's a good thing I still have the gate remote. We open the garage door a bit and walk in through there. We use the door in the garage to get into the house. We sneak in slowly and find them in the lounge drinking wine and watching TV.

Me: "Evening ladies, or should I say morning ladies." They jump out of their seats and scream.

Ayanda: "Philani what the heck, you scared us."

Me: "My apologies ladies, I didn't mean too."

Cebo: "What do you want?" She says crossing her arms on her chest.

Me: "Let's go for a ride."

Ayanda: "It's midnight Philani, where are we going?"

Me: "It's a surprise, let's go."

Cebo picks up her phone and tries to make a call but Nate shoots the phone out of her hand leaving her bleeding.

Ayanda: "What the heck is wrong with you? You shot her?"

Nate: "If you don't get your asses out the door I will shoot you too."

They follow each other and walk out the door. They try to get into

Ayanda's car but we lead them out to the street where our car is parked. Nate gets into the back with Cebo while Ayanda and I get into the front. We drive off. Ayanda: "Philani, what's going on? Why are you doing this?" I ignore her.

We get to the safe house and we take them down to the basement. I give them chairs to sit and I grab one too.

Me: "Now ladies, I know all this seems a bit extreme, but I have questions and you two will give me the answers. Whose idea was it to traffic my wife to Thailand?"

Ayanda: "We dont know what you are talking about."

Me: "Ok, let's do this a bit different, how do you know Zakes Chuene?"

Cebo: "We don't know him. Please Philani I need a doctor, I am bleeding."

Me: "That's just a flash wound Cebo, you'll be fine. Now back to my question, how do you know Zakes Chuene? And just a heads up, he already told me everything so you better not lie to me." I look at both of them but no one wants to speak. "Ok then ladies, since you dont want to speak I will give

you time to think about this." I get up and push the chair against the wall. "Now ladies get up, you are going to the naughty corner." They refuse to get up so I call Nate over and we drag them up.

We tie their hands together, strip them naked and tie them to the beams on the side of wall which leaves them dangling.

When we are done we leave them there, lock the doors and head out. They need to marinate a bit.

When I get home i quickly get into the shower, come back into the bedroom and get into bed. I

kiss Lando on the cheek and she stirs. She turns around and finds me staring at her.

Lando: "You're back." She says with her cute sleepy voice.

Me: "Yeah, you missed me?"

Lando: "Not really ndoda." She says as she lays on my chest. I chuckle.

Me: "I can see that. But I missed you."

Lando: "Where have you been?"

Me: "Just sorting some things out. Nothing for you to worry about." She looks up at me.

Lando: "Is she dead?" I know she wants to know about Ayanda but

I can't drag her into my dark world. Whatever happens there is for me to know and not her.

Me: "Babe, stay out of this I will take care of it my way. Okay."

Lando: "I was just asking." She says sulking and moving away from me. She turns her back to me. I move closer to her and pull her back till she is lying on her back. I get on top of her but she keeps her eyes closed and her hands crossed over her chest.

Me: "Are you mad at me?" She keeps quiet. I uncross her hands and lift them over her head before kissing her all over her

face. I move over to her neck and I hear her moan.

Lando: "What are you doing?"

Me: "So now you're talking to me?"

I say in between kisses. I let go of her hands and they immediately go to my back, moving up and down. I keep kissing her while she lights up fires all over me with her hands. I stop and groan when I feel her hands on my dick, pecks of sleeping naked. I lift my vest off of her and kiss her all the way from her neck to her boobs and down to her haven. I bury myself in between her thighs as she squirms and wiggles

her body. After a while she cums on my face. I get up and enter her in one push and she screams. I put my hand on her mouth.

Me: "You are going to wake the kids up." She says something but since my hand is in her mouth I can't hear her. "What are you saying?" She moves my hand from her mouth.

Lando: "Just stop talking and finish what you started."

Me: "And if I dont." She squirms and wiggles under me and i can tell she has an itch that needs to be scratched.

Lando: "Philani man."

Me: "Say please."

Lando: "Please please please please please please please."

Me: "Lose the attitude." She closes her eyes. "Say baby please Fuck me!" She clicks her tongue and crosses her arms over her chest. "Okay then." I pull out and lay next to her. She opens her eyes and looks at me.

Lando: "Really Philani, you are seriously doing this?" I pretend to sleep. "Mxm." She gets out of bed and goes to the chest of drawers. She opens the bottom drawer and searches through it. "Uh huh." She says excitedly. She turns

around and she has a dildo in her hands.

Me: "What the fuck is that?"

Lando: "Since you Mr Biyela refuse to finish what you started, I will finish it for you." She says walking towards the bathroom. She closes the door as I run to the bathroom. I bang on the door. "I am busy leave me alone."

Me: "Lando open the door. Now!"

She opens the door with the dildo in her hands. I take it from her and bend her over the sink before fucking the shit out of her. By the time we are done she is sitting on the floor breathing

hard. I give her a towel to clean herself and I pick up the dildo.

Me: "In the morning this thing goes straight to the fire." I hear her laugh as I walk out of the bathroom.

I swear this woman is giving me grey hairs.

INSERT 34

I woke up sore. I literally crawled to bed, last night, well this morning. Philani left me in the cold bathroom floor. Romantic much. I woke up and soaked myself in the tub. I realise now, maybe taking out the dildo wasn't such a good

idea. Dont judge, I was single once and a girl had needs.

I got out of the bath and wrapped a towel around me and walked into the bedroom. I found Philani sitting on the bed with a smirk on his face. He laughed when he saw me struggling to walk.

Philani: "Oh sthandwa Sam. Uright baby?" Mxm.

Lando: "Please leave me alone." He laughed. I sat on the bed with my legs parted. If my grandmother was here she would say hlala ngentfombi (sit properly).

Philani: "I made you breakfast, and I am taking the kids out. So you can rest." That's very thoughtful but i am not about to tell him that.

Me: "I need to see them before they leave."

Philani: "No problem, I will bring them up." He handed me the breakfast, fruit salad, freshly squeezed orange juice, toast, bacon, eggs and tomatoes, before walking out. He came back carrying Theo with Gugu following behind him. Gugu came over and sat on the bed and gave me a hug. Philani handed Theo to me.

He was bathe and dressed already. Gugu touches my forehead, like she is feeling if I have a temperature or something.

Gugu: "You're not hot, you dont have a cold." I guess Philani told her that.

Me: "No, just period pains."

Gugu: "Eew bye." She gets out of the bed.

Me: "And now, what's that about?"

Gugu: "I am not ready to get my period yet."

Me: "Periods are not contagious Gugu."

Gugu: "They are trust me. Let me go before I breathe in the periodic air. Bhuti Philani I will be downstairs." She leaves. Philani is busy laughing.

Me: "You do know it's not funny right?"

Philani: "I am so gonna miss her when she's gone." I smile.

Me: "Me too. I still dont know why she insisted on going to boarding school."

Philani: "Because she wants to be independent like her big sister.

Besides we can go see her anytime we want. She's not going to Mars."

Me: "I know."

Philani: "Let me leave, we still need to pick up Kazi. We will see you later ok." He kisses me on the forehead. I kiss Theo and hand him over to him. He blows me a kiss before walking out the door. I slump back onto the bed and fall asleep.



I am woken up by my phone ringing non stop. I pick it up and its Buli. I know she is at the gate so I just buzz her in. After the whole kidnapping business Philani ramped up security and

now the guards at the gate are not allowed to let anyone in unless duly instructed. So now anyone who is in the house needs to be the one to buzz in visitors.

I get up from the bed and put on my gown and head downstairs. I decide to use the lift cause I dont think my vagina can survive the stairs. I get downstairs and she is already rummaging through the fridge.

Me: "Your boyfriend doesn't feed you?" She turns around with leftover chicken in her hands, she takes a bite.

Buli: "Were you sleeping?"

Me: "Yes!" Why am I feeling guilty right now.

Buli: "Bitch its almost noon." I look at my phone and she's right, it is almost noon.

Me: "I needed rest okay, i am tired."

Buli: "Mhmmmm okay. Anyways do you want to go see Ayanda?"

Me: "Ayanda who?"

Buli: "Your abductor. Apparently she is being marinated somewhere and I think we should go see her."

Me: "Why in Gods name would I do that?"

Buli: "To get closure. And answers."

Me: "Ok so how do you know this?"

Buli: "Well Nate told me, although he didn't tell me where they keep her so we will go over to the hospital and blackmail him to tell us?"

Me: "Okay what do you have on him?"

Buli: "You'll see. Go get dressed." This is a bad idea, but knowing Buli she won't stop till I do this. I rush upstairs and change into a pair of leggings and one of Philani's t-shirts. I put on some sneakers and tie my hair up. I grab my phone and my bag and soon enough we are out the door.

We drive to SunMed while chatting and butchering Beyonce's songs. We get there and the nurse at reception looks at us funny. We walk past her and I turn to look at her, I recognize her. She gave me attitude one night when I came to see Ngcebo. I see she still holds a grudge. I turn back and chuckle a bit. We get to Nates office and knock. As soon as we walk through the door he is already looking at us funny. Nate: "Whatever it is No. No. No and Hell No!" Buli and I look at each other and laugh.

Buli: "Baby, you haven't even

heard what we wanted to say."

She says moving over to sit on his lap. I take a seat across from them.

Nate: "Whatever it is I know it's not good. So No."

Buli: "You dont even want a hint?"

Nate: "Nope." She kisses him on the neck and he groans. I swear I am about to be subjected to live porn. I clear my throat and they both look at me and laugh.

Me: "If you two are going to start banging each other the least you can do is give me time to get out the room." They laugh.

Nate: "Tell your friend that. So

what can I do for you ladies?" He says clearing his throat.

Me: "We need to see Ayanda."

Nate: "No."

Me: "Nate, I need this to find closure. I need her to tell me why she did what she did, please."

Nate: "We know why she did what she did, she is a psychopath and an idiot."

Me: "I need her to tell me. Please Nate. I promise if you do this one thing for me I will not ask you for anything for the rest of the year."

Nate: "it's still January."

Me: "Ok maybe for the rest of

the month."

Nate: "Lando I know....." he starts coughing, pretend coughing and looks at Buli who has a huge smile on her face. What the heck is going on. "I.....mh.....I.....Fine, but I will take you."

Ok then. I got up and walked towards the door. I looked back at them and they were still sitting down. I decided to walk out anyway. I walked towards the exit before I heard Buli running behind me. Nate wasn't with her.

Me: "Where is Nate? I thought he was taking us?"

Buli: "He is, he just went to ask one of the doctors to stand in for him. He gave me his car keys, we are taking his car."

Me: "Ok. So why did you stay behind when I left?"

Buli: "Oh that, I was giving Nate a handjob."

Me: "Eew Buli, I was right there." She has a smile on her face.

Buli: "I know, thats what made it even more fun." Wow.

We get to the car and get in and wait for Nate. He shows up a few minutes later and we drive off. I notice we are driving towards

Hyde Park. We drive to this beautiful house, or should I say mansion. The gate opens after Nate punches in a code and scanning his palm and iris.

We drive in and park by the front door. We get out and go into the house. Its beautiful, the decor is amazing, this can't possibly be where they are keeping her. Talk about hiding in plain sight. You wouldn't think a mansion like this could hold so many secrets.

Sbu walks in from the backdoor in shorts. He is dripping wet, I guess he was in the pool. The nerd has perks for days. Who

knew under all that geekiness
theres so much beauty.

Sbu: "Nate. Ladies. What are you
doing here?"

Nate: "They want to see Ayanda,
have you checked on them?"

Sbu: "I did this morning. They
still won't talk."

Nate: "Cool, let's go see them
then."

He leads us towards the kitchen,
presses a button on the stove
and one of the cabinets slides
open. Buli and I look at each
other before following Nate down
the stairs. As soon as we are in
the door/cabinet shuts close

again. He turns the lights on and we see them. Cebo and Ayanda tied to the beams on the side of the room naked. Nate walks over to the table, picks up a bucket and walks to the bathroom, he comes back with water and pours it all over them. They scream, I guess the water must be cold.

Nate: "The sun has been up for a while now and you are still sleeping." They are shaking.

Ayanda: "Can I have some water?" She says slurring her words.

Nate: "I just gave you water." He cuts them loose and they slump

onto the floor. Buli and I are standing in the corner holding on to each other. He lifts them from the floor and puts them on the chairs and they try to cover themselves with their hands while they are shaking. "Lando wants to talk to you." Cebo tries to laugh. But she just ends up rattling her teeth together.

I walk over to them and pull up a chair. I move my eyes from one to the other. I should feel sorry for them, but the only thing going through my head right now is all I could have lost. My family, my friends, my job, I could have lost

everything and ended up in a brothel on the other side of the world. I grab a knife from the table and stick it in Ayanda's leg and she screams in pain.

Cebo: "What the fuck are you doing?" She shouts. I pull out the knife from Ayanda and stick it in Cebo's thigh. Now they are both screaming in pain.

Me: "Why did you have me kidnapped Ayanda? What did I do to you that was so horrible you had to ship me off to the other side of the world? What?" She chuckles.

Ayanda: "You really are an idiot

aren't you? You took him from me, Landokuhle. He was mine, he would have been with me still but thanks to you, he left me to play happy family with you."

Me: "I didn't take him from you Ayanda, if you know Philani half as much as you think you do then you would know that he never does anything he doesn't want to do."

Ayanda: "No, but he does anything his father says, that's why he agreed to marry you because in two years he will divorce you.

That was his plan, that's what he told me. I wasn't willing to wait for two years to have him

back. I love him way too much to just sit and wait for a full 24 months while he wakes up in your arms everyday."

My heart sank, not because of the pain in her voice but because he plans to divorce me when this two years is up. And here I was thinking maybe these two years could just be the beginning of a long love story. But what if Ayanda is lying? A lot of thoughts keep running through my head. I have fallen in love with Philani, and what if he really is planning on divorcing me. I close my eyes

and count down from ten to one. I need to focus.

Me: "So how much did they pay you for me?"

Ayanda: "Excuse me?"

Me: "I just want to know how much I am worth according to you."

Cebo: "You ain't worth shit." She says trying to laugh. "You really think you are all that? You think because you are Mrs Biyela then you are better than everyone else? You. Ain't. Worth. Shit. Sweetly."

I pull out the knife from her thigh and stick it in the other

thigh. I pull it out again and keep moving from one thigh to the next till she is gushing blood from every hole. I turn back to look at Ayanda who is now scared out of her mind.

Me: "Are you going to tell me my worth?"

Ayanda: "Two hundred thousand."
Huh.

Two hundred thousand? That is how much I am worth. I make that and maybe more from my investments in just six months, and here I was being sold in one day for two hundred thousand. I feel my blood boil. I am not that

cheap. I take the knife and start boring holes into Ayanda. I am so caught up in the task at hand before I feel strong hands snake around my waist and pull me away. The chair I was sitting on falls to the ground. Even through the smell of blood and sweat his scent is unmissable. He puts me down by the stairs.

Philani: "What the fuck are you doing?" I look at him and I can see the fire in his eyes. He is angry, i look away. "Landokuhle, what the heck are you doing? How did you even get here?"

Nate: "Uhm bra, I brought her

here."

Philani: "Why in heavens name would you do that Nate?" He asks way too calmly for my liking.

Nate: "She needed closure, and answers and this was the only way to get them." I look at him as he closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. He opens them and looks looks back at me. "Go to the bathroom and wash this blood off of you." I take my behind and just walk to the bathroom.

I take my clothes off and look at myself in the mirror. I have blood spatters all over my face and neck. My hands are blood red, my

sneakers and leggings are a different color to what they were when I wore them. I feel my heart pounding, I have blood on my hands, I stabbed people and watched them scream in pain and I didn't feel a thing. Who am I turning into? Is this really the person I want to be? What happened to the kind Lando? I sit on the toilet seat and feel tears run down my face.

Philani walks in with a refuse bag in one hand and some clothes on the other. He sees me sitting there and he just picks up my clothes and puts them in the

refuse bag.

Philani: "Take a bath Landokuhle we need to leave. And wear these when you are done." He puts the clothes on top of the sink and walks out with the refuse bag.

I stand up slowly and get under the shower. I watch the water wash off the blood from my body and carry it down to the sewage. I think the water washed away my conscience too, cause when I walked out of the shower I didn't feel as bad anymore. Maybe it's because I justified myself by saying atleast I didn't kill them.

I put on the clothes Philani had left, it was just shorts and a vest. I had to go braless cause he took my bra and my panties too. I walked out and found him tying them back to the beams. They were both begging him to take them to a hospital but their pleas fell on deaf ears. When he was done he walked past me to the bathroom to wash his hands. When he was done he held me by my forearm and walked me up the stairs after switching off the lights. We got to the top and he punched in the code and we walked out.

We found Nate and Buli in the lounge, but he was so angry he didn't even stop to say goodbye. We walked out and the gravel reminded me that I had no shoes on. I struggled to walk at his pace and when he noticed that he came and scooped me up over the shoulder. We got to his car and he opened the door for me before depositing me into the front seat. I got in and sat still. He got in and we drove off.

We got to the house and the kids weren't there, he must have left them with Kazi. He walked up the stairs to our bedroom and I

followed him, but catching up with him proved hard because he took two steps in one go. By the time I got to the bedroom he was in the closet searching for something. I sat on the bed and waited for him to come out.

Me: "So vele you are not going to talk to me?" He looked at me and I immediately regretted saying that. I should have just let him cool down a bit. Oh well, it's done now. "Please say something."

Philani: "What do you want me to say?"

Me: "I dont know. Yell, scream whatever, just dont shut me out."

Philani: "If I hadn't showed up would you have killed them?"

Me: "I dont know." He takes a deep breath and drags a chair and sits in front of me.

Philani: "Lando, I dont tell you half the shit that I do because I dont want to drag you into my dark world. I dont want you losing yourself."

Me: "I won't."

Philani: "Lando, did you see the holes you bore into their thighs? The way you were sticking that knife in and out of them it was like you were playing a game. Do you know how easy it would have

been to move up to their chests?
You would have killed them."

Me: "So? After what they did they deserve to die." I don't know why he is so worried about them. What if Ayanda is right, what if he is just bidding his time until the two years is up and he goes back to her?

Philani: "Yes they deserve to die, but not by your hand." He takes a deep breath and puts my hands in his. "Lando, taking a life is easy, its the consequences afterwards that are hard to deal with. The nightmares, the guilt and everything. I dont want you to

have to deal with that. I want you happy and kind and just being you. Leave all this to me, let me deal with Ayanda." I look down at our intertwined hands, he is right, as much as Ayanda deserves all that's coming to her, I am not a killer.

Me: "You are right. I am sorry. For going behind your back but I am not sorry for what I did." He laughs.

Philani: "I can tell. And now that I know you know how to handle a knife, I am never messing with you ever again." I laugh. I get up and straddle him on the chair and

start kissing him and soon we were on the bed with him pounding my already sore vagina.

INSERT 35

Death! Some say it comes like a thief in the night. But sometimes people just invite it into their houses in broad daylight. And I think that's what Ayanda and Cebo did, they invited it in and it did what it always does. Claim lives. After a week of being tied up and left to starve Ayanda and Buli finally died. I don't know how it happened though but they

were found on the side of the Gautrain route. My theory though is that they left them on the rail tracks of the Gautrain. And the way it's so fast it didn't stop in time so they were crushed. The news says they were high on drugs and fell asleep there, but I know better. I think i can sleep better now.

Today we are taking Gugu to boarding school. We decided to drive because the school is in the Eastern Cape. We woke up pretty early because we would be driving back. Gugu and Theo slept most of the way. We stopped a few

times on the way but we got there eventually.

We drove into the school and many students were already there with their parents. We walked out the car and started unpacking. As soon as we started dragging luggage up to the dorms a girl came running towards us and gave Gugu a hug. She just got here and she already has a friend. They start chatting and completely ignoring us. Philani looks at me and looks at them and laughs. I clear my throat.

Me: "Hello." They giggle.

Gugu: "Sorry, Lando this is my

friend Asenathi. Ase this is my sister Lando and her hubby Philani and that is my cute nephew Theo." She holds out her hand and we give her a handshake.

Ase: "Its nice to finally meet you. Gugu talks a lot about you." So they gossip about me. "All good things though."

Me: "Ok so how do you two know each other, you just got here?" I ask Gugu.

Gugu: "I was added to this WhatsApp group last year after I got accepted, turned out it was all the Grade tens, new and old. Ase and I started talking and

now we are friends." She said smiling. Talk about technology making things easier. Now there won't be awkward moments and students sitting alone at break because they have no friends.

Me: "Okay then, let's go see the principal." Ase led us to the principal's office but there was a bit of a queue. I greeted the Secretary and she quickly came and gave me a hug.

Secretary: "Its so nice to see you again. I'll tell the principal you are here."

Me: "No it's okay, we will wait our turn."

Secretary: "Heck no, our former Headgirl cannot be standing in line. Let me tell the principal." She walks away to the principal's office. I look around and some of the parents are looking at me funny. She pops her head out of the principal's office and calls us in. We walk in and the principal is just as excited to see me.

She walks out and leads us to the dorms and shows us where Gugu will stay, turns out she is sharing a room with Ase. When we are done we walk out and head back to the car. I take out a bank card and give it to Gugu.

Me: "This is for emergencies only. Okay." She giggles. "I am serious Gugu."

Gugu: "I know, emergencies only. Got you."

I give her a hug and get into the car. Philani opens the window and leans out to speak to her.

Philani: "A little tip, if you swipe anything less than two hundred it won't report." Gugu laughs.

Me: "Really Philani?"

Philani: "What?" Mxm.

We drive out and leave her there, although I am a bit sad to be leaving her behind, she doesn't seem to care. I look back at the

rearview mirror and she is already gone. I am going to miss her, but at least I know she will be getting a bit of her childhood back.

We drove back to Joburg and by the time we got there we were all just tired and sleepy. I put Theo to bed and found Philani already in the shower. I am not waiting for him to finish so I just join him. He scrubs my back and I scrub his. When we are done we get out, lotion and get into bed naked. Yep his naked tendencies have rubbed off on me. I lay on

his chest and start drawing patterns on his chest.

Philani: "What do you want?"

Me: "What?"

Philani: "The only time a woman starts drawing useless shit on a man's chest is because she wants something, so what do you want?"

I take a deep breath and look up at him.

Me: "I don't want anything but I do have a question."

Philani: "Okay, what is it?"

Me: "Are you planning on getting a divorce in two years?"

Philani: "Where is that coming from?"

Me: "Just answer the question?"

Philani: "I dont know. I dont know what will happen two years from now or even five years. But what I do know is that I love you, and I dont see myself without you in my life. whatever happens in my life, I want it to be with you and no one else."

Me: "Is that what you told Ayanda?"

Philani: "So this is where its coming from, Ayanda. What did she tell you?"

Me: "She said you told her that once the two years is up you will be filing for a divorce."

Philani: "Lando, I love you. Do you think I would be doing all this if i wasn't planning to stick around. For heavens sake we adopted a child together." He has a point, but I also know that even if you give a man a football team of children if he wants he will still leave you.

Me: "So no divorce?"

Philani: "Nope. You Mrs Biyela are stuck with me for eternity. When Jesus comes back he will find us together." He says kissing my forehead. I lay back on his chest and doze off.

I woke up early and prepared for church. Today there is a dedication at church for Faith's babies. We had one for Theo too. It was beautiful. Since it's a dedication and I am Godmother to baby Avumile I have to wear white. I decided to wear my white pencil skirt, a white sheer blouse and a white blazer with a bit of ruffles on the bottom. I decided on red strap stilettos.

I walked downstairs with Theo while Philani got ready, and they say women take forever. When he was done he found us waiting for

him in the car. He got in and we went to church.

The ceremony didn't take too long. It was beautiful though. When it was over we sat down for the actual service. I sat next to Buli and Faith. Mbusi and Philani sat together with Nate, yep he came to church for the first time.

Me: "How did you convince mlungu to come to church?" Buli chuckles.

Buli: "I have ways."

Me: "You have that man by the balls." She mock bowed.

Buli: "Thank you. As it should be." She took a deep breath. "I have a problem though, my dad called.

He wants me to come home."

Me: "Come home as in pay them a visit or....." she closed her eyes.

Buli: "No, come home as in come home and marry that old gizzard he chose for me."

Me: "I can't believe he is still hung up on that. Does he not care about your happiness?"

Faith: "Obviously not. I am a princess and my father would never dream of forcing me to marry someone I don't like.

Especially someone old enough to be my father."

Buli: "I am thinking of moving to New York."

Me: "You can't be serious right now."

Buli: "It's the only way Lando. My mother is already planning the wedding and they have even set a date."

Faith: "Yoh, hhayike I give up."

Me: "What about Nate?"

Buli: "Maybe we can move to New York together and just be by ourselves and be happy."

Me: "And you don't think your father is going to follow you there?"

Buli: "If he doesn't know where I am then....."

Okay so here is the story with Buli, her father decided when she was sixteen that she would marry this old gizzard from their village. During the December holidays that year she was supposed to go home and marry this old man. Instead of going home she went to her grandparents place, luckily for her they were able to convince her father to give her time and let her finish her education first. After matric she came to Joburg and never went back. Although they know where she is, and she talks to them most of the time,

but she still hasn't been home, she is afraid that the old man will abduct her and marry her by force.

After church we went to Faith's for lunch. Buli didn't look okay although she tried to fake it but we could see she wasn't okay.



BULI

Nate and I left Faith's and went back to his place. I have been spending so much time with him and everyday i fall deeper and deeper in love with him. He is an amazing guy. He is the type of

person who will love you, protect you and still put you back in line when you stray, not in an abusive way, and that's what I like about him.

I knew I have to tell him about my father and that old gizzard. He might be a chief but he is not the kind of man I see myself with. He has four wives already and the last one is only twenty years old. In fact none of his wives are over thirty. The original first wife would have been forty eight but she died during childbirth twenty years ago. Even she was over twenty

years younger than him. It's a bit perverted if you ask me. When we left church I got a text message from my dad saying if I even think about running away this time he will disown me.

Financially I can take care of myself. I don't need him or his money, but I don't know if I can live without my mother or my siblings. Disowning me won't just be cutting me off financially but he will make sure my whole family turns their back on me. Right now I feel stuck between a rock and a hard place. I can choose to be happy but that would mean

letting go of my family. And if I choose to do this I would be letting go of a man who loves me. We got to the house and I took a shower and put on my Pajamas. I walked to the lounge and Nate was already sitting on the couch scrolling through Netflix with some popcorn, wine for me and a beer for him. He's so thoughtful. I sat down next to him and laid my head on his chest.

Nate: "Baby what's wrong?"

Me: "Nothing." He lifted my head off his chest and looked at me in the eyes.

Nate: "Baby I know you, you

haven't been fine since your dad called last night. Tell me what he said that upset you." I take a deep breath, I guess theres no better time than now to tell the truth.

Me: "My dad told me that i have to come home."

Nate: "To visit?"

Me: "No, to get married?" He looked at me for a while before bursting into laughter.

Nate: "Wooh. You almost had me there. Nice joke."

Me: "I am serious Nate." He looks back at me and the laughter has left his eyes.

Nate: "Ok. So who are you supposed to marry?"

Me: "Some old man that my father promised me to when I was sixteen."

Nate: "Buli, you are a lawyer, you know the rules of this country, your father can't force you to do something you dont want to do."

Buli: "I know that, it's just....."

Nate: "Just what Buli?"

Buli: "If I dont do this he will disown me."

Nate: "So where does that leave us."

Buli: "I dont know Nate. I have a lot to think about."

Nate: "Do you love him?"

Buli: "Of course not. But I love my family, I love my mum and my siblings. If I dont do this I am going to lose them."

Nate: "Right." He gets up to leave.

Buli: "Nate please dont do this. Let's talk about this."

Nate: "I think maybe you need to decide what you want. I know I want you, I know I love you and I see my future with you in it. But if you want to do this then I won't stand in your way. I love you way too much to stop you from doing what you want."

He turned his back and walked upstairs. I felt tears fall from my eyes. I feel like I am at a crossroads right now and I can't decide whether to choose the road to happiness or loyalty to my father.

INSERT 36

Culture evolves but tradition remains the same, at least that's what people say. And this weekend we have to honor the tradition of imbeleko. We are flying down to KZN for the weekend to have imbeleko for the

twins. To tell you the truth though I am anxious. The thought of being there with my mother-in-law just sends shivers down my spine. I know she hates me but her reception to the kids has not been a friendly one.

Buli, Lando and I are already waiting in the jet for Mbusi to show up. Somehow Lando was able to twist Philani's arm into letting us use the Biyela jet.

Buli: "Do you think your husband will show up?" Speak of the devil and he will appear.

Me: "Mbusi, you are late!" He kisses me on the cheek before

taking a seat and strapping himself in.

Mbusi: "I know baby, I am sorry. I had some things to sort out."

The jet takes off. "So Lando, why didn't you bring Theo, I miss the little guy."

Lando: "Please wena you had your babies and your forgot about my poor baby." He laughs. "He misses you too but he has a cold right now. That is why even Philani couldn't come. One of us had to stay with him."

Mbusi: "Oh that's bad. I should come see him when we get back." I choose to focus on my magazine.

Theo doesn't have a cold. She left him because she doesn't trust my Mother-in-law. U can't blame her though, if this ceremony wasn't about the kids I also would have left them behind.

We land at King Shaka airport and there are cars waiting for us.

Mbusi and I together with the babies get into one car and Buli and Lando get into another.

There's security in the front and the back. I buckle up and we begin the long journey to Mtubatuba, okay its only two hours but my anxiety makes it feel like it's a long drive.

When we see the big compound, I notice there are people moving up and down the yard. They must be preparing for the ceremony tomorrow. The driver slows down and allows the other cars to pass us and enter the yard. I see Buli and Lando walk towards the family and greet them. Everyone is waiting by the main house.

The driver pulls up to the gate and we get out. We have to enter the yard on foot. Mbusi and I take the babies out and wait as the driver gets in and parks the car. They open the gate for us to get in. As soon as we take a step

into the yard it starts raining and the ululating begins. I cover Ayabonga with his blanket as the traditional healer Bab'Mphikeleli walks towards us. He places two leopard skins on the babies and leads us to a rondavel on the side of the house.

We get inside the rondavel and lay the babies down on the leopard skins. He covers their bodies in red ochre and smears some black powder on their forehead. When he is done we put their clothes back on and cover them with the leopard skins. He instructs us to not wash them until tomorrow

when they are introduced to their ancestors and to make sure they sleep with the leopard skins covering them.

We pick them up and head to the main house. As soon as we get in everyone rushes over to us and they all want to hold them but we hand them over to their grandfather and their great-grandfather, they call him Khokho, he is almost 94 years old. He is holding Ayabonga.

Khokho: "How blessed am I? God must truly love me. I get to see the next Chief, not in my dreams but he is in my arms.

Ngcobo

Mapholoba

Nyuswa

Fuze, Mavela

Mafuz'afulele njengefu lemvula

Mashiya amahle ngathi

azoshumayela

Dambuzo, Mthabathe

Mabhala ngozipho abanye bebhala

ngepensela

Malal'efake umunwe enduna

Avuke ekuseni awuncinde akhombe

ilanga

Mavulangkulu kuvel'ilanga

Sididane

Ngongoma

Maqadi amakhulu

Mbili

Ngcobo.

The house is filled with ululating and whistles. Everyone is happy about this, except mummy dearest. She is nowhere in sight. I decide to forget about her and just enjoy this moment. If these babies made it here, surely there is a higher power watching over them and protecting them. So maybe I should chill a bit and just enjoy.

We woke up the next morning and prepared for the ceremony. Two

goats were slaughtered and the babies were introduced to their ancestors early in the morning.

After they were introduced they had white beads tied around their wrists and ankles. Mother-in-law finally decided to come to the party. Although she wasn't fully there, she had no choice.

When everything was done people feasted and drank like there was no tomorrow. By nightfall people were beginning to depart. The drunkards stayed behind to finish all the alcohol.

I was so tired that by the time my head hit the people it was

lights out. I woke up sweating and out of breath after I had a bad dream. I dreamt that a snake had coiled itself around my babies and it was squeezing the life out of them. I tried getting closer to try and save them but the closer I got the harder it squeezed. After a while their eyes turned red and blood came gushing out from their eyes, mouths and ears. They were in so much pain but I couldn't even get to them. Then I heard someone laughing from the darkness, an evil laugh but I couldn't see their face.

I woke up and walked over to their crib, my babies were sleeping peacefully. I even put my finger on their noses just to feel the heat of their breath. I took a deep breath and just prayed over them.



NARRATED

In the middle of the night, a woman leaves the palace wearing all black. She sneaks out making sure no one follows her. She reaches the gate and looks back one more time to make sure no one is there. But she doesn't

notice a figure standing by one of the rondavels also watching her. She turns and leaves as the figure follows her from a safe distance. She walks for a while before entering a forest. She walks into the forest without fear and walks to the other side where she crosses a river and walks up a mountain with the figure steadily keeping pace. On top of the mountain she makes her way into a lone rondavel. The figure follows suit and stands by the window looking in. He decides to take out his phone and presses record.

Woman: "Gedlembane wake up we need to talk."

Gedlembane wakes up and stretches himself

Gedle: "My queen, it's the middle of the night. To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?" He sits up on his single bed by the corner and looks at the queen who is pacing up and down.

Queen: "I need answers

Gedlembane. I need to know how that girl was able to have those God forsaken children after all that we did?"

Gedle: "My queen I have no answers for you. I have tried to

find out what happened and nothing comes up."

Queen: "Throw the bones, check your calabash, do something man Gedlembane, do I have to do the thinking for you." He groans, gets up and throws a grass mat on the floor, lays down a kanga and wraps himself in leopard print fabric and got down on his knees.

Gedle: "My queen please have a seat." She sits down and watches him as he chants and calls upon the spirits before throwing the bones on the floor. "My Queen, I see nothing but darkness."

Queen: "Check the calabash cause

clearly your bones are useless." He gets up and pulls out the calabash from under his bed. He begins his chants again and calls upon the spirit. Before he knows it the calabash begins to boil up and smoke comes up from it. He chants some more and the smoke fills up the room. He stops and the smoke begins to clear. He takes some time analyzing his calabash.

Gedle: "My queen, I think I have the answers you seek."

Queen: "Speak and stop wasting my time. I need to head back to the palace before the sun rises."

He takes a deep breath.

Gedle: "The snake we planted in her womb is dead. That is why she was able to carry the babies to term."

Queen: "How did the snake die, were you not supposed to watch over it and make sure things go according to plan."

Gedle: "My Queen it seems there is a higher being that has been protecting her and the babies, she also didn't even know she was pregnant, her stomach wasn't even visible for the world to see. Those kids aren't just miracle babies, they are protected."

Queen: "By who? And why?" She asked now pacing up and down the room again.

Gedle: "I dont have the answer to that question my queen." She sits back down.

Queen: "Fine, then what do we do now, how do we get rid of them now, especially the boy?" He gets up and reaches into a satchel bag hanging on a nail on the wall. He brings out a white stone and hands it to her.

Gedle: "Take this stone. Place it under the bed they will be sleeping on. Take this powder, as soon as they fall asleep, blow this

powder outside, call their names three times and then take this knife and point it to the moon. As soon as you do that there will be thunder and lightning. It will hit their bed and start a fire." He hands her all that she will need. She laughs out loud still oblivious to the figure lurking outside.

He takes his phone and checks if it's still recording. Unfortunately it rings at that moment. He quickly puts it on silent before running down the mountain as quick as possible and back to the palace.

Gedle: "Who was that?"

Queen: "I don't know. I need to get going. I will let you know how it goes." She gets up and begins her walk back to the palace. When she gets to the palace she goes straight to her chambers and gets into bed with a smile on her face.



FAITH

I woke up in the morning and found Mbusi sitting on the side of the bed with his elbows on his knees and his chin on his hands. He seemed deep in thought. I got up and kneeled on the bed and put

my hands around his neck. He seems startled by that.

Me: "Baby what's wrong?" I ask kissing his shoulder.

Mbusi: "We are going back to Joburg?"

Me: "Today?"

Mbusi: "Yes. Get the kids ready." He walks over to the bathroom to take a shower. I don't know what is going on but I know his moods, and this one is one that says 'I won't change my mind so do as I say.' I get up and start packing. When he is done with his shower he helps me bath the kids and get them ready. I send Lando

a text telling them to get ready because we are leaving.

Once the babies are clean and dressed I go and take a shower while Mbusi watches over them. When we are done he calls the servants and they start packing our belongings in the cars. We walk out and walk to the main house, we find Buli and Lando already there together with the rest of the family.

Khokho: "Mbusi, the servants say you are leaving?"

Mbusi: "Yebo khokho, I am leaving, and I dont think I will be coming back here anytime soon."

He didn't tell me any of this. Why are we not coming back here? His mother comes walking down the stairs humming a song. She seems to be in a good mood.

Mrs Ngcobo: "Oh my baby, the babies are up, bring them to gogo so she can hold them." She walks over to me and Aya but Mbusi stands in front of her.

Mbusi: "You will never ever again in your miserable life ever touch my kids." Everyone gasps and the room goes silent.

Mrs Ngcobo: "Son!"

Mbusi: "Dont son me, you bloody witch." Lando comes over and

takes Avumile from him and drags me to the side of the room. Mr Ngcobo: "Son what is going on?" He asks standing up to stand between them.

Mbusi: "Your wife is a witch, she is the reason Faith has been having all these miscarriages." I feel my knees turn into jelly. Buli rushes over to me and takes Aya before pulling up a chair for me to sit.

Mr Ngcobo: "That is a very serious accusation Mbusi." I look at my Mother-in-law and she has tears running down her face.

Mrs Ngcobo: "After everything I

have done for you Mbusi, I carried you in my womb for nine full months, loved you and protected you your whole life and this is the thanks I get. Accusing me of being a witch. Dear Lord Jesus what have I done to deserve this." She puts her hands over her head and starts wailing. Zethu comes over to her to comfort her.

Zethu: "Bhuti why would you do such a thing, you can't call our mother a witch."

Mbusi: "Her crocodile tears might fool you but not me." He takes out his phone and plays a recording.

He places the phone on the coffee table and connects the speaker so everyone can hear. By the time the recording is done playing, Zethu and Aphelele are huddled together crying, their mother is on the floor crying too.

Mr Ngcobo: "Thabile, why would you do such a thing, to your own child." She doesn't answer, instead she cries louder. He instructs two of the guards to go search her room and bring anything that doesn't belong there to him. She tries to stop them but the other guards hold her back. The guards come back and place different

things on the coffee table. A calabash that's filled with red liquid, a blue and red wool tied around a doll with a small snake head stuck in the abdomen with a needle. There's also a white stone and some powder.

Bab'Ngcobo takes a seat on the couch, and just looks at all the things on the table. He then instructs the guards to take his wife upstairs to her room and lock her there. He gets up and makes a phone call. He stands there for a while before Bab'Mphikeleli walks in chanting and singing the Ngcobo praise names. He walks

over to the items on the table and moves them around with his stick before chanting and going into a trance.

When he is done he kneels on the floor next to the items.

Bab'Mphikeleli: "Makhosi."

Bab'Ngcobo: "Makhosi makhosi oknuka (for what). Yini umsebenzi wakho laykhaya Mphikeleli?

(What is your job). Waphela umuzi kababa ubhekile (things fall apart with you here). Sifuya abathakathi awustsheli (we have witches here and you dont even tell us)"

Bab'Mphikeleli: "Mapholoba,

abaphantsi bebakufihlile konke loku (the ancestors hid this from me)"

Bab'Ngcobo walks over to Mbusi who is now standing next to me with his arm around my shoulders.

Bab'Ngcobo: "Son, please take maDlamini back to Joburg. I will sort this out and let you know how it all goes." He turns to look at me. "MaDlamini, I am so sorry." I just nod my head as Mbusi leads me out. I am so numb right now I dont know what to think. We decide to use the sprinter so we can all travel together. Buli and Lando strap

the babies in and take their seats. Mbusi gets in and sits next to me. I rest my head on his shoulder and feel the tears stream down my face. If I never see that woman again, it will be too soon.

INSERT 37

It's been a couple of weeks since we came back from Mtubatuba. Everything that happened there honestly was a revelation and a half. I think the person most affected though was Mbusi, finding out that your mother is

responsible for the pain that your wife went through would devastate anybody. But being the one to catch her, now that just sent him on a whole different path. We have seen them a few times since then, they say they are okay but I think it will take time for them to get back to the way things used to be. It was easier thinking you had a medical problem than having to accept that your own mother-in-law is the reason behind it. But we have assured Faith and Mbusi that we will be with them every step of the way like we always have been.

His mother was banished from the palace and sent back to her family. How humiliating is that? Anyway back to me. I finally made a decision after speaking to my siblings, I decided not to marry that old geyser. If he wants another wife he can find her someone else, but it won't be Bulelwa Zwane. I called my dad and told him my decision and he didn't take it very well. He even came to Joburg to find me. He went to my house but since I had anticipated him coming, I told my neighbors I was going on a business trip to the UK for a few

weeks, and that's what they told him when he came. Instead of going back home he decided to go to every law firm in town since he didn't know which one I worked for. That was a bust too.

I moved in with Nate for a few weeks. I am not planning on vaten-sit so. He was happy with my decision. I realised that I wasn't ready to lose all that I have with him. I mean he is probably my soulmate. I have never loved anyone as much as I love him so giving all that up would not be easy. I need that man.

It's a Friday and I am meeting the girls for drinks. Lando texted me and told me that we will meet at Faith's place. I drove to the mall and bought a couple of bottles of wine and headed to Faith's. I got there and found Lando already drinking. This drunkard, she couldn't even wait for me.

Me: "Ladies." I got in and gave them hugs before pouring myself a glass of red wine.

Faith: "You do know this is not fair right?" We looked at her with questioning eyes. "You shouldn't be drinking cause I am also not

drinking." We burst out laughing.

Lando: "Girl please, after the week I've had at work, I need a glass of wine."

Faith: "You I understand, wena what's your excuse?" She asks looking at me.

Me: "I have my reasons too. Since I am staying with my man for a few days I need the wine to get through the night." They look at each other.

Lando: "I thought you said mlungu knows how to lay down the pipe."

Me: "That's the problem. He can but he also has a very high libido."

And now that I have to stay put at his place its an every day job."

Faith: "You do know you could tell him you need a break right."

Me: "Heck no. Since I am off work I need the orgasms to sleep better at night and to start my day."

Lando: "So how did you start your day when you were single?"

Me: "That is why dildos were invented." They burst out laughing. "Speaking of dildos, have you bought a new one since the other one went up in flames?"

Lando: "Nope, and I am not planning on getting it." I guess

now I know what to get her for her birthday.

Me: "You know who I think needs a dildo? Your Mother-in-law." I say pointing to Faith with a celery stick. "Clearly her husband wasn't doing a proper job."

Lando: "Have they told you anything about what's happening?"

Faith: "Nope, all I know is that she was banished from the palace and sent back to her family."

Lando: "But like they haven't told you why she did it. Why she went through all that trouble."

Faith: "Nope, but Bab'Ngcobo is

coming next week so maybe he will give us answers cause I have so many questions in my head. And if I don't get answers soon I will go crazy."

Buli: "Do you think you'll ever forgive her?"

Faith: "I dont know. The Christian in me wants to forgive but I just want to know why? I mean she has never liked me but why would she do that to Mbusi, knowing how much he wanted to be a father. She saw him in pain and she didn't flinch, no remorse, no guilt, nothing."

Buli: "We could always go down to

KZN to get the answers you want."

Lando: "Hhay Buli, last time you suggested that some people ended up with holes in their thighs. So no. No KZN." Mxm

Lando knows how to spoil a party.

Faith: "Its okay, hopefully I will get the answers when Ubaba comes by next week." I really hope she gets the answers she needs to put this behind her.



NARRATED

In Beacon Bay, East London. Mr Mdoda is sitting in his office looking out towards the beach

when there is a knock on the door, he tells the person to come and his right hand man Sticks walks in.

Mdoda: "Wha do you have for me Sticks?" He asks not turning from the window.

Sticks: "Bozza, she is in Joburg, she didn't go to the UK. She took a few weeks off work and moved in with her boyfriend." Mdoda turns around to look at Sticks.

Mdoda: "She has a boyfriend?"

Sticks: "Yes, his name is Nate Samuels. He is a doctor and a businessman."

Mdoda: "Can we get to him?"

Sticks: "We can, he isn't big on security so getting to him will be easy. But....."

Mdoda: "But what?"

Sticks: "His friends, I found out that he is close friends with Philani Biyela, Sizwe Ziqubu and Lindani Ndlovu."

Mdoda: "Am I supposed to know who they are?"

Sticks: "According to my sources, they are the most powerful guys in the Joburg underworld. They deal in a whole lot of stuff, drugs, arms, diamonds and gold."

Mdoda: "Mhmmm."

Sticks: "Remember the reserve

bank heist that happened six years ago?"

Mdoda: "Yeah."

Sticks: "Rumours say that they were behind it."

Mdoda: "So why are they not in jail."

Sticks: "Because they left no evidence. The hawks were on their tail for a while but they found nothing. So they closed the case."

Mdoda: "Yeah well they are powerful in their territory, this is mine. Put a plan in motion. I need my daughter home."

Sticks: "Yes sir." He walks out.

Mdoda turns back to staring outside the window.

He gets a text from his wife that dinner is ready so he walks out the office to the dining room. He finds his wife sitting at the table.

Mdoda: "Sthandwa sam." He kisses her on the cheek and takes a seat and starts eating.

Mrs Mdoda: "Why was sticks here?"

Mdoda: "Business." He takes a sip from his drink. "Tell me, have you cancelled the wedding plans?"

Mrs Mdoda: "Not yet. I will call the planner tomorrow."

Mdoda: "Dont. Plan the wedding."

Mrs Mdoda: "We can't force her to marry Dalindyebo tata."

Mdoda: "She will, I will talk to her and sort this out."

Mrs Mdoda: "Maybe we should give her more time to think about this, maybe she will change her mind."

Mdoda: "I have given her over 8 years. It's time she come home and do what she is supposed to do."

Mrs Mdoda: "Kodwa tata (but)"

Mdoda: "Hhaybo, I have spoken, the wedding is going ahead, Buli will just have to suck it up."

Mrs Mdoda: "If you say so."

They continue eating in silence.



LANDO

I enjoy being back at work, although I miss Theo during the day. We got him a nanny that I had to fire after just two days because she started making googoo eyes at Philani. Call me insecure but I am not a fan of people who won't stay in their lane.

It's the weekend so I have a picnic planned for the three of us at the Johannesburg Botanical

Gardens. I would have asked Faith and Mbusi to join us but their babies are still small.

I decided we would wear matching clothes. I wore black Adidas sweatpants with a white Adidas tshirt and black yeezy sneakers. Philani complained but he eventually gave in and wore the same thing. Theo looked so cute in his outfit.

I was busy in the kitchen packing the basket when Philani came down with Theo.

Philani: "We are late!"

Me: "Its a picnic Philani theres no

arrival time. Please load the stroller in the car and strap Theo in his car seat. I will be out just now." He took the stroller and walked out sulking. He was supposed to have a golf day with his friends but I had already made plans for us so....

I carried the basket outside and found him standing by the car busy on his phone. He helped load the basket in the boot before we got into the car and drove off.

We get there and set up. Theo seems to be enjoying himself. He is crawling around and trying to eat grass. After a while Philani lays

down on his back and puts Theo on his chest. Next thing I know they are both snoring besides me. I decide to take a walk around and take pictures.

By the time I get back they are still sleeping. It's already late so I decide to start packing our things in the car, then I can wake them up so we can go home. When everything is packed I come back to wake them up.

Me: "Philani." He groans "Baby wake up." He opens his eyes.

Philani: "What time is it?"

Me: "Time to go home. Let's go."
I take Theo from him and he

gets up and stretches. He takes the blanket and follows me to the car.

Me: "That was nice."

Philani: "What?"

Me: "The picnic. It was nice spending time together."

Philani: "Yeah."

Me: "Didn't you have fun." He ignores me. Instead he keeps looking at his phone.

"Are you expecting a call?" He looks at me.

Philani: "No. Why?"

Me: "Can you focus on the road then."

Philani: "Sorry." He puts his phone

away.

Mxm. He just ruined my day. I look out the window and doze off.

I wake up when I feel the car come to a stop. I look out and we are at Bab'Biyela's house in Dainfern.

Me: "I thought we were going home?"

Philani: "We are. We are just dropping Theo off with Kazi."

Me: "What? Why?"

Philani: "I will explain later. Stay in the car I'll take him inside." He gets out the car and opens the back door and takes Theo out. He brings him to my side and I kiss

him. He is still sleeping, he must really be tired. I hope he doesn't throw a tantrum when he wakes up and doesn't find me there.

Philani takes him inside and comes back quickly. He needs to explain. He gets into the car and drives off.

Me: "Why are we leaving Theo there?"

Philani: "Because we are going out to dinner. And since you fired the nanny we needed a babysitter." I guess that makes sense.

Speaking of nannys, I need to call aunty Sphelele so she can tell me when the new nanny is arriving.

Yes I decided to hire a fifty years old woman from the village.

We get to the house and quickly take a shower. Apparently dinner starts at 20:00 and I only have about 45 minutes to get ready.

When I get out of the shower I find a long gold dress on the bed. Its sleeveless and has a plunging neckline. I pick it up and the Swarovski crystals its adorned with sparkle in the light. There is also a box of shoes next to it and a smaller one on top. I open the small box first and it's a jewelry set, its diamond studded earrings, a necklace with just one diamond

in the center and a bracelet. Its beautiful. This dinner must be special.

I get dressed and the dress is gorgeous, I put on the earrings and the gold strap stilettos. I decide to pull my weave up in a messy bun and put on as minimal make up as possible. Philani appears from God knows where wearing a black tuxedo with a black bowtie. He picks up the necklace and places it on my neck before planting a kiss in my shoulder while admiring me on the mirror.

Me: "When did you get time to do this Mr Biyela?"

Philani: "A gentleman never reveals his secret my love. Are you ready." I turn to face him.

Me: "As ready as I'll ever be." I straightened his bowtie. "So what's the occasion?"

Philani: "You will see. Shall we." I hook my elbow onto his and he leads me out. As we walk down the stairs I see the lounge. It is scattered with red rose petals. It wasn't like this when we got in. How did he do that.

When we get to the final step I notice small candles that lit up a

pathway. We follow the path and it leads outside to the garden.

The garden is beautiful. There are rose petals everywhere and fairy lights that light up the place. There is a table that is decorated with small candles, flowers and hanging crystals.

Philani: "Do you like it."

Me: "Baby its beautiful, but what's the occasion."

Philani: "Come." He leads me to the table and pulls out a seat for me. I sit down and he moves to sit on the other side. A waiter appears from nowhere and places a plate with a stainless steel

cover on the table. The waiter opens the cover and it's a slice of chocolate cake. On the side of the plate there is 'will you marry me' written with chocolate syrup. I look up and he is on one knee in front of me. He is holding a small brown velvet box with a ring that sparkles even in the night.

Me: "Baby what's going on?"

Philani: "Landokuhle, Avumile Shongwe, please do me the honour of being my wife." I chuckle.

Me: "I am your wife."

Philani: "I know, but this time I want you to be my wife in every sense of the word not just on

paper. I want to marry you with the world watching, i want everyone to know that I am yours and you are mine. I want my family to welcome you into the family the right way, both traditionally and otherwise. I want you to fully and unequivocally be known as Landokuhle Avumile Biyela."

Me: "Yes, I will marry you again and again." I feel tears fall down my face as he slips the ring into my finger. We both get up and kiss the life out of each other. I love this man. I pull out and look at him.

Me: "So what happened to waiting two years."

Philani: "I dont need two years to know that I love you and I want to spend the rest of my life with you." I smile and kiss him again.

Me: "Okay."

Philani: "Which is why we need to do the right thing this time."

Me: "What do you mean?"

Philani: "I know you love Bab'Shongwe but this time we have to pay Lobola the right way, to your biological family not a man you met along the way."

My mood drops from a hundred to ten. The thought of my mother

being involved in my life is not pleasant.

Me: "I dont want my mother to ruin this for me."

Philani: "She won't, because this time we will pay lobola to your father and no one else." I look at him.

Me: "Philani my father is dead. I told you that."

Philani: "He is not dead baby. He is alive and I found him."

INSERT 38

I woke up in the morning and it felt like even mother nature was

in a good mood. The sun was out and the birds were chirping. It sounded like the soundtrack of my life. I turned over in the bed and his side was empty. Oh well, at least I have this sparkling diamond on my hand to keep me company. I looked at this rock on my finger and I couldn't help but smile. I took it off and placed it on his pillow, I took out the gold band I have been wearing since we got married and moved it to my other hand. I put the new ring back in its rightful place. It looked even better without the gold band. I was busy admiring

the ring when Philani walked in with a tray of breakfast. I got up and sat up with my back on the headboard.

Philani: "Nice ring!" He says placing the tray on the side table and getting on the bed.

Me: "Thank you. My fiancée has great taste." He laughs.

Philani: "Well, he is a lucky guy." He says planting kisses on my neck.

Me: "Indeed he is." I turned to him, cupped his face with my hands and kissed him. He pulled out after a while to catch his breath.

Philani: "Your food is getting cold."

He said as I went back and kissed him again.

Me: "We have a microwave."

I got up and straddled him. He held on to my butt as we kissed. His hands moved up to my waist and pulled up the vest I was wearing leaving me naked. He lifted himself a bit from the bed and pulled down his shorts. I felt his dick spring up and hit me soon as it was free. He entered me and I moaned and let go of his lips. I started moving up and down while he kissed and sucked my boobs. He whispered "faster" but I decided to do the opposite and go slower,

which drove him nuts. When he realized I was playing him he snaked his arm around my waist and started pounding me from the bottom. I held on to the headboard as I felt myself about to cum. He went harder and faster and I felt a volcano erupt inside of me. He turned over and laid me in the bed and started pounding me again. He kept going until we both released at the same time before he slumped on top of me with his dick still in me. After he caught his breath he turned over and laid on his back looking at the ceiling.

I got up and went to the bathroom and brought back a towel for us to clean ourselves up. I got on the bed and took the tray from the side table and started eating while Philani laid on his back with his eyes closed.

Me: "Babe."

Philani: "Mhmm."

Me: "Last night you said my father was alive and you found him. What did you mean?" He opens his eyes, pulls himself up and leans on the headboard with his back.

Philani: "Your mother lied to you. Your father is alive. He is a

teacher at a school in Eswatini."

Me: "How do you know he's my father?" He reaches into his side drawer and brings out a file. He opens it and there are pictures and documents. He picks one document and hands it to me.

Philani: "That's your birth certificate with his name on it."

He hands me the pictures. It's him. He looks like me. There's one with him holding a little baby in his arms. Could it be me? If it's really him and he is alive then why did he leave me? Why did he abandon me?

I have all these questions in my head and no answers. Growing up and going through everything I went through I always comforted myself by saying if my father had been there things would have been different, that I could easily forgive him because he didn't ask to die, but now I don't know what to think. I don't know how to feel. And as much as I can bombard Philani with questions the only person who can give me the answers I seek is him and him alone. I finish eating and just lay in Philani's chest. I need to talk to Dr Steenkamp.



BULI

I woke up to an empty bed. And I am late for church. Argh God will just have to forgive me. I get up and go to the bathroom, brush my teeth and wash my face. I walk out and head downstairs.

Hopefully Nate is back. He has a habit of falling asleep on the couch, especially when he was performing a surgery that took too long. I get downstairs and he is not there. I check the garage and his car is not there. He was called in for an emergency last night at the hospital. Oh well let

me just start on lunch cause it's late for breakfast.

I decide to put on some music while cooking. By the time I am done it's lunchtime. Hopefully Nate will be back soon. I head back upstairs and take a shower. I put on some shorts and a crop top and go back downstairs to watch a movie. After an hour just sitting there I take my phone and call him. His phone goes straight to voicemail. I call him again and still nothing. I decide to call the hospital. It rings twice and someone picks up.

Receptionist: "SunMed private hospital how can I help you?"

Me: "Hi, i am trying to get hold of Dr Nate Samuels." I hear shuffling before she comes back on the line.

Receptionist: "I am sorry Dr Samuels is off this weekend.

Please try calling him on his cell if its urgent." Okay this is weird.

Me: "I know he is off this weekend but he was called in last night for an emergency surgery."

Receptionist: "Oh okay, let me check." I hear a keyboard clicking.

"No ma'am, there were no surgeries yesterday, not even

emergency ones. Dr Samuels did not come here yesterday." I feel my heart rate increasing bit by bit.

Me: "Okay, thank you for your time."

Receptionist: "Of course. Have a good day." She hangs up.

Where could Nate be? I try his phone one more time and nothing. I call the lounge and he is not there either. Now I am getting worried. I decide to call Philani.

Philani: "Bulelwa!"

Me: "Hey, have you seen Nate?"

Philani: "Nope, why?"

Me: "He was called in for an

emergency surgery at the hospital but I just called them now and they have no record of that. His phone goes straight to voicemail."

Philani: "Have you checked the lounge?"

Me: "They haven't seen him either." I hear him swear.

Philani: "Okay let me make some calls, I will call you back.

Me: "Okay, thanks." I hang up.

For his sake I hope he is not under some woman right now cause I swear I will kill him.



PHILANI

Buli's call unsettled me a bit. Nate is not the type to disappear without informing anyone. I texted Sbu and told him to track his car and phone. I left the gym and went to the kitchen. Lando came in from picking up Theo.

Me: "Hey." I said kissing her on the cheek and then taking Theo.

Lando: "Hey, what's wrong?"

Me: "What makes you think anything is wrong?"

Lando: "Because I know you. What's happening?" I take a deep breath.

Me: "Nate is missing, I got a call from Buli saying he left last night

after being called for a surgery at the hospital but according to them they didn't call him."

Lando: "You think something happened to him?"

Me: "I dont know. I am just waiting on Sbu to track his phone and car then we'll take it from there."

Lando: "For his sake I hope he is not under some woman cause if he breaks my friends heart I will cut his balls off and feed them to the dogs." She says with a serious face.

Me: "why do I believe that?" She smiles.

Lando: "I hope he is okay though. Let me go put this one down for his nap." She takes the sleeping Theo and heads upstairs.

It's been almost an hour since I texted Sbu and he still hasn't called back. But then again no news is good news right? My phone rings just as I take out a bottle of water from the fridge. It's Sbu.

Me: "Sbu!"

Sbu: "Bozza, his car is in the hospital parking lot."

Me: "Okay meet me there."

Sbu: "Sure." I hang up.

I take my car keys and head out. I will text Lando later. I drive into the parking lot and sure enough his car is there. I park next to it and get out the car. Sbu drives in and parks next to me. He gets out and walks over to me.

Sbu: "Bozza."

Me: "Sure. Still no sign of him?"

Sbu: "No. But I have the boys out looking for him."

Me: "Good. Were you able to track his phone?"

Sbu: "No. It was disconnected last night around ten. Its last known location was right here."

Me: "Fuck!" I say walking around his car. I notice something peeking out from under the driver's side of the car. I kneel down and pick it up. It's his stethoscope. He wouldn't leave that lying around unless someone took him.

I kneel down again and look under the car, his car keys are under the car. I pick them up. He really was taken. Question is who took him and why?



BULI

It's been hours since I called Philani and he still hasn't come back to me. The door bell rings. I rush to open hoping its Philani with some news. But it's just Lando and Theo. I just sigh and walk back to the lounge.

Lando: "Geez, you could atleast pretend to be happy to see us." She says putting Theo on the floor.

Me: "Sorry friend, I was hoping it was Philani and maybe he had some news." I give her a hug.

Lando: "He texted me saying they found Nates car in the hospital parking lot." I look at her with

shock and maybe relief.

Me: "But the hospital said he wasn't there. Why the fuck would they lie? I hope that nurse wasn't covering for him and he is somewhere cheating."

Lando: "I doubt that. I am sure Philani will come and tell us where he is. I am hungry did you cook?"

Me: "Yeah." She gets up and goes to the kitchen. I pick up Theo and he tries to pull my earrings.

"That uncle of yours better not be cheating on me or else I will kill him." He smiles and that just warms my heart and makes me feel a little better. Lando comes

back with a plate of food. She sits down and starts eating. The door bell rings again. I put Theo down and go and open.

Sizwe and Nate walk in followed by Sbu. I lead them to the lounge and they greet Lando before sitting down.

Me: "So? What did you find?"

Philani looks at Sizwe while rubbing his hands together.

Philani: "We found his car at the hospital, but there was no sign of him. We asked the hospital staff and one nurse said he came in last night saying he was called for a surgery but they told him there

are no scheduled surgeries so it must have been a mistake. He left and that was the last they saw of him."

Sbu: "I hacked into the hospital's security system and it shows he did go there and left without even going to his office."

I hold on to my chest as my heart rate rises, as if that will help. I have so many theories right now and none of them make sense even to me. Lando comes and sits next to me with her arm around me.

Philani: "We think someone took him."

Me: "Took him as in picked him up from the hospital or what?"

Philani: "We think he was kidnapped." I swear if I wasn't sitting down I would have fainted. Why would anyone want to take him.

Me: "Is it..... is it related to your jobs?"

Philani: "I doubt it. We have called everyone we know and no one has a clue where he might be or who took him." My phone rings. I look at the caller ID and it's my dad so I ignore it.

Me: "You are going to find him right?" I ask with tears

streaming down my face. I can't lose him.

Sizwe: "We will find him. We need to go, we will call you soon as we have more information."

Me: "Ok." They get up, Philani comes and kisses Lando before walking out.

It's been hours since they left and I have been stuck on the same spot in this couch. They haven't called to update us. What if he is lying in a ditch somewhere dead. Dear God please dont take him from me. I say a silent prayer.

My phone rings again and it's my dad. I keep sending it to voicemail but he keeps calling. Lando walks down the stairs after putting Theo to sleep and hears my phone ringing.

Lando: "You are not going to answer that?" She asks taking a seat next to me.

Me: "It's my dad so it's not important."

Lando: "Ok." She puts on a movie, my eyes are watching but my mind is not registering anything that's happening there. My phone rings again. "I think you should answer it, clearly he won't stop."

I pick the phone up and he has now moved to video call. I answer and his face appears. He seems angry.

Me: "Hi dad."

Dad: "Buli I have been trying to call you, why aren't you picking up my calls?"

Me: "Dad please I have a lot going on right now can we do this some other time."

Dad: "Theres no better time than the present. I just wanted to tell you that the plans for your wedding are coming along just right. Although your mother says you have to come home for the

dress fitting." I mentally roll my eyes. He must be out of his mind.

Me: "I don't know why you are wasting your money, I am not marrying Dalindyebo." He laughs.

Dad: "Of course you are baba.

That boyfriend of yours will not stop the wedding." How does he even know about Nate?

Me: "Dad I need to go I am expecting a call."

Dad: "Before you go, your boyfriend wants to say hi." What? He moves the phone around and it points to Nate. I close my mouth in shock. He is tied to a chair, but he looks unconscious. And it looks

like he has been tortured. The shirt he is wearing is bloody and he has a wound on the side of his head. Tears stream down my face at the sight of him. He turns the camera back to himself.

Dad: "Now babygirl, you are going to come home, marry Dalindyebo and I will set him free, you dont come home i put a bullet in his head." He smiles. "I love you. I will see you in the next two days, if you are not here then I will send you an address where you will pick up his corpse." The line goes dead and my phone slips from my hand as my sobs fill the room.

Lando holds me and let's me sob on her chest.

Lando: "Hey, we know who has Nate..... Buli's dad, he just called..... ok I will see you then."
She must have called Philani.

I know how tight and close Nate and his friends are. They always have each others backs. My dad might think he is doing this to punish me but he just opened a can of worms he can never be able to close. And strangely enough, I am more worried about Nate than I am about my dad.

INSERT 39

Sizwe and I drove to Nates as soon as Lando called. We need to get to the bottom of this as soon as possible. We drive into the house and walk in without knocking. We find Lando in the lounge.

Me: "Hey. Wheres Buli?"

Lando: "Sleeping. She wouldn't stop crying so I gave her sleeping pills."

Me: "What did her father say?"

Lando: "He said she has to come home in two days and marry the man he chose for her, if she doesn't come he will kill Nate."

Sizwe: "Who is her father?"

Me: "He is some construction businessmen from eQumbu in the Eastern Cape but he is based in East London. Mr Mdoda. I dont know his name."

Sizwe takes out his phone and calls Sbu.

Sizwe: "Sbu, yeah I need you to find out all you can about a Mdoda from East London, he is in construction..... yeah he has Nate..... ok sharp." He hangs up. "He'll call us once he has more info."

Me: "Its late I think we need to get some sleep. Where's Theo?"

Lando: "Upstairs sleeping."

Me: "Are we sleeping over?"

Lando: "I am not leaving Buli in the state that she's in."

Me: "Ok then let's go." I hold her hand and we walk up the stairs and go into our rooms.

I hope that man knows what he is doing. Because he just started a war he won't win. And what kind of sick twisted man forces his daughter to marry a man old enough to be her grandfather? I don't know what he stands to gain with this marriage but I will find out and then bring him to his knees.

I woke up early in the morning and went to the gym. It helps me think. When I was done I went to the kitchen and made myself a smoothie. I was standing there looking out the window deep in thought when Sizwe came down.

Sizwe: "Morning."

Me: "Bafo."

Sizwe: "What are you thinking about?" He asks coming to stand next to me.

Me: "How are we going to do this?"

Sizwe: "I dont know man." Just then the door bell rang. I went to

open and it was Sbu. I led him back to the kitchen.

Me: "So what did you get?" He took out some files from his laptop bag and handed them to us.

Sbu: "So mr Mdoda has a construction company that gets most of the government tenders in East London and parts of the Eastern Cape. He builds roads, bridges, schools, hospitals basically everything. He is friends with the provincial government big wigs."

Me: "We don't need his bio Sbu get to the point."

Sbu: "Okay so the man sis Buli is

supposed to marry is a chief eQumbu. For the past 10 years he has been fighting for the government to build a big hospital there, four new high schools, a medical university and a science center. Government finally approved his request and they are giving him 800 million to build all these things."

Me: "So that's where Mdoda comes in?"

Sbu: "Yes. So Dalindyebo has a penchant for young girls, rumour has it he dates girls as young as fifteen years old."

Sizwe: "That's statutory rape

mosi."

Sbu: "I know, but none of the girls families complain because he takes care of them, he has built homes for them and sent them to varsity."

Me: "How is that different to pimping out your child?"

Sbu: "Its not. Apparently he has had his eye on sis Buli for a while now, he spoke to Mdoda when sis Buli was sixteen, but her grandfather refused for her to get married that young. But now with this tender coming he is willing to do anything to get it, even if it means selling his own

daughter."

Sizwe: "Can we get to him?"

Sbu: "We can. The wedding is happening in a week, invites have been sent out and there will be police there as security, courtesy of the police minister."

Me: "We need a way to make him think he has the upper hand in this."

Sizwe: "A distraction?"

Me: "Yeah, make him think he has won."

Sizwe: "Then Buli has to go home. It will inflate his ego and make him believe he is untouchable while we find Nate and then get

Buli before the wedding."

Sbu: "You don't think he will release Nate?"

Me: "Not before the wedding he wont, Nate is his bargaining chip, having Nate alive will be his way of ensuring she walks down that aisle."

Sizwe: "And that's why we need to find Nate before the wedding."

Me: "Yeah, I dont know how Buli will take all this."

Sizwe: "We will explain everything to her."

Me: "Yeah, and hopefully she doesn't think we are throwing her

to the wolves. Let's make breakfast before they wake up."



LANDO

I woke up and Philani wasn't there. I guess they must be busy strategizing on what to do to Mdoda. I have never liked that man, he reminds me too much of my stepfather. He is controlling and wants to call the shots even when it's not necessary. Arranged marriages work sometimes, Philani and I being a prime example of that, but to let your daughter marry someone who is older even than you is just fucked

up. I just hope the guys will get to Nate before its too late.

I got up and took a shower before bathing Theo, I have to leave him with Kazi before I go to work. I pack his bag and then get dressed. I have to pass by the house cause these Jean's will not cut it in the office. I was about to join everyone downstairs when Philani walked in.

Me: "Hey."

Philani: "Hey, why are you up so early? Where are you going?" He asks looking at me, uh does he not know that today is a Monday and people work on Mondays?

Me: "Uhm it's a Monday, I am going to work."

Philani: "Babe, you can't leave Buli to be by herself. She needs company."

Me: "I know, that is why I called Faith, she is coming over."

Philani: "Cant you call in sick?"

Me: "No, my boss is very strict about showing our faces at work."

He smiles walks over to me and puts his hands around my waist with my hands on his chest.

Philani: "Your boss sounds like a slave driver."

Me: "He is. He's cute though that's why i put up with him."

Philani: "Seriously though babe, please stay, I need you to talk to Buli, try and convince her to go home."

Me: "The fuck you talking about? She is not going there Philani." I try to pull away from him but his hold on me tightens so I just let him be.

Philani: "Baby listen, we need Buli to go home and make her father believe she will marry that guy, while he is distracted we find Nate and then bring Buli back."

Me: "And what happens if she goes there and he kills him anyway?"

Philani: "He won't, if he is smart he will keep him alive till after the wedding, which is why we need to get to Nate before the wedding and then get to Buli before she gets married."

Me: "So how long is that going to take?"

Philani: "The wedding is on Saturday."

Me: "Which Saturday?"

Philani: "This coming one."

Me: "Dead serious, that man is determined to get his daughter married off."

Philani: "Please talk to her."

Me: "Okay. I guess I have to call

Kazi and tell her we are not coming."

Philani: "Tell her to come over here. She gets bored being alone in that house."

Me: "Okay."

Philani: "We have to go, we have made breakfast so if you are hungry you can go eat before it gets cold."

Me: "What's wrong with the showers here?"

Philani: "Nothing, we need a change of clothes."

Me: "Okay, bring me some too when you get back."

Philani: "Or you could just walk

around naked."

Me: "That would be great, especially with Sizwe and Sbu downstairs."

Philani: "Point taken. All this is mine and mine alone. I am the only one allowed to ogle you." I laugh.

Me: "Ok then. Thanks for breakfast. Let me go check on Buli."

Philani: "okay." He kisses me on the forehead. "I will see you later." He turns around and leaves. I guess I have to call the office and tell them I'll be working from home today.



NARRATED

In East London, Mr Mdoda is in his office enjoying a glass of his finest whiskey when Sticks walks in.

Mdoda: "Sticks my man. You want a drink?"

Sticks: "That's your special bottle."

Mdoda: "Yes, this one comes out on special occasions, like today." He says pouring Sticks a drink and handing it to him.

Sticks: "So what are we celebrating bozza?"

Mdoda: "Life. And my daughter is about to get married."

Sticks: "You bozza, once told me to never count my chickens before they hatch. Dont you think it's too soon to be celebrating?"

Mdoda: "This my boy is a done deal. Buli comes home, gets married and Dalindyebo hands me the tender on a silver platter."

Sticks: "There's just one problem."

Mdoda: "Which is?"

Sticks: "Her boyfriend!"

Mdoda: "Theres nothing to worry about there. If she loves him she will do what I say, but the fun part is this. After the wedding we kill him."

Sticks: "I heard from a friend of

mine in Joburg that his friends have set out on a manhunt looking for him. They even have a reward for anyone who has information."

Mdoda: "They can search all they want. They won't find him."

Sticks: "I hope so bozza, cause according to my friend thise guys don't play."

Mdoda: "Stop worrying, you are beginning to sound like my wife. Drink up. We are about to roll in dough Baba. We are about to be rich."

Sticks took a sip of his drink while watching his boss who had a smile

plastered on his face. He was happy, the question was would his happiness last or did he just dig his own grave. Time alone would tell.



BULI

I still cant believe Lando convinced me to come home. I really hope Philani's plan works because this week will be like cutting myself with a blunt knife. My dad will be walking around with his inflated ego. I pray they really get to Nate soon.

I board my flight late in the evening, I don't know why but I've always enjoyed traveling at night, but tonight, not so much. And the flight seems to be going at super speed because before I know it the plane lands at the East London airport. I find a car waiting for me. Philani must have organized it cause my family doesn't know I am coming.

I get in the car and off we go. My heart rate escalates with every kilometer we leave behind. We get home thirty minutes later and there are cars outside. The

family must have come down from eQumbu.

I talk to the security at the gate and he let's us in. I take a deep breath and say a little prayer while the driver unloads my bags. As soon as he is done I get out the car, grab my bags and drag my feet to the door. I knock and I hear footsteps before the door swings open to reveal my mother. She smiles soon as she sees me and comes over to give me a hug. I reluctantly return the hug. She let's go, cups my face and smiles.

Mama: "Oh sana lwam, I have missed you."

Me: "Hello mama." She holds my hand and leads me inside.

Mama: "The bride is here." She shouted soon as we were in the lounge. The ululating and dancing began and I swear the whole of Qumbu had descended here. I faked a smile while aunts came to give me hugs. I saw my father from the corner of my eye, he was coming from his study. He leaned on the wall and watched with a smile on his face as everyone fussed around me. I excused

myself and took my bags up to my room.

I walked into my room and it was still the same as I had left it.

When I turned eighteen and went to varsity I never came back

home. I called when I needed to but I hadn't stepped foot in this

house in seven years. I walked in slowly and looked around. All my

posters were still there, my study desk still had my pens and

notebooks. I wonder why they never removed all these things.

I put my luggage on the bed, opened it and began unpacking my clothes.

Dad: "You made the right decision ntombiyam (my girl.)" He said walking into my room. I turned around to look at him.

Me: "Its not like you gave me a choice."

Dad: "A little persuasion never hurt anybody." I chuckled. This man is something else.

Me: "So now that I am here will you let Nate go?" He walked over and sat on the bed watching me unpack.

Dad: "Not yet, i will release him after the wedding. Let's call it an extra incentive for you to do what you need to do." I stopped

unpacking and looked at him.

Philani was right.

Me: "All this for 800 million?" He looked at me almost in shock. Like I wasn't supposed to know that. "Your greed will be the death of you one day." He chuckled and got up.

Dad: "It's not greed baby, it's ambition." He walked out and left me standing there. I took out my phone and called Philani.

Philani: "Bulelwa. How was your trip?"

Me: "Okay I guess. Do you have any more info on Nates location?"

Philani: "Not yet. I will update

you when we have information." I closed my eyes and took a deep breath.

Me: "I don't want to marry this man Philani."

Philani: "I know. And you won't. I promise you we will get you out of there as soon as possible." I sighed. For some strange reason, I trust him. I might be here now but I know he won't stop till he finds Nate, and Nate won't stop till I am back in his arms again. I said my goodbyes and threw myself onto the bed. My father might be floating on cloud nine right now thinking he has won

but he has no idea of the storm that's coming. Dare I say for once he is about to meet his match? Or maybe he is about to meet people who will mop the floor with him? Either way I don't care, as long as I get to see my man again.

INSERT 40

I woke up and the house was already buzzing. People were moving up and down doing God knows what. I stood by the window and watched them prepare for the big day. It's two

days before the wedding and things seem to be falling into place. I heard a knock on the door before my mother walked in followed by some woman carrying what must be my wedding dress. They decided on a white wedding, apparently even lobola has been paid.

My mum sits on the bed while the lady opens the bag to reveal the dress. Any other day I would have been impressed but not today. She lays it out on the bed and as beautiful as it is, to me it's nothing more than a harness

that would tie me to a man I didn't want.

Mama: "Come, let's see if it fits so we can make the necessary alterations."

I go over to them and they help me put it on. It's an off the shoulder mermaid dress with a beaded bodice and lace appliques. It was breathtaking. I must admit my mother has taste. I looked in the mirror and saw her shed a tear behind me. I wasn't even moved. The lady kept checking the dress.

I was busy admiring the dress when the door burst open and Lando walked in followed by Qhawekazi. I turned to look at them and a tear escaped my eye. They rushed over to me and gave me a group hug. My mother and the dressmaker gave us some privacy. I pulled out from the hug and wiped the tears.

Lando: "You look amazing friend. That dress is gorgeous."

Me: "I wish I felt the same way."

Kazi: "How have you been?"

Me: "I dont know, I just want this thing to be over already."

Theres still no info on Nate?"

Lando: "Not yet, but....." just then my mother and the dressmaker walked in this time with three other dresses. They put them on the bed.

Mama: "The bridesmaids dresses are here, where is Faith?"

Lando: "She'll come tomorrow evening, she has small babies so she cant leave them for too long."

Mama: "Its okay, I guess she'll fit her dress tomorrow then. I just hope it won't need too much alterations." She handed Kazi and Lando their dresses and they tried them on.

Their dresses were champagne coloured mermaid dresses with spaghetti straps, and beaded bodices. They looked beautiful.

After making the necessary notes for alterations my mother and her friend left. We sat on the bed and tried catching up but we ended up falling asleep.



PHILANI

We have been in East London for two days now. Finding Nate has been a mission and a half. We decided to come to East London to scope out the place and try figure

out where he could be. We have followed Mdoda but he didn't seem to do anything out of the ordinary. I must admit he knows how to be discreet.

I am pretty certain wherever Nate is he is unconscious. I know that because if he wasn't he would have sent us a sign as to where he might be. See my friends and I all have watches, not the expensive ones but just ordinary watches that we installed with trackers. When one of us is in trouble all the person has to do is click the switch on the watch three times and it

sends the exact location of that person to us. Now we have traced his watch signal and we know its in East London, now we just need to find his exact location.

We have been sitting in this van outside the Mdoda house for almost two hours now just watching the house. We sent in two of our guys inside disguised as maintenance people just so they can scope out the place and see what they can find. Sizwe, Sbu and I are watching and listening in on them.

Cobra: "Bozza." He speaks into the listening device.

Me: "Yeah what's up?"

Cobra: "I'm going into Mdodas office now, he just asked me to change the lights."

Me: "Okay, don't go offline, we will listen to you, hopefully we will pick something up."

Cobra: "Sure." We hear his footsteps as he walks, he knocks and a man shouts for him to come in, it must be Mdoda.

Cobra: 'Baba, you asked me to change your lights, can I check which lights are not working, or you are still busy?'

Mdoda: 'No, I am leaving, just change all the lights.'

Cobra: 'Of course sir.' We hear footsteps fade away. 'Okay he is gone, let me snoop around.'

Sizwe: "Just dont get caught."

Cobra: "Never." We hear shuffling around, drawers being opened and closed and then silence. "Shoot somebody is coming this way." We hear him climb the ladder. A door swings open.

Guy: 'Where is Mr Mdoda? And what are you doing in his office?'

Cobra: 'He left about ten minutes ago. And as you can see I am changing the lights.'

Guy: 'Mxm.' He stomps out.

Cobra: 'That was way too close.'

Me: 'Yeah, finish up there and get out before things get out of hand.'

Cobra: 'Okay.' He goes offline.

Me: "We need to follow Mdoda when he leaves."

Sbu: "He left five minutes ago."

Me: "Shit, now what?" We hear a knock on the van door, we open and the two guys we sent inside Cobra and Razor get in.

Sizwe: "Did you find something?" He takes out a file from inside his overalls.

Cobra: "I don't know how helpful this is but this is a list of his properties. I can bet my last

dime Bra Nate is in one of those."
Me: "Good job. Let's go find Nate."
Razor moves to the drivers seat
and we drive off to the first
location.

We get there and it's a house. It
doesn't look like somewhere he
Nate would be, it's in a suburban
area, but then again our safe
house is in a suburb so maybe? We
wait and someone walks out after
about an hour. Its Mdoda, he
walks out followed by a woman in
a silk nightdress and gown. I
guess it must be his side chick
cause he kissed her before driving
off. I guess this one is a bust.

We move to the second location and it looks like an office building. There are people moving in and out of there. We wait till its knock off time before sneaking in. He is not there.

By the time we get to the third location its almost midnight. We get to the place and its an abandoned building. We decide to check it out. We go in and find two guys sleeping. We go through the back and use the back entrance. We search every room but we dont find him. Just as we are about to leave Sizwe finds a room that is locked. We pick the lock and go in.

We find Nate sleeping on the floor. He is unconscious. Sizwe and Cobra pick him up and carry him out to the van via the backdoor. We also found some drugs they probably used to keep him sedated. Sbu and I fill the syringes and sneak up on the sleeping guards. We inject them, take one of them to the room and lock it again. We get petrol from the van, throw it all over the building and then set it on fire. We go back to the hotel once the flames have engulfed the whole building and we hear fire sirens coming. Now to get Buli out!



LANDO

Its wedding o'clock! Atleast that's what most people say. Buli's mother woke us up early in the morning with breakfast. Faith landed last night and lucky for her, her dress fit her like a glove, it didn't need any alterations.

I haven't heard from Philani in two days, I dont know where he is or what is happening. They haven't told us anything about what's happening. I called him last night but his phone went straight to voicemail.

When we were done eating breakfast a group of women came in led by Buli's mother. I guess they must be here to offer advice. They came in with chairs, sat down while some sat on the carpet. Buli, Faith, Kazi and I were crammed on the bed. They gave out their advice, mostly just telling her to respect her husband and her sister wives blah bloody blah.

I got a text as we were sitting there from Philani for us to pack our things and put them in a car that's waiting for us outside. We weren't leaving yet but we needed

to make sure that when we do leave we don't leave anything behind.

The women left and we packed our bags and took them to the car. An old lady asked us about the bags so we lied and told her they were taking them to eQumbu for the traditional wedding tomorrow. She believed us. We went back inside and waited, the wedding would be in the afternoon so we still had time. A makeup artist came in and started working on us.

An hour before the wedding started we I tried calling Philani

but his phone went straight to voicemail again. Buli was now pacing up and down.

Me: "Buli you need to sit down before you dig a whole into the carpet."

Buli: "Please call Philani again, I cant do this, please try him again."

Faith: "Okay, friend you need to calm down." She said leading her to a chair. She sat down while trying to breath. I got a paper bag from her drawer and let her breath into it. Her mother came in.

Mama: "Baby, It's time nana."

We got up, took our bouquets and walked out. As we walked down the stairs there was singing and ululating. Her mother walked next to her with a smile plastered on her face. She must be so proud.



BULI

Have you ever been in quicksand? You feel stuck, like you are drowning slowly. You scream for help but your voice seems stuck in your throat? I have never been in a quicksand either but that's what I feel like right now. Like I am drowning. Like my breath is slowly leaving my body.

We get outside and my father is standing by the door. He smiles at me but I don't return the smile. He holds my hand and leads me to the car. It's his special car. A Rolls Royce Phantom in matte black. His pride and joy. He opens the door for me and I get in. Lando gets in on the other side while Faith and Kazi follow behind. He gets on the driver's side with his right hand man Sticks on the passenger seat. We drive out and follow the convoy before us. We get to the robots and stop. The convoy before us has already went through. We

wait for the light to turn green. Just as the lights turn green a black van screeches and comes to a stop right in front of us. Four guys appear wearing balaclavas with guns pointed at us. Sticks gets out and starts shooting at them while my dad's security also starts shooting from behind us. Lando and I lay down in the car and wait for the shooting to end. Soon the shooting ends, the car doors open and we are ordered to get out and get in the van. We do as told. Faith and Kazi follow behind us and get into the van too. They drive off without

saying a word. And I notice another van behind us. One of the guys takes out a phone and makes a call and puts it on loudspeaker.

Guy: "Mrs Mdoda?"

Mama: "Yes this is she?"

Guy: "Go to the corner of Harold Crescent and Walmer road. Your husband is there. When he gets up tell him we have his daughter and if he wants her back he will give us half of the 800 million rands he just got. Okay? Good. Bye bye." He hangs up and his friends burst out laughing. We are

not. I feel someone lean on the seat behind me.

Voice: "Where's your sense of humor Babu?"

Oh my God. It's him. I turn around so quick just as he is removing the balaclava. I throw myself over the seat and into his arms. I start kissing his face with tears running down my face. I am so happy to see him.

Philani: "Okay you two we don't need a live porn movie please."

Lando: "Why didn't you say anything?"

Nate: "Then it wouldn't have been

a surprise."

Me: "Where did they find you?"

Nate: "Some abandoned building downtown."

Sizwe: "Your father kept him in one of his old buildings. Kept him sedated the whole time."

Me: "I am so happy to see you."

Nate: "Me too baby."

Philani: "You need to change your clothes. You cant walk into the airport with wedding gowns." He hands out tracksuits from a bag. They close their eyes and we change.

We get to the airport and board the Biyela jet. I take a deep

breath and lay on Nates chest. Even though they didn't kill my father I know they are still going to make him pay, Nate is not the type of person who let's go that easily. Either way I am happy to be back where I belong.



NARRATED

At the Phoenix lounge, Philani, Sbu and Sizwe are in the office.

Sbu: "I am in." Philani and Sizwe walk over to him, stand beside him and look at the computer screen in front of them.

Sizwe: "So Dalindyebo already

transferred all the funds for the tender?"

Sbu: "Yep, by the looks of it the money was transferred on Tuesday and it cleared last night."

Philani: "When people get old they lose their senses. How do you give someone that much money before you even seal the deal."

Sizwe: "Maybe it was meant to be a show of faith."

Philani: "Yeah well screw faith, empty those accounts."

Sbu: "For real?"

Philani: "Yep, empty his business accounts and then his personal

accounts. By the time he gets back from the hospital I need him to find his pockets dry as trees in winter."

Sbu: "Okay, I will transfer the funds to different offshore banks."

Philani: "Good. Just make sure the money is untraceable."

Sbu: "Got it."

Philani: "Boys I would love to stay and chat but I have a wife waiting for me so I will see you gentlemen later." He leaves.

Sizwe takes out his phone and makes a call.

Sizwe: "Hey, is your dad

home?..... Are you sure?.....
I dont want him to kill me when
I get there..... okay I am on
my way."

Sbu: "You are leaving too?"

Sizwe: "Get a girlfriend Sbu." He
leaves.

Sbu: "Mxm." He goes back to his
work.

INSERT 41

It's been a while since we got
back from East London. A month
to be precise. Buli's dad made it
out of the hospital in one piece.
Turns out the guys shot him in

the leg. He passed out soon after, or maybe he has a phobia for blood. His release from hospital was shortlived because he was admitted again after finding out his bank accounts were empty. He had a heart attack. He didn't die though. The hawks however descended on him like a tonne of bricks. Him and Dalindyebo are being investigated for fraud, corruption and embezzlement of state funds. They are looking to spend at least 20 years behind bars.

Nate decided to pay Lobola for Buli, he blackmailed her father,

he said it's either he kills him for what he did to him or he accepts his lobola and gives them their blessing which he did, reluctantly. They said they'll have a wedding later, they wanted to get the lobola out of the way before Mr Mdoda goes to prison.

When we came back Faith found her Mother-in-law sitting outside her house, Mbusi threw her out and said he didn't want her in his house. Even her begging and pleading would not sway him. On the upside though he finally let her explain herself, she said she did all that she did because she

wanted her older son to come back and claim the throne. Apparently Mr Ngcobo disowned him and banned him from ever setting foot in the palace after he raped two of the servants. One of them fell pregnant with his child as a result of the rape so he fed her abortion pills by force. She died a few weeks later from bleeding too much. Her honesty was admirable but it didn't soften Mbusi's heart. He told her he wanted nothing to do with her. Faith gave her money and put her on the next bus back to her village.

My birthday is coming up in a month. Philani has been trying to secretly find out what I want for my birthday, but I don't celebrate my birthday anymore. I used to love celebrating it until my stepfather raped me on my thirteenth birthday and said that was my gift for me. I have hated my birthday since then and I don't celebrate it.

Theo's nanny finally came and boy do I love her. She's a fifty six year old woman that aunt Sphelele found for me. She is respectful and kind and Theo loves her which has made my return to

work even smoother. Today we have a board meeting. Every year around this time we have one, where shareholders get a report on the previous financial year and to also discuss the gala dinner we hold to raise funds for the different charities we support. I got in early to finish up my financial report because I will be presenting it.

I got to the boardroom and set up all I will need for it. I was busy setting up when a woman walked in. She was beautiful, light skinned with a curvy body. She wore a dress that was so tight it

looked like it could rip at anytime.
She took a seat.

Me: "Hello."

Her: "Hi, dont mind me I am just early, you can continue." She went back to her phone. I decided to ignore her and finish setting up. My PA Nicki came in with some files I had asked her to bring for me. She looked at the lady and looked at me before looking back to her.

Nicki: "Uche, what are you doing here, the meeting starts in an hour." So she knows her. She'll have to explain that to me later.

Uche: "Oh I know dear, I have

some work to finish up before the meeting. Tell me, is Philani in yet?" Nicki looks at me and then back to her. Since this is getting interesting I decided to stop what I am doing and just watch this interaction happening right now.

Nicki: "He is not in yet, why?"

Uche: "Please let me know when he gets in."

Nicki: "Ask his PA or the receptionist downstairs, they might help." She looks up at Nicki with so much venom in her eyes, I think in her previous life she was a snake.

Uche: "Well I am asking you. And if you know what's good for you, you will do what I tell you."

Nicki: "Uche you are not my boss, I dont work for you." She turns and leaves.

Uche: "Geez, it's so hard to find good help these days." She turns to me. "Will you tell me when Philani arrives, please." I just smile. I dont know this girl from a bar of soap but I can tell you now, I hate her.



PHILANI

I was in my office prepping for the board meeting when the door

burst open. I looked up and Lindani marched in.

Lindani: "Honey, I'm home." He says walking in with his hands in the air like theres an audience. I laugh. I missed him. I get up and we hug.

Me: "You son of a bitch, where have you been?" He laughs.

Lindani: "You know where I have been. I was closing that Naija oil deal for you."

Me: "Niggas please, you closed that deal two weeks ago." He laughs again.

Lindani: "Ok so I took a couple weeks off, I needed them."

Me: "What's her name?"

Lindani: "Who's name?"

Me: "The girl that made you spend a whole two weeks extra in Nigeria." He laughs.

Lindani: "Just some spoilt billionaire heiress. I had to get out of there fast though."

Me: "Why?"

Lindani: "She wanted to introduce me to her father as her fiancée. I don't play those games." I laugh.

Me: "Poor girl, you left her heartbroken?"

Lindani: "She'll get over it. I told her if she wants to marry me

she'll be my 8th wife and she'll have to stay in the rural areas with my mother."

Me: "How did she take it?"

Lindani: "Would you believe she was ready and willing to do it. The girl just smelled of desperation. So I ducked." I laughed so hard I felt tears forming in my eyes.

Me: "One of these days these women will kill you." He laughs.

Lindani: "So how much am I getting?"

Me: "For what?"

Lindani: "From that big ass piece of cake you brought back from East London." I laugh.

Me: "How much do you want?"

Lindani: "As long as I can afford a private jet of my own." I chuckle.

"But seriously though, how do you have that much fun without me."

Me: "You were having your own fun in Naija bra."

Lindani: "True, so you dont think this old man will come after us?"

Me: "He probably will, which is why we have a plan already. Just in case."

Lindani: "Good. You'll fill me in later."

Me: "Sure thing. Lounge?"

Lindani: "Yeah. By the way, Uche

was asking about you." Here we go again. Another ex.

See Uche and I used to date about five years ago while I was doing my MBA in London. She was there getting her degree.

We got together and dated until she went home for the holidays, got married and came back like nothing happened. I only found out after almost six months when her husband came to see her.

That girl broke my heart and I never thought I would love someone as much as I loved her. Even Ayanda didn't come close to that. Until I met Landokuhle and

all the walls I had built around me came crashing down within days of knowing her.

Me: "How is she?"

Lindani: "She's good. We flew down together, she'll be here for the meeting since she will be planning the gala dinner."

Me: "I forgot about that."

Uche runs an events management company, since her father does business with BH she got the contract. Talk about nepotism. Surprisingly I am not moved by her being here. Or at least I wasn't, until she walked through

the door. Lindani looked at me and laughed before walking out.

Uche: "Biyela, Its been a while."

Me: "Yeah. How's your husband."

She chuckles and comes closer to me. She stands in front of me looking straight in my eyes.

Uche: "He is okay. I heard you got married."

Me: "I did, I figured it's time I join the happily married crew."

She laughs, almost seductively.

She came too close to me and I moved away. I came around my desk and sat down. She sat on the desk with her one butt cheek.

Uche: "So who's the lucky girl."

And almost on cue Lando walked in and stopped for a second looking at Uche. She came over to me.

Lando: "Baby the meeting is about to start, almost everyone is there, let's go." I got up and picked up my files.

Me: "Baby this is....."

Lando: "Uche. We've met." Uche got down from the desk and extended her hand out to Lando who took it.

Uche: "Mrs Biyela! I dont think we have been properly introduced."

Lando: "I am sure we will be but for now I would like a few

minutes with my husband."

Uche: "I will be in the boardroom."

She turns and leaves.

Me: "You are cute when you're jealous."

Lando: "If I ever find that girl sitting in your desk like that ever again I will cut your balls and feed them to you." I laugh but she isn't laughing.

Me: "Why are you mad at me, she's the one you should be mad at."

Lando: "Hleka ke wena (laugh). You won't be laughing when you have your balls stuck in your throat." She turns and leaves.

Why did I just get a hard on when she said that. I know she would kill me if I did anything and yet I find it hot. I need Jesus. I walk out and follow her.



LANDO

I knew I didn't like that girl but now I really hate her. How dare she sit in my husband's desk with her probably pantyless butt. Mxm. But I won't let her ruin my day. I have a big presentation ahead of me and I can't afford to be distracted.

I walked into the boardroom and almost everyone is here. Some are drinking tea by the tea station while others are sitting and conversing. I grab a bottle of water and take a seat. Uche walks in shaking her ass and some of the people here greet her before she sits down. Philani walks in with Mr Biyela senior and they sit down. The others follow suit and take their seats and the meeting begins.

Just before I get up to do my presentation my phone vibrates and it's a text message. I pick it up and check and it's from Philani.

I look at him and he has a smirk on his face, which makes me curious about the content of the message. I open it and it's a pic of his dick. I quickly close the phone and hide it. I look back at him and he is suppressing a laugh. Stupid idiot. Mxm.

When it's my turn I do my presentation and all goes well. I sit back down and Miss Uche gets up to present. I am bored so I decide to play with Philani. I send him some pictures of me in lingerie. We keep going back and forth until the meeting is over.

I walk over to my office but I don't notice Philani following me. He sneaks up behind me with his hands on my waist.

Me: "Mr Biyela, this is a work environment, what you are doing is not allowed."

Philani: "It's your fault for sending me all those pictures." He says with his hands running up my thigh. He turns me around, picks me up and pins me against the wall. Good thing I wore a skirt. He pushes my skirt up till it's on my waist while kissing me. He pushes my underwear aside and enters me in one swift push. I

moan louder than I should and he puts his hand on my mouth while he moves in and out of me.

We are busy having fun when I hear a knock on the door. We ignore it and keep going until someone tries to open the door.

Bab'Biyela: "Makoti, are you in there?" Instead of stopping he goes harder and faster.

Me: "I'm coming." I shout. Philani moves a few more times and we both release after the other. He pulls out and plants my feet back on the ground. I grab a few tissues from my bag and wipe myself then fix myself up. I push

him into the bathroom and open the door.

Me: "Baba." He walks in.

Bab'Biyela: "Uright? You seem out of breath."

Me: "Oh yeah, I was just doing a bit of yoga to calm me down." He chuckles.

Bab'Biyela: "There's no need to be nervous. You did good. So good in fact that we will be announcing you as COO officially at the gala dinner."

Me: "Oh. Thank you. I won't let you down."

Bab'Biyela: "I know you won't."

He turns around to leave. "By the

way, have you seen Philani?"

Me: "Uhm, mh..... No, I haven't seen him."

Bab'Biyela: "Ok. Let me go find him." He leaves.

Philani comes out of the bathroom smiling.

Philani: "Hey there Miss COO. Congratulations." I take a bow.

Me: "Thank you Mr CEO."

Philani: "Does this make us a power couple?"

Me: "I think it does. Now go your father is looking for you." He kisses me on the forehead before leaving.

I take a seat and look out into the city. There's a whole lot of work ahead and I need to prepare myself for it. I turn around and check my calendar to set a reminder for the gala dinner. I notice that I had a doctor's appointment about three weeks ago. Fuck. I forgot to get my shots. Holy fuck please dont let me be pregnant.



NARRATED

In East London, Mdoda is in his office deep in thought when the door burst open and Dalindyebo walks in.

Dali: "Mdoda, you need to stop daydreaming and get my money back."

Mdoda: "And where am I supposed to find it?"

Dali: "You know who has my money and I want it back. I will not have the hawks breathing down my neck. I need that money back."

Mdoda: "I have tried but I cant find it. Whoever took it left no trace."

Dali: "Do you know who might have it?"

Mdoda: "I have my suspicions."

Dali: "Speak."

Mdoda: "Buli's boyfriend or

husband."

Dali: "And who is this boyfriend?"

Mdoda: "Some doctor from Joburg." Dalindyebo laughs.

Dali: "So you are telling me that some stupid doctor from Joburg was able to steal 800 million and leave absolutely no trace?"

Mdoda: "Its more like over a billion, they emptied my business accounts and my personal ones "

Dali: "You are so fucken weak Mdoda, allowing some idiot to strip you of all that you have worked hard for. What is wrong with you." He storms out.

Mdoda opens his desk drawer and takes out a gun. He puts it in his mouth and pulls the trigger.

INSERT 42

Reporter: "In sad news, the family of Businessman Mr Khulekani Mdoda has announced that the Businessman passed on last night after committing suicide at his home in Beacon Bay, East London. The businessman together with chief Dalindyebo Mrharhane were being investigated for corruption and embezzlement of state funds

after 800 million rands
disappeared from Mdoda
construction. Mdoda construction
had been allocated a tender to
build new infrastructure in
eQumbu. Our reporter Casey
Matthews has the full report."
I don't know how many times I
have watched this clip. I keep
rewinding it and watching it all
over again. I guess a part of me
is hoping that maybe the report
will be different. I can't believe
my father is dead. Yes he wasn't
the best father, and chances of
him winning father of the year
were slim to zero, but either way

he was still my father. I loved him, in his own twisted and illogical brain I am sure he loved me too.

Nate walks in from the gym. The whole time he has been working out I have been here. He pauses by the door before he walks over to the couch, takes the remote from me and switches off the TV. We sit in silence for a while. I haven't even had the courage to call my mother. I feel tears flow down my face and Nate draws me close to him. I sob on his shoulder. After a while I wipe my tears and stand up.

Me: "You want breakfast?"

Nate: "Yes please. I'll go take a shower in the meantime." He walks upstairs as I head to the kitchen. I decide on pancakes. I need this to get my mind off my dad. I can't believe he took the easy way out. My dad has never run away from anything. If he wanted something he would do whatever it took to get it. He could convince an eskimo to buy ice from him. The one thing he had failed to do was convince me to change my last name to his.

See when my parents met, my dad was married to another woman.

After my mum got pregnant the woman threatened to kill her and me so she left the Eastern Cape and went back home to Durban. She gave me her last name Zwane when I was born. When I was eight my dad's wife died in a car accident and soon after my dad came looking for us. I guess love really never dies because they got married when I was ten. And since then he would try to change my last name but I refused.

I finished making the pancakes and set the table. Nate came down already dressed. We sat down and had our breakfast in

silence. A part of me wanted to lash out at him. I wanted to be mad at him because they cleaned out his accounts and that led to him killing himself. But then the other part of me always knew his greed and desire for more and more wealth would be the death of him. I can't blame anyone for my dad being a coward and taking the easy way out.

We finished eating and I cleaned the table. I was busy washing dishes when I felt Nate's hands around my waist and his chin on my head.

Nate: "I am sorry."

Me: "Its not your fault."

Nate: "I know. I just wish I could take the pain from you."

Me: "I am not in pain. Shock maybe." He turns me around to face him.

Nate: "Buli I know you, remember. You cant fool me." I take a deep breath.

Me: "I wish things were different, I wish he could have been..... I dont know. I wish he didn't take the easy way out like a coward."

Nate: "I know. But what's done is done. We cant change it."

Me: "I need to call my mum.
Maybe even go home."

Nate: "Ok. Tell me when you need
to go home and I will take you.
Okay?" I smile and give him a
hug.

Me: "Thank you for being here."

Nate: "I wouldn't be anywhere
else."

Just then the door bell rings.

Nate let's go of me and goes to
open the door while I finish up
cleaning. He returns a few seconds
later with Lando and Faith. They
come over to me and give me a
group hug.



PHILANI

Mdoda's death didn't shock me. I knew eventually something would happen. I just didn't think it would be so soon. I guess I figured he had more strength in him than I gave him credit for. I might be wrong but people like him who base their happiness on their bank balance crash really hard when it's taken from them. And it's better that he did this to himself.

I drive into the BH parking lot and see Uche struggling with her bags. The husband in me says let her be, after all we are in the

21st century and women pride themselves in doing everything a man can do, and sometimes even better. But the gentleman in me is still alive apparently. I park my car, take my laptop bag and throw it over my shoulder before walking over to her.

Me: "You need help?" She turns around and smiles.

Uche: "Hey I didn't see you there. Yes please I could do with an extra hand." I take the box from the backseat and a bag while she picks up some files.

Me: "So what's with all this stuff?" She locks her car and we

walk towards the elevator.

Uche: "Samples for the gala dinner. By the way I need your guest list."

Me: "I will tell Lando to forward it to you." The lift comes down and we get in. She presses the button and off we go.

Uche: "So tell me about your wife."

Me: "What do you want to know?"

Uche: "Everything. How you met, how you fell in love."

Me: "Its complicated. Maybe someday I will tell you all about it."

Uche: "I'll hold you to that." She looks down like she is thinking

about something. And then she looks at me. "So she signed the prenup?"

Me: "No. She didn't sign anything." I don't know why she is even going there but I am glad when the lift gets to the executive floor. We get out and I walk her to the office she is using. I place her stuff on the desk before quickly heading out. I go into my office and start work.

By lunchtime most of my work is done. I decided to cancel my afternoon meetings cause I need to meet up with the guys to

discuss Mioda and his stupidity. I was finishing up when Uche walked in with some plastic bags.

Uche: "Hey, are you busy?"

Me: "Nah I am done. What's up."

Uche: "So I went out to buy lunch, now I realize I bought more than enough so I thought we could share."

Me: "Oh ok. That's nice thanks. What did you get?" She places the plastic bag on the small table by the couch and takes everything out. This food is not just more than enough for two it's a whole feast. I decide to send Lando a text.

'Theres lunch in the office if you are hungry.' I press send. I walk over to the couch and sit down. Uche opens the takeaways and theres ribs and burgers and fries. She clearly went all out. I take some fries and eat. Lando walks in and pauses before walking over to the couch.

Lando: "Oh food glorious food. How did you know I was hungry baby?" She says picking up a rib and sitting on my lap.

Me: "I would love to take the credit for this but it's all Uche. She bought the food." Uche has stopped eating.

Lando: "Oh that's nice. Thank you Uche." Uche smiles, or fakes a smile.

Uche: "You are welcome." She goes back to her salad.

Lando: "Wena, why didn't you remind me about my doctor's appointment."

Me: "I didn't know."

Lando: "Babe I put it in your calendar too and I told you about it."

Me: "Oh now I remember. Sorry babe, It totally slipped my mind. But you dont look sick though."

Lando: "It was for my shots. I was supposed to get them three

weeks ago."

Me: "Its not too late to get them though."

Lando: "With the amount of your nuts inside me right now?" I laugh but notice Uche choking on her juice.

Uche: "I think I need to go back to work. Enjoy the food." She gets up and leaves. As soon as she walks out Lando and I burst out laughing.

Me: "What in the hell is wrong with you, you made the poor child uncomfortable."

Lando: "You are the one who called me to come."

Me: "Because you said you would cut my balls off if you found me alone with her." She laughs.

Lando: "And they say you cant teach an old dog new tricks."

Me: "So about your shots, when are you going to get them?"

Lando: "I made another appointment for later today."

Me: "Can I come?"

Lando: "Its just shots."

Me: "I know, and I still want to be there."

Lando: "Okay."

She moves from my lap.

and sits on the couch. She eats an entire pack of ribs and a burger

to boot. This might be a bit presumptuous but I think she is already eating for two. But I cant be excited just yet. I need the doctor to confirm or deny it first before I get my Hope's up.



BULI

I finally decided to go home. I am not sure how my reception will be but I am hoping for the best and expecting the worst. I didn't tell Nate I was leaving, I just left a note. I know he said he would bring me home, and I know it's because he wants to protect me

but this is something I have to do on my own.

I land at the airport and take an uber home. The closer we get the more anxious I get. I asked the driver to stop a couple of houses away. I pay and get out of the car. He helps me with my luggage before driving off. I take a deep breath and take the first step home. I notice there are more cars outside the gate and reporters across the road. I see them before they see me so I quickly rush in before they bombard me with questions.

I greet the people walking around outside doing God knows what. I walk into the house and greet those in the lounge. My mother is not there so she must be in her room. I walk up the stairs and straight to my room. It's not how I left it. This time all things belonging to me have been removed from the bedroom except the bed and blankets. I place the luggage on the bed and take a seat next to it. The last time my room was this empty was the day we moved in. And now it's empty again. I look around oblivious to my brother Ndoba

standing by the door. He is looking at me with a face I cant fully read.

Me: "Hey!"

Nqoba: "You came to inspect your work?"

Me: "Excuse me?"

Me: "Excuse you?" He chuckles. Walks into the room and closes the door behind him. "You did this Bulelwa. You drove dad to his grave."

Me: "And how did I do that Nqoba? Because I wanted to be happy with someone I loved?"

Nqoba: "Yes Bulelwa, you knew how important this marriage was

to dad, you knew."

Me: "I am sorry weren't you the one who said you would support me if I refused to marry Dalindyebo?"

Nqoba: "I did. And then you agreed to it. You came home and played the blushing bride only to leave dad with a bullet wound and egg on his face. Do you know how embarrassing it was to have to explain to all those guests that the wedding was off because dear old sis ran off with another man. And to top it all off, you brought that same man back a few weeks later so he can pay lobola for you.

Why would you bring this much shame to us Bulelwa?"

Me: "If you knew what your father did that made me come here you wouldn't be saying that right now." He laughs.

Nqoba: "Sisi we, he did what he had to do for the betterment of this family. And you went and threw all of that right in his face." He was now shouting. "You are a disgrace Bulelwa. Go back to where you came from and never set foot in this house ever again." Just then the door burst open and my mum walked in. I got up from the bed and looked at her

trying to read her face. She walked in and I noticed people behind her peeping in. She closed the door and came closer to me.

Mama: "What are you doing here Bulelwa? Haven't you done enough?"

Me: "Done enough what mama? I came to bury my father."

Mama: "Bury your father huh? It must be nice being you. You cause havoc everywhere you go and come back to make sure your handiwork is impeccable."

Me: "I didn't shoot him mama, he did that himself."

Mama: "You might not have

physically pulled the trigger but I can tell you this now, his blood is in your hands. And I will never forgive you for this." She turns and walks out the room. And the tears flow down my face.

Nqoba: "You know for once in my life I am glad you dont use the Mdoda surname. You are not deserving of that name." He walks out too. I sit back down on the bed, and with tears running down my face I call the only man I know off who understands me. He picks up after the second ring.
Me: "Mkhulu!"

Mkhulu: "Bubu. Ukuphi? (where

are you)"

Me: "At home, in my room."

Mkhulu: "Ok, I am coming okay."

Me: "Okay Mkhulu." He hangs up.

I lay down on the bed and wait.



LANDO

Just before knocking off I texted Philani and told him to meet me at the hospital. I still dont know why he wants to see me get my shots. I was busy packing up when Miss Uche decided to come say goodbye.

Uche: "You need to teach me."

Me: "Teach you what?"

Uche: "How to seduce one of the richest man on the continent, convince him to marry you without a prenup and then seal the deal by getting pregnant." I chuckle.

Me: "What do you want Uche?"

Uche: "I dont want anything. I just give credit where credit is due. You went past the gold digging stage and went straight for the diamonds and platinum."

I get up from my chair, grab my bags and stand before her.

Me: "If you hadn't been a certified whore you would have been the one digging platinum and diamonds. Philani loved you and

was ready to marry you till you made a fool of him and married a Yoruba demon. And now that your precious hubby has brought you 3 more sister wives you wish you could be me. But your time is over sis. He doesn't want you anymore. So you can shake your ass from top to bottom, left to right, he is over you. The sooner you get this gala dinner done the sooner you can go back to Lekki Island and sharing your husband. Now I will tell you the same thing I told him. Make a move on my husband and that silicon on your ass will flow through your blood stream.

Are we clear? Good. Close the door on your way out." I leave her there and head to the hospital. I get to the hospital and Philani is already inside the doctor's office laughing his lungs out. I knock and walk in.

Me: "Sorry I am late." I walk over to him and give him a hug. "Why are you early?"

Philani: "Because I dont operate on African time. You should try it."

Me: "Mxm. whatever. Hi Dr Khuzwayo." I take a seat.

Dr K: "You are three weeks late Mrs Biyela."

Me: "I know. Work!"

Dr K: "I understand since you work for this idiot here." Did she just call him an idiot? I look over to him and he is laughing. Do they know each other? I hope this is not another ex.

Me: "You two know each other?"

Dr K: "Yeah, he's my homeboy. We grew up together. He was the first person I came out to."

Me: "Came out?" I know what coming out means but I just don't want to assume.

Dr K: "Yes, I am gay."

Me: "Oh ok. I didn't know."

Dr K: "It's okay. Let's get the show on the road. Before the

shots though we need to rule out pregnancy first." She hands me a small container and directs me to the toilet to pee. I come back with the pee and she takes it out of the office.

Philani: "What do you think the results are going to say?"

Me: "I dont know." She comes back after a few minutes and she is smiling. She takes a seat and looks at me.

Dr K: "Before I give you your results I think we need to do an ultrasound."

I get on the bed and she squirts some cold ass gel on my stomach.

I feel my heartbeat get faster. She places her machine on my stomach and starts moving it around. She moves it for a while until she gets what she is looking for. A heartbeat.

Me: "Is that my heartbeat?" She laughs.

Dr K: "No, that's your baby's heartbeat." Philani gets up from the chair and rushes over to us.

Philani: "Does that mean she is pregnant?"

Dr K: "Yes. Congratulations Ntshangase, you are going to be a father."

I look at Philani and he has the

biggest smile plastered on his face. Holy shit I am going to have another child.

INSERT 43

Grief. It's hard to deal with, but it can also change people. My brother and my mother's words still rang in my head. I have been sitting in my room waiting for my grandfather to come. He walked in late in the evening just as I was preparing to sleep. I know they told me to leave but I just couldn't. I ran to him soon as I saw him and threw myself onto

him and just cried. He held me and for the first time since I got here, I felt okay. He led me to the bed and we sat down.

Mkhulu: "Bubu what are you doing here?"

Me: "You also think I killed him?"

Mkhulu: "Of course not nana. I am just worried about the hostility here. I know how your mother and your siblings feel." I wipe the tears that have fallen from my eyes.

Me: "What do you think I should do?"

Mkhulu: "I think you should check into a hotel, stay there until the

funeral."

Me: "But this is home."

Mkhulu: "I know that. But the way they feel about you right now I wouldn't want to wake up one day and find that you are dead because they poisoned you. People can do stupid things when they are hurt. And no I don't blame you for any of this. I don't blame you for choosing your happiness over everything else. I don't blame you for your father's cowardice. For the first time in a long time you chose you. You put yourself first. And knowing you, if you stay here you will go back to the Buli who

wants to please everyone and taking the blame for things you are not responsible for. You are not Jesus Bubu, you cant be carrying people's crosses. That's not right."

Me: "We are supposed to be a family mkhulu, do all families do this or is it just mine?"

Mkhulu: "Family is anyone and everyone who chooses to be in your life and adds positivity to it. And sometimes family isnt blood. It's the people who choose to love you and want you to be happy. And you my dear Bubu, you have that. That boy, he's your

family. Your friends, they are your family. And I am your family too. This time put yourself first and never ever allow anyone to make you feel less than who you are, A beautiful, kind and crazy human being who loves with her heart and soul."

Maybe he is right. My mother's words are already replaying themselves in my head like a broken disc. Staying here will just drive me over the edge. After Mkhulu left I booked a hotel online, I packed my things and left in the middle of the night. Luckily most people had gone

home and some were asleep. I requested an uber and decided to wait for it outside. Just as I walked out I found Nqoba smoking outside.

Nqoba: "Like a thief in the night you walk away." I decided to ignore him and kept walking towards the gate. He followed me and grabbed me by the hand. "I am talking to you Bulelwa."

Me: "You told me I should leave, now I am so what's your problem." He chuckles and spits something in the ground.

Nqoba: "Why? You cant face what you have done?"

Me: "I didn't do anything."

Nqoba: "Our father is dead because of you."

Me: "No your father is dead because he was a coward. He bullied and trampled on people his entire life because of greed and when he came face to face with people he couldn't bully he couldn't accept that so he took the easy way out." I yank my hand away from him.

Nqoba: "That man raised you, gave you everything that you wanted and you thank him by throwing his generosity right back in his face."

Me: "Yes he raised me, yes he provided for me and yes he did all that but that does not excuse him selling me off to the highest bidder." I see a car pull up at the gate, it must be my uber. "You can blame me all you want, call me names and whatever but you and I both know the truth. Our father was a selfish and greedy man who cared about no one but himself. And one day when you wake up and realize that I promise i won't tell you 'i told you so.' Until then have a nice life bhuti." I turn and walk away.

I get into the uber and we drive to the hotel. Just before he ends the trip I tell him to drive me to the airport. Mkhulu was right. I have a family. And it's time I put me first and forget about people who see me as nothing more than a means to an end. It's time I start living my life as Bulelwa, and live it for me.



LANDO

Finding out I was pregnant was a bit of a shocker. I kept asking myself how and why before common sense kicked in. I am scared though. I have mothered

Theo and I love him more than anything else in the world. I would lay my life on the line for him. With Theo I didn't get the opportunity to prepare myself for motherhood. I was thrown straight into the deep end and I had to learn to swim, fast, or else I would end up damaging the poor child. It's been a journey I have enjoyed and will continue to enjoy. But this time it's different. The fear and uncertainty is giving me endless anxiety. This time no one is throwing me into the deep end but I have to swim there myself.

My biggest fear, what if I have a daughter? What if she goes through what I went through? What if I turn out to be just like my mother? What if I fail to protect her? All these what ifs keep running through my mind.

To say Philani is excited would be an understatement. We have been married for almost six months now and I am already six weeks pregnant. Talk about rushing things. I have had to beg him not to tell anyone. If it were up to him he would put out an ad on the billboards in the highways. In the time that we have been

married I have realised Philani loves hard and he loves deep. He is not the typical drug Lord who close themselves off in fear of their enemies seeing the people they love as their weak spots. With Philani its like he is fueled with love. It's like he breathes love and it flows through his system together with his blood. Watching him now play with Theo on the floor fills my heart with a bit more love and a little less fear everyday. I know he will be a great father to this child just like he is to Theo. I hope and pray I can live up to that. My phone

rings next to me and its aunty Kholiwe. I haven't seen her in a while and seeing her name pop up on my screen brings a smile to my face. I answer and before I can even say hello there is ululating on the other end of the line.

Me: "Aunty, what's going on?" I ask after the ululating dies down.

Kholiwe: "Hhaybo wena you are on loudspeaker, gogo is here too."

Me: "Sawubona gogo (hello gogo)"

Gogo: "Oh my child you have made me the happiest gogo in the entire world." Okay this is confusing. What did I do?

Me: "What did I do gogo?"

Gogo: "I know about my great grandchild. I know we were not supposed to know just yet but your husband was so excited he couldn't wait to tell us."

Me: "Yes my husband cant keep a secret."

They laugh. I look at Philani and he pretends like he didn't hear anything. This idiot.

Kholiwe: "Dont worry we won't tell anyone until you are ready to tell them. We are just so excited."

They squeal.

Gogo: "Where's Philani?"

Me: "He's here." I put the phone on loudspeaker.

Philani: "Magogo, unjani salukazi Sami (how are you)"

Gogo: "I am over the moon. Wena you better take care of Makoti, she is carrying precious cargo and if you stress her in anyway I will castrate you siyezwana (are we clear.)" He chuckles.

Philani: "Yebo gogo."

Gogo: "Good. Makoti nawe take care of yourself okay."

Me: "I will gogo."

Kholiwe: "I am coming there soon so we can plan your wedding." I laugh.

Me: "Okay aunty. Bye." I hang up. I take a pillow and hit Philani

with it. He laughs.

Philani: "What have I done now."
He says getting up and and joining me on the couch. He lays his head on my lap and kiss my invisible bump. That's his new thing, speaking to the baby. I pray it's a boy because if it's a girl Lord we are screwed.

I get up in the morning and get ready for work. I leave Philani sleeping and go downstairs to make breakfast. He comes down after a while looking all nice and hot in his suit. It's true what they say, a suit is to women what

lingerie is to men. My man looks hella hot.

Philani: "Its this very same appetite that got you knocked up." He says kissing me on the cheek and taking a seat. I didn't even realize I was drooling over him. I have heard some women's libido goes into overdrive when they are pregnant. I really hope I am not one of those.

I dish up for him and we talk about work while having our breakfast. As soon as we are done Mamnguni comes down with Theo still in his pjs. I take him from her and feed him while she tidied

up the lounge. When I was done I went back upstairs and put Theo back in his crib. I kiss him and go to our room. I finish getting ready and walk out. I find Philani already waiting for me. His other new thing, refusing to let me drive myself. Apparently it's too dangerous for me. I have decided to indulge him for now. Once my hormones are in full effect, God only knows what will happen.



NARRATED

At Phoenix lounge, Philani and his friends are sitting in the office

drinking and waiting for Nate. He comes in after a while.

Lindani: "I thought only black people are bad with time."

Nate: "Shut up wena." He hugs all of them and sits down. "We have a problem. Someone is following me."

Philani: "Who?"

Nate: "I dont know but they followed me in here." Sbu takes out his iPad and gets into the lounges surveillance system. He hands Nate the iPad so he can look for the person. He spots him sitting by the bar.

Nate: "That's him." The guys

gather around Nate to look at the guy.

Sizwe: "He looks familiar, I just don't know where I know him from."

Nate: "From the looks of it I think he is a hired hand. He's been following me for almost a week now. But he uses different cars everytime."

Lindani: "If he is alone right now we can take him out."

Philani: "No. Does he know you have seen him?" He asks Nate.

Nate: "I don't think so. I have made sure to act normal at all cost."

Philani: "Good. First thing we need to do is up security. Buli needs guards as in yesterday. Until we know what this person wants we need to keep our loved ones safe."

Sbu: "I am on it."

Nate: "Do you think it has anything to do with Mdoda?"

Lindani: "The man was buried over two weeks back. I am sure by now he is rotting. Unless he was working with someone."

Nate: "True. And if it's about the money then Mdoda probably told his partner about it and now he is here to get back what belongs to him."

Philani: "So if this guy was sent to recover the money....."

Sbu: "He won't kill you till he has it back."

Sizwe: "Or he might." They all turn to look at him. "He is an assassin. I remember seeing him at some shooting range up north a few months back. He said his name was Kalen or Kaden I dont remember."

Philani: "So you think he is here to kill?"

Sizwe: "Definitely. The guy has numbers on his arms. Apparently every number represents someone he has killed."

Lindani: "And how do you know all this. Are you friends or something?"

Sizwe: "Research brother. I research people who make my spirit uneasy."

Just then they hear a knock and a waitress walks in with a bottle of Hennessy and five glasses."

Philani: "We didn't order that."

Waitress: "I know. There is a scary guy at the bar he said I should bring this up. There's a note."

Philani: "Ok thanks." She puts the tray on the table and walks out. The guys all look at the note and

no one wants to pick it up. Lindani bursts out laughing.

Lindani: "Wow. You guys can kill without blinking but now you are afraid to pick up a piece of paper. Wow." He laughs.

Nate: "You do know it could be laced with anthrax right."

Lindani: "Oh yeah."

Philani takes a letter opener and uses it to turn the note upside down.

"I want my money. All of it.

You have 7 days to bring it to me or else

Die poppe sal Dans

D"

Lindani: "Who the fuck is D."

Nate: "What was Mdoda's name?"

Sbu: "Khulekani Ephraim Mdoda."

Nate: "So its definitely not him."

Sizwe: "What about the ditched groom."

Nate: "Dali something."

Philani: "Dalindyebo." They all look at each other.

Sizwe: "Say the word and I will take him out."

Nate: "Not yet. Dalindyebo is a bit more dangerous than Mdoda and taking him out will not be that easy. Especially now that he has his goon here. Since he has been

following me for a week we don't know what he knows and how far his research has gone."

Sbu: "I will do some digging. A man like him always has skeletons in his closet."

Lindani: "Do you think he wants the money for himself?"

Philani: "Obviously. If he wanted to prove his innocence to the hawks he would have sent them to us, he wouldn't have that guy here."

Lindani: "So it's highly likely that they would have spent maybe half the money on the infrastructure and then split the

rest between them."

Philani: "Exactly, which is why he worked hard to get the money in bulk and not in installments."

Nate: "So what's the plan?"

Philani: "Play dumb. Make him think he calls the shots while Sbu does the digging. Once we know who we are dealing with....."

Sizwe: "We strike." He says with a smile on his face.

Lindani: "The way you enjoy killing were you not loved as a kid?"

Sizwe: "I was loved. By your mother when my dick was inside her."

Lindani: "Eew man fuck off. I need

to wash my brain." He walks out and leaves them there.

Nate: "The fuck is wrong with you."

Philani: "You do know it might be a joke now but one day when he finds out you did really fuck his mother he will kill you."

Sizwe: "It was his stepmother so it doesn't count. Plus it's not my fault she has the body of a 25 year old."

They burst out laughing.

Nate: "You are an idiot."



BULI

I didn't get to bury my father but life goes on. I am back at work full time and I have moved in with Nate. He said it's harder for him to protect me when I am so far from him. I know he was lying but I let him win.

I was busy cooking when my phone rang. I picked it up and it was my brother.

Me: "Hello."

Nqoba: "Buli, you have to come home."

Me: "And why would I do that Nqoba. Last time I was there you told me I wasn't welcome."

Nqoba: "Dads life insurance

refuses to pay out."

Me: "That's what usually happens when someone commits suicide."

Nqoba: "We need the money Buli, you know the hawks froze the company accounts so we don't have money."

Me: "I am sorry about your predicament but what has that got to do with me?"

Nqoba: "So you don't care about your mother and siblings? They need money for school and the life insurance money will help."

Me: "When I told you your father was selfish you didn't believe me. He knew killing himself would

make it hard for the insurance to pay out. But he did it anyway."

Nqoba: "Bulelwa....."

Me: "No Nqoba, if you need money, sell the house and your expensive Porsche, move the family back to eQumbu and wena get a job.

Daddy is gone so no more allowance. Goodbye." I hang up.

I hate flip floppers. If you hate me, hate me and stick to it. Dont switch up when you need something from me. Mxm.

INSERT 44

Living with people watching your every move is really frustrating. I don't know why Philani felt it necessary to bring these people here. Four of them sitting and standing outside my office while I work has brought stares and whispers all over the building. All though I think the women who keep going up and down in the passage are more interested in advertising themselves to these buff men. They are quite lookable though I will admit. Just dont tell Philani I said that.

I was busy working like any normal person would when Uche

walked in. She threw a file on my desk.

Uche: "The revised budget for the gala dinner as you suggested. Now can you approve it, the dinner is less than a month away and we need to start working on it."

I picked up the file and put it on my to do list. "I need that approved today Lando."

Me: "Its Mrs Biyela to you. Now you can see I have my hands full. I will check the budget and review it and then approve it if necessary." She clicks her tongue and walks out, slamming the door behind her.

I pick up the file and look at the budget and I actually laugh. This dinner is to raise funds for charity and this woman wants us to spend almost 3 million rands on it. She must have lost her damn mind. I close the file, get up and walk to her office. I walk in without knocking.

Uche: "Doors were created for a reason."

Me: "And so were budgets but you dont seem to make sense of them. I am not approving this." I throw the file on her desk.

Uche: "These delay tactics you are using will not work. I need that

budget approved. You know I can't start implementing my plans without the money."

Me: "Uche BH will not spend almost 3 million in one night when there are children starving out there."

Uche: "Lando....."

Me: "Mrs Biyela!"

Uche: "MRS BIYELA this is not some backyard party this is a GALA dinner. Emphasis on GALA. We need to make it high end and high class."

Me: "I'll give you half a million. Anything beyond that will come from your commission." She opens

her mouth in shock.

Uche: "Are you listening to yourself right now. This is an annual event that needs to be perfect."

Me: "Uche I am giving you 500 thousand Rands not Nairas. That will be fine. And I will add an extra 200 thousand for emergencies. If you cant make use of all of that money then tell me so I can find another event coordinator to do this, because trust me there are plenty of them who would use even less of that and the event would be amazing." I know she wants to

say something but I don't give her the chance as I turn and walk out.

I get back to my office and find Philani sitting on my chair. He has takeaways on the desk. I sit on his lap and give him a kiss before opening the takeaways excitedly. It's a Greek salad, I don't want that so I keep looking and there are only salads in here.

Me: "Philani."

Philani: "Yes baby." He says with his hands wrap around my waist and rubbing my tummy while his head rests on my back.

Me: "Where's the food?"

Philani: "Right in front of you. I figured we need to start eating healthy for the baby's sake. I don't want my baby being born with diabetes or whatever." He said we as if he is the one who has cravings or hormones that will go haywire. I close my eyes and take a deep breath and count down from ten. I get up so I can face him.

Me: "Philani Leonard Biyela."

Philani: "I hate that name, please don't use it."

Me: "Philani Leonard Biyela you do know I could stab you right now and blame it on the hormones." He

looks at me shocked. "I am not a rabbit I will not eat plants alone when God gave us cows that have delicious ribs and perfectly matured steak or even pork chops and lamb chops. Dear Lord Jesus do you know how many options are there. You could have gotten just one, just one of them and I would have been happy."

Philani: "But baby it's not healthy for the baby."

Dear God I have 34 more weeks of this. By the time I give birth I might just be a widow. I decide to calm myself down before taking my purse and walking out.

Philani: "Where are you going?"

Me: "To get food." He laughs.

Philani: "Wait." I turn around with my hand on the door knob.

He reaches behind him and retrieves another take away. He takes out a takeaway and I can smell the ribs from here. I walk back and sit on his lap and his hands are back to rubbing my tummy.

Me: "You are playing with fire Biyela." He laughs some more. I take a rib and bite into it and it just melts in my mouth. I lean back and lay on his chest with my feet up on the desk. "So tell me,

what's with the guards." I feel him tense up.

Philani: "Just taking precautions."

Me: "I get that but why? Who is after you?"

Philani: "No one important."

Me: "You wouldn't have guards around us if it wasn't important."

Philani: "Do you trust me?"

Me: "Of course I trust you but....."

Philani: "Then please dont question me. You know I would never deliberately put you in danger."

I take another rib and stick it in my mouth. Yes I trust him and

yes I know he wouldn't put me in danger but I know this is serious. There is something big going on because everyone has guards. And by everyone I mean whoever is associated to us has guards.

Gugu has them, I dont know why cause she is in boarding school but she has said two of them have been following her around, especially when she leaves the school premises. Faith has them, Buli and Kazi have them too. I decide to let it go and just trust him like he said.



PHILANI

I drove to the lounge and the guys were already there. I also noticed I was also being followed again. It's a good thing we have the guards protecting the ladies. It would kill me if anything happened to them because of our actions. I grab a bottle of Hennessy at the bar and rush upstairs to the office. Today is Friday so it's busy.

I get into the office and greet the guys before pouring myself a glass of Hennessy. I sit down.

Nate: "Did you see them?"

Me: "Yep, they've been on my tail since yesterday."

Lindani: "I think it's time we got the girls out of the way. These guys mean business and they won't back down."

Sbu: "The safe house is ready. All we need to do is get them there."

Me: "Yeah I think it's time we end this."

Nate: "I will get the chopper's ready."

Lindani: "I will drive. In order to finish this we need to lead these guys out of town. Atleast we know they cant get into the safe house and if by some miracle they get in theres the panic room."

Sizwe: "Then what are we

waiting for. We have 24 hours before time runs out and Dalindyebo seems to be sending an army."

We discuss an exit strategy for the girls and once we are done I call my pilot and we fly off to the Eastern Cape. I get to Gugu's school and it takes a while before they let me in but I explain to the matron that there has been a death in the family and I need Gugu to come with me. They release her after more begging and pleading. We fly back and Lando is excited to see her.

Lando: "Why didn't you tell me you were coming?"

Gugu: "I didn't know either until I was woken up and told someone had died and I needed to come home." Lando looks at me and I see the million questions in her eyes.

Lando: "Ok, go and rest. I will be up in a second." Gugu goes running up the stairs.

"What's going on Philani?"

Me: "You said you trust me right?"

Lando: "Yes."

Me: "Then I need you to pack your stuff. I have to take you

somewhere safe."

Lando: "Fine. But you have to tell me what is happening once all this is done." That was easier than I thought it would be. She walks upstairs and I drive to Faith's. I knock for a while before Mbusi opens. Its late so they were already sleeping.

Mbusi: "Biyela, what's going on?"

Me: "I cant explain right now but I need you guys to come with me." Just then Faith comes walking down the stairs.

Faith: "Philani, is Lando okay?"

Me: "She is fine, but I need you to come with me. I can't explain now

but its really important."

Faith: "Does it have anything to do with the guards outside?"

Me: "Yes. Please trust me."

Mbusi: "I dont know what is going on but I need an explanation and since I won't get it now baby I think you need to go pack." Faith runs upstairs.

Me: "Arent you packing?"

Mbusi: "I cant. I have some business in London and I have to fly out in the morning. But I trust you to keep my family safe."

Me: "I will. But I still need you to pack and since you are flying out I will ask the pilot to get the jet

ready and you can fly out now."

Mbusi: "Clearly whatever this is its serious."

Me: "It is and I am sorry to get you involved but since Faith is Lando's friend it makes her vulnerable too."

Mbusi: "I understand. I will go pack then."

He also goes back upstairs and they come back a few minutes later with their bags packed and ready. Mbusi and I get the babies strapped in. He shakes my hand. I get into the car and wait while him and Faith say their goodbyes. After a while she gets in and we

drive off while he drives straight to the airport.

We get to my place and find Nate and Buli already there. The girls hug each other and they fuss over the sleeping babies. After a while Sizwe and Kazi walk in looking way too cozy for my liking. Dont get me wrong I love my friends but they know my family is off limits to them. I cant have any of them breaking hearts even in my own family. She runs over to the others soon as she sees me looking at them.

As soon as everyone is here we pack them up in the cars and

drive off to Nates hotel. We get to the roof and the choppers take off one by one. We get to the safe house and Lindani is already there with someone. She turns around and I want to laugh but I am more shocked than anything.

Lando rushes to her and gives her a hug before they burst into endless laughter. The guys and I convene in the kitchen. We all look at Lindani as soon as he comes in.

Lindani: "What?" He asks taking a beer from the fridge and gulping it down.

Me: "How long have you been smashing Taki?"

Lindani: "I am not smashing her we are just getting to know each other."

Nate: "So you are not sleeping together?"

Lindani: "No, not yet." We all laugh.

Me: "How are the blue balls treating you?"

Lindani: "I have a hand and I know how to use it thank you very much."

Me: "So what happened to the billionaire heiress?"

Lindani: "There was no heiress, I went with her to Nigeria."

Nate: "So you spent an entire month with her and didn't smash,

not even once." He shakes his head and we give him a round of applause.

Me: "Wow bra, I love this growth."

Lindani: "Shut up let's just go and make sure everything is in order before we head back to Joburg. Your friends followed me here by the way but I lost them somewhere in Polokwane."

Nate: "Good." We walk back into the lounge where the girls are.

Me: "Ladies let's give you a tour." They get up and we show them around. We take the stairs down to the basement.

Lando: "You are not planning to kill us are you?" I chuckle.

Me: "Of course not baby. This is a panic room. If God forbid someone breaks into the house you can all come in here and you will be safe."

Buli: "What if they follow us here?"

Sbu: "They won't be able to come in. All you have to do is press that red button and the security system goes on high alert. The house will shut down until we come here and let you out."

Gugu: "So what happens if you get kidnapped by aliens and you never come back. Are we going to

die in here."

Me: "We will send one alien to let you out." She laughs. When we are done showing them the rooms in the basement and the pantry we go back upstairs. Lando drags me to one of the bedrooms.

Lando: "So you are not going to tell me what's going on?"

Me: "I will explain everything once it's done. I promise you." She hugs me.

Lando: "Just so you know if you get yourself killed I will ask Pastor Lukau to resurrect you then I will kill you myself." I laugh.

Me: "Why are you always threatening me?"

Lando: "I don't make threats I make promises. Seriously though I am not raising these kids by myself. You have to come back."

Me: "I am coming back. I promise." I take her lips into mine and kiss her. Nate knocks on the door.

Nate: "Bafo we need to go."

We follow him downstairs and say our goodbyes. We get into the cars and drive out. We make it to Polokwane at the break of dawn. We drive to the warehouse there. Nate gets a message on his.

'Times up. I am coming for my money. D.'

Nate: "Gentlemen, it's time to strap up."

We get the guns we will need and load them in the cars before Nate and I drive back to Joburg.



NARRATED

At an old building in downtown Joburg, Dalindyebo has gathered his man, about 20 of them.

Dali: "Madoda, you all know why we are gathered here right?"

Men: "Yes."

Dali: "Good, for the past week you

have been following these men, now I need you to bring them here. I want them alive. I want them to beg for their lives as soon as they give me my money. Do whatever it takes to get them here and if that means putting a bullet in their loved ones heads do it. Are we clear?"

Men: "Yes sir."

Dali: "Good. Get the show on the road." They leave. Dalindyebo's right hand man comes in and stands next to him.

Nqoba: "Are you sure this is going to work."

Dali: "You want payback for your

father right?"

Nqoba: "Of course."

Dali: "Then we do this, we do it right and all the money will be back, and you my boy will never work another day in your life." He smiles and they lift their whiskey glasses.

Nqoba: "Heres to early retirement." They laugh.

Dali: Kwedini (Boy) you are a socialite, what are you retiring from?"

Nqoba: "Even socialites have to retire at some point."

INSERT 45

PHILANI

Nate and I drove back to Joburg just to make sure these guys see us since Lindani lost them. We get to the lounge in the morning and its closed. And since we have the spare keys we open and head to the office. And as if they have been waiting for us four armed guys walk in after us. We decide to use the back door and head back to the car. We see two of them standing guard outside. We start revving the car and they notice. They call their friends and follow us. We drive all the way back to Polokwane with them on

our tail. Luckily for us the Audi R8 is faster than the GTIs they are driving.

We got stopped a couple of times on the way by the police. We had cold drink money so we get to keep going. By the time we get to Polokwane there are at least 10 GTIs following us. I must admit though, Dalindyebo knows what he is doing.

We drive out of town and into the warehouse. And like discussed our men are ready and waiting. As soon as we drive in, park and get out of the car we rush inside. The guys in GTIs follow suit oblivious

to the armed men hiding around. As soon as all of them are inside the warehouse premises we close the gate and open fire. It's a good thing we are far from people's homes. The guys open fire too and a shoot out happens outside. After about five minutes the shooting dies down. We walk out and there are bodies scattered all over the place.

We check most of the guys and they are dead. Luckily only a couple of our guys got shot, we didn't lose anyone just a couple of bullet wounds but nothing serious. As we are moving from one body to the

next I feel something sting my side before I hear two gunshot wounds. I feel where the sting happened and my hand comes back bloody. Shit. I've been shot. I feel my knees get weak and things just get blurry before they go dark.

NARRATED

Just as Philani falls to the ground and goes unconscious, his friends rally around him. Nate places his sweater on the wound to try and stop it from bleeding. They are distracted when three BMWs pull up at the gate. Mr Biyela walks in with some of his guys.

Mr B: "Take him to a hospital, I will clean up here."

Lindani and Nate load Philani into the car and they drive off to the hospital.

Mr Biyela calls his boys and they load the bodies in the cars and drive them inside the warehouse except one. They load that one into the boot of their car. Once all the GTIs are inside the warehouse he tells his men to dip cloths in the gas tanks and drenches them in petrol. They leave the cloths hanging a bit and then they set them alight.

They drive out leaving the warehouse with the bodies inside burning. They drive back to Joburg with Mr Biyela in the lead followed by Sizwe and Sbu and their guys.

In downtown Johannesburg, in an old abandoned building, Dalindyebo and Nqoba are busy drinking whiskey, while waiting for information from their man. It's been hours since they left and there has been no feedback from any of them. Nqoba starts pacing up and down as the anxiety starts to take over.

Dali: "Please sit down you are making me dizzy. "

Nqoba: "What if they have been caught? What if those idiots are on their way here as we speak?"

Dali: "There are guards outside so stop." Nqoba takes a seat. Just then Dalindyebo's phone rings. He picks it up.

"Hello.....Yeah.....what do you mean?..... Find them..... I dont care how you do it but I need them here and you better not return until you have them. Are we clear?.....Good." he hangs up.

Nqoba: "What's happening?"

Dali: "Their houses are empty."

Nqoba: "So what?"

Dali: "You are more stupid than I thought you were. Let me explain. If we have something or someone they love it will be easier for them to give us what we want."

Nqoba: "Oh! Smart move."

As they are busy talking and laughing they hear gunshots coming from outside. They quickly stand on their feet and

Dalindyebo takes out his gun and makes sure its loaded. The door bursts open and Mr Biyela walks in followed by Sizwe and Sbu.

Dali: "What the fuck is going on Biyela?"

Mr B: "Your men shot my son."

Dali: "I have no idea what you are talking about."

Mr B: "Right." He calls one of his guys and they bring the body in and throw it on the floor. "I do believe he is yours. The rest of them are causing pollution in Limpopo."

Dali: "Look all I want is my money, that's it."

Mr B: "You dont have money

Dalindyebo, the money you want was meant to be for the

community not you. And luckily for

the community that money was insured therefore the community will get its money, but you on the other hand....."

Dali: "Ok look let's just forget this even happened. I will walk away from this so....."

Mr B: "You should have walked away the first time. But now that my boy is lying in a hospital bed fighting for his life, theres no walking away. Boys." Sbu and Sizwe tie both Dalindyebo and Nqoba to a chair before injecting them with a sedative.

Once they are unconscious they untie them and drag them to

Dalindyebo's car that is parked outside. They place them in the drivers seat and passenger side and they place the dead body in the boot.

Sizwe: "So what now?"

Mr B: "We call the cops, they will have to explain to the cops why they have a dead body in the boot and we need to wipe the guns and place them in the boot."

Sbu: "You know the police are useless. Dalindyebo has connections, he might be out within days if no hours."

Mr B: "He won't. I already have people waiting for him there. Now

the guns gentlemen." They do as they are told. Once they are done they call the cops. They park across the street and wait.

The cops get to the building and sure enough they find the guns hidden in the boot and the dead body. They pour water on Dalindyebo and Nqoba and they wake up quickly.

Officer 1: "Chief, why are you sleeping here and why do you have a dead body in the boot of your car?" Dalindyebo quickly comes back to his senses when he hears that.

Dali: "Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit." He

says hitting the steering wheel.
Officer 2: "Okay, get out the car and put your hands up." They do as they are told.

"You are under arrest for the possession of unlicensed firearms and a dead body. You have the right to remain silent, anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law."

Dladla: "Officer, I will take over from here." The two officers walk away. "Chief Dalindyebo, you really have dug your own grave this time."

Dali: "I will be out in less than 48 hours." Dladla laughs.

Dladla: "You won't even make it to that 48 hours. You will be put into a holding cell for a few hours and since you violated your bail conditions you are going straight to Sun City prison and there you will find a welcoming squad waiting to just lay out the red carpet for you. You should have just stayed eQumbu and presided over silly squabbles instead you walked into the lions den and nobody makes it out of this lion den alive." He walks over to Nqoba who has shit himself.

"Hhay hhay man, uzinyele mqundu kayihlo. (No no man, you have shit

yourself.) If you have shit yourself now imagine what's going to happen in prison. You are embarrassing yourself." He lifts up Ndoba's face who has tears running down his face. "Guys take them away." The officers come back and take them away.



LANDO

I woke up early in the morning and decided to make breakfast for everyone. I went to the bathroom and took a shower.

After I lotioned I wore my red maxi dress and some flip flops. I was lucky enough not to get

morning sickness, the pregnancy gods must be smiling down on me. I opened up the sliding door leading to the balcony and the view from this place is beautiful. There is a wall fence that is I think ten feet high. Beyond it was the most beautiful and vast shades of green I have ever seen. I swear this place was unaffected by pollution. I would love to come back and enjoy it without the anxiety I have right now.

I went back into the bedroom and tried calling Philani for the tenth time today but it keeps sending

me straight to voicemail. I hope he is okay. I went downstairs and started on breakfast before Kazi joined me.

Kazi: "Good morning Mrs Biyela."
She gives me a peck on the cheek before helping me with breakfast.

Me: "Good morning. How did you sleep?"

Kazi: "Very well thank you. You?"

Me: "Me too, so how long have you and Sizwe been a thing?"

Kazi: "I have absolutely no idea what you are talking about." She looks away trying to hide her blushing face.

Me: "Okay, I will just ask Philani

to ask Sizwe."

Kazi: "Please dont."

Me: "Okay then, tell me."

Kazi: "Okay it's been a couple of months but please dont tell Philani, he is crazy he might just kill Sizwe."

Me: "Philani will be the last person he will need to worry about. If he breaks your heart I will kill him myself." She jumps up and down and gives me a hug.

Kazi: "You are so cute when you try to be scary. I know you would never hurt a fly." If only you knew.

We finish with breakfast and call everyone down. After breakfast we decided to lounge around the pool. I decided to get the deets on Taki and Lindani's blossoming romance.

Me: "So?"

Taki: "So what?"

Me: "You and Lindani. How did that happen?" She laughs.

Taki: "There is nothing going on. We are just friends."

Me: "If you say so."

Taki: "Stop being miss journalism."
I laugh.

Me: "I love a beautiful love story hawu."

Taki: "If it happens, I will let you know. And that is a very big if."

Me: "I'll hold you to that. Have you heard from Kele."

Taki: "She decided to transfer to the North West University. The whole kidnapping thing scared her."

Me: "I cant blame her. Joburg has some shitty ass people. I wonder what happend to her friends?"

Taki: "They didn't tell you?"

Me: "What?"

Taki: "Lindani and your hubby took care of that. Those girls will never ever think about doing

what they did to her."

Me: "Mhmm. As long as she is safe it's good."

We basked in the sun for the better part of the day. Buli and Faith made lunch since we made breakfast. In the evening after dinner we sat in front of the TV watching a movie when Nate and Lindani walked in.

Nate: "Ladies. How are you doing?"

Me: "We are good."

Lindani: "Its time to go back home."

Buli: "Cant we leave tomorrow? We are enjoying ourselves here."

Please just give us one more day."

Nate: "Unfortunately we really need to go back."

Me: "Why, what's going on?"

Where's Philani?"

Lindani: "He is in Joburg. Please pack we really need to go." They walk back out.

Their faces are unreadable but when I asked about Philani I swear their bodies tensed up.

They couldn't even look me in the eye. I hope there is nothing wrong.

We went upstairs and packed our bags before we were flown out. We got to Joburg and we were

driven to Dainfern where Nate said we had to leave Gugu, Kazi and Faith. We then drove to SunMed hospital. I felt my heart beating fast, since no one wanted to tell me what was going on my thoughts were running wild.

We got to the hospital and made our way to Nates office.

Me: "Okay, what the fuck is going on and where is my husband?"

Nate: "Lando I am sorry to have to tell you this but he was shot early this morning." He cant be dead. No! I felt my head spin before my knees gave in and darkness consumed me.

INSERT 46

I woke up to the smell of.....
whatever it is that smells in
hospitals. I looked around and I
felt something heavy next to me.
I looked at the closed blinds and I
could tell it was morning already.
I remembered Nate saying
something about Philani being
shot. I started panicking and
tried to get up but I was held
down by something or someone. I
looked next to me and Philani lay
there with his eyes closed. I
wasn't sure if he was sleeping or
not so I just lay back down and

just watched him with tears running down my eyes. I swear this baby is making me weak. Yes I am going to blame the baby for everything now.

Philani: "Its rude to stare." I wiped my tears. "Une drama Kodwa Landokuhle (you are so dramatic) why did you faint?" He says all this with his eyes still shut.

Me: "I thought you were dead." He opened his eyes and I could see the sparkle in his eyes.

Philani: "Who told you that?"

Me: "Well Nate said you were shot...."

Philani: "Shot not dead."

Me: "Mxm. Blame your baby, he has my hormones running all over the place."

Philani: "SHE! And dont blame her, you are a natural cry baby you just try to hide it very well. How is my princess anyway?"

Me: "It will be so much fun saying I told you so when HE comes out with balls dangling."

He tries to laugh but instead winces in pain. "You okay?"

Philani: "Yeah I am okay, just a little pain."

Me: "Can I see?"

Philani: "What?"

Me: "I want to see where they shot you." He shakes his head before moving the sheet away from him. He has a bandage on his left side. I touch around the wound and he flinches.

Philani: "Are you trying to kill me?"

Me: "Is it painful?"

Philani: "Its a bullet wound babe of course its painful."

Just then a nurse walks in and opens the blinds. She turns around and I know her.

Nurse: "I am sorry but hospital policy doesn't allow for a patient to share a bed with a visitor."

Philani: "We are both patients."

Nurse: "Then ma'am please go back to your room." She says.

Me: "This is my room." She turns to look at Philani.

Nurse: "Sir!"

Philani: "I am not going anywhere and if you have a problem with that go call your boss." He says pulling me back to lay on his chest. I see the attitude in her face before she marches out of the room. I want to laugh but I decide to keep it in.

Me: "You are mean."

Philani: "She started it." Nate walks in.

Nate: "Why are you two giving my

nurses a hard time?"

Philani: "Uyaphapha lo nurse wakho (she is full of it). Why did you scare my wife making her think I was dead?"

Nate: "I never said you were dead. And you two love fainting."

Me: "What do you mean we love fainting? Did he faint too?"

Nate: "Yes, he saw his blood and fainted." I looked at him.

Me: "Who's full of drama now?"

Philani: "No, mine is different."

Me: "You kill people but you are afraid of blood."

Philani: "My blood. I dont like seeing my blood."

Nate: "You need help. Anyways I will be releasing you both today."

Me: "Even him? What about the wound?"

Nate: "We have removed the bullet and then stitched him up so he's good. He should heal in a week or two. I will get your discharge papers ready." He walks out.

Me: "So Mr tough guy is afraid of his own blood. How tough of you."

Nate: "Mxm. I dont like you anymore."

Me: "That's okay. I will hotspot you, I have enough love for both of us." I kiss him and the kiss

gets intense. His hands go all over me and I put my knee in between his thighs and i can feel his erection. I put my hand on his dick and start rubbing it. Just when he is about to pin me back on the bed I pull out and get out of the bed.

Philani: "What the heck?"

Me: "You are being discharged, we need to get you ready." I take my clothes that are hanging on the chair and start getting dressed.

Philani: "You are seriously going to leave me like this?"

Me: "We are in a hospital we cant be doing nasty stuff. Anybody can

walk in here."

Philani: "Its a private ward."

Me: "Tell untshangase to go back to sleep, and wena get dressed.

Someone brought you clothes." I throw the small bag on the bed.

Philani: "Ok. Dont complain when I do the same thing to you next time." He says getting off the bed.

Me: "I have a dildo so....." I shrug. "Hurry up so we can go past Dr Khuzwayo. I need to make sure nothing happened to the baby when I fainted." He doesn't say anything, poor baby is sulking.

I text Nate and tell him that we are going to Dr Khuzwayo's office and we'll be back to sign the discharge papers. We get to Dr Khuzwayo's office and she is busy with a patient so we wait. After she is done she calls us in. I lay on the bed and she pours the cold gel on my stomach. And soon we can hear the heartbeat. I look over at Philani and he has tears glistening in his eyes and he is trying so hard to keep them in.

Dr K: "Mummy and baby seem to be doing good." She wipes the gel from my stomach.

Philani: "Can you tell the sex yet?"

Dr K: "Not yet. What are you hoping for?"

Philani: "A Girl." She smiles. And looks at me.

Me: "A boy. But a healthy baby will do."

Dr K: "Okay this will be interesting." She hands us the sonogram pictures and we leave. We get back to the ward and Nate has the discharge papers ready so we sign them and leave.



BULI

I got home last night and went straight to bed. I found a whole lot of missed calls when I woke

up. Some were from my mom and some from my sister, Nqobile, Nqoba's twin. I decided to ignore them and made breakfast instead. Since Nate was at the hospital with Philani I decided to eat in front of the TV.

I was watching the news when I saw that my brother Nqoba and Dalindyebo were arrested for the possession of illegal firearms and a dead body in the car. I guess that answers my questions about my mother's calls. I decide to call Nqobile back. She picked up after the first ring.

Nqobile: "Mntase (sister). How are you?"

Me: "I am good, I saw your missed calls. What's going on?"

Nqobile: "Have you called your mother yet? She's been trying to reach you."

Me: "I saw her missed calls but I am ignoring her. What does she want?" Not that i dont know the answer to that.

Nqobile: "She wants you to help get Nqoba out of jail. He was arrested with Dalindyebo."

Me: "I saw the news.

Unfortunately I can't help them."

Nqobile: "Good, Nqoba deserves a

few months behind bars so he can get his head straight. I mean dad has been gone for almost a month now and instead of being a man and taking care of the family he goes and gets himself involved with bo Dalindyebo. Hhay no your brother is an idiot shem." I laughed.

Me: "Yiwele lakho lelo (That's your twin.)"

Nqobile: "Hhay suka he needs to get his head screwed on right. No grown ass man should be looking to his father to feed him. And now he has landed himself in jail. Your mother will beg and plead

and even cry trying to get him out."

Me: "Her and dad spoiled him. Now dad is gone he cant deal with his problem child. Mine he can miss me shem. In actual fact I should just block her for a while."

Nqobile: "Mntase all I can tell you is that you need to protect your peace. You are lucky you have a man who fights for you and protects you, God knows if I had that I wouldn't be here right now, dependent on a man like my father wanted me to be." I took a deep breath remembering how hard she begged our father not

to marry her off but he wouldn't listen. Married her off to a 40 year old man when she was only nineteen with just matric.

Me: "How are your studies going?"

Nqobile: "Good. Two more modules to finish before I graduate."

Me: "Still hiding it?"

Nqobile: "Obviously. You know my husband would blow a gasket if he found out."

Me: "Are you still planning on leaving him after graduation?"

Nqobile: "Yebo. I already have a job waiting for me soon as I graduate. You know if it wasn't for your advice I'd still be using

my monthly allowance to buy bo LV and Gucci."

I laughed. My sister loves shopping but I am glad she chose to take my advice and study at UNISA, even though she has to hide it from her cheating husband.

Me: "So how do you explain the no shopping now?"

Nqobile: "Oh I didn't stop shopping. Small street and its Fong kongs has been my saving grace."

Me: "I cant wait to see you graduate sis. Which is why you need to focus on your kids and

getting that degree. Your mother and brother will see themselves out of this mess."

Nqobile: "I will, I love you. And block your mother before she manipulates you. Bye."

She hung up. She is right. I need to just ignore my mother because I know she'll want me to help Nqoba. As much as I love my family i think sometimes it's better to love them from afar.



PHILANI

We left the hospital and drove to Dainfern to pick up Gugu and

Theo. We drove in and I saw Lindani's car parked outside. I wonder what he is doing here. I parked the car and we walked into the house. Gugu and Kazi ran to me and hugged me.

Kazi: "Give us a warning next time you decide to get yourself shot." I laughed.

Me: "Noted."

Gugu: "When you told the matron that there was a death in the family I didn't think it was you."

Me: "I am not the dying type." I walked into the lounge and Lando was already on the floor playing with Theo. I saw my dad outside

by the pool with Lindani and Sizwe. I wonder what's going on. I decide to join them.

Me: "Hey."

Dad: "You are alive." I hug him.

Me: "I dont die that easily."

Lindani: "No you just faint easily."

They laugh.

Me: "Fuck off bra. What are you doing here." They shrug their shoulders, I look at my dad and he just stares at me like he didn't hear me. "Dad?"

Dad: "Oh yeah, I need to talk to you boys we are just waiting for Nate and Sbu."

Okay, this must be serious. I went back to the house and poured myself some whiskey from the bar, I know alcohol and meds dont mix but if my dad calls a meeting with us it must be serious. Just as I am about to go back outside I see Nate and Sbu come in so I decide to wait for them. They greet the girls before walking over to me.

Nate: "What the heck is going on?"

Me: "I dont know, he said he's waiting for you two."

Sbu: "Are we in trouble?" My father has that effect on people.

As much as he is always happy and easygoing, once he decides to lay down the law he becomes a scary person. And this meeting, looks like he has some serious shit to talk about.

Nate: "Are we going to walk out there or we are going to stand here?" I sigh.

Me: "I guess theres no point delaying the inevitable." We walk out to them.

Dad: "Ah good, you are all here. Let's go." He leads us to the braai area. We sit down on the benches while he stands and looks at us. Right now I feel like all

those times in high school when we were summoned to the principal's office for doing something we shouldn't have done. He takes a sip of his whiskey and looks at us one by one. He looks at me and I try to not feel intimidated but after a few seconds I look away.

Dad: "So, is this how you want to live your lives?" Silence. "I asked a question?" Silence. "Don't you think it's time to walk away from this life? Philani you have a family now, what happens the next time you get shot in the chest, or on the back, or even if you die? Who's

going to protect Lando and Theo?
You are a family man now, your family takes priority, you cant bombard them with guards all their lives. At some point this has to stop. You have money, you have legit businesses, grow those and put this life behind you."

Me: "Its not that simple dad."

Dad: "Then make it simple, for your family. And if you decide to keep doing this you cannot be on the frontlines, put other people in charge and lead from the shadows. Wena Nate, didn't you just move in with Buli?"

Nate: "I did."

Dad: "So you know that makes her vulnerable too right? There are many people who will use her to get to you. You need to protect her. Wena Lindani, are you giving up your player card?"

Lindani: "Eish!" He says scratching his head. I want to laugh but this is not the time, I will laugh at him later.

Dad: "Get your priorities in order before you put that girl in danger. Sizwe?"

Sizwe: "Baba."

Dad: "Do you have a girlfriend?"

Sizwe: "Yes."

Dad: "You love her?"

Sizwe: "Yes. I do."

Dad: "Then get your shit in order. Sbu?"

Sbu: "Yes sir!"

Dad: "Girlfriend?"

Sbu: "Eish, not yet!"

Dad: "Say the word and I will find you a girl eMandawe." He laughs.

Sbu: "No Baba ngi sharp for now."

Dad: "Okay then. Boys, put your priorities in order. I am certain you have people you trust who can run this operation without you being fully hands on. It's time for you to grow up and put your loved ones first." He takes his whiskey glass and walks away.

We sit there in silence for a while just trying to digest what my dad said. Kazi comes to us and tells us lunch is ready. We walk back to the house and eat in silence. When we are done Lando and I take the kids and we drive straight to the airport. The jet is ready so we take Gugu back to school. We come back late in the evening. We get home and I take a shower. While I am in the bathroom my phone beeps. I take it and it's a message from Uche. I open it and it's a picture of her in a bathtub naked with chocolate cake next to her. She looks good

but the cake looks better. Okay now I need some cake. I wrap a towel around my waist and walk downstairs. I find Lando making tea. Cravings.

Me: "Hey, do we have chocolate cake?"

Lando: "I think theres some in the fridge." I open the fridge and theres two slices of cake. It's cold though. I pop it into the microwave and I hope it doesn't get ruined. When its ready I say a silent prayer before tasting it, mhmm not bad. It will have to do. I follow Lando to the lounge and we sit to watch a movie.

Lando: "So you are not getting dressed vele?"

Me: "Nope. My house, I can do whatever I want to do. Besides it means you get easy access to untshangase so you should be happy." She rolls her eyes and looks back to the TV. Maybe dad is right. I need to protect this, I need to make sure she feels safe all the time. And if that means giving up this life then so be it. I pull her close to me and kiss the top of her head.

INSERT 47

I woke up this morning and just laid on the bed looking at the ceiling. Today is the night of the gala dinner. My dress is not here yet and I am a bit anxious. I got up and went to the bathroom to take a shower. When I was done I stood by the floor length mirror in the closet and tried to do the pregnant pose, you know the one where you put your hand on your tummy as if it will fall? Yes that one. Nope did not work. I am not showing yet but there is a little bump that looks like I am constipated. I put on my gown and decided to go have breakfast.

I got downstairs and MaMnguni was already feeding Theo.

Me: "Hello ma." I said and walked over to Theo and kissed him on the cheeks.

MaMnguni: "Hello. You look tired."

Me: "My dress for the dinner tonight is still not ready. The designer was supposed to deliver it last night but he didn't. Now I am stressed."

MaMnguni: "I am sure he will bring it. Theres still a bit of time."

Me: "I guess." I took an apple and ate it. MaMnguni went up to bathe Theo. I couldn't decide on

breakfast. I was still trying to figure out what I will eat when the door burst open and Buli, Faith, Kazi and Taki walked in.

Buli: "Hello madam."

Me: "Hey, what are you guys doing here?"

Faith: "We are going to the spa and then going to get our hair and make up done for the gala dinner."

Me: "I still dont have a dress."

Kazi: "Dont worry about that. Your dress is coming. You need to go change so we can leave."

Me: "Ok then."

I rushed upstairs and changed to

some black Nike leggings and a black Nike tshirt. I slipped on my Nike slides and I was ready to go. I took my bag and headed downstairs.

We got into the car and drove to the spa. I noticed we were the only ones there and when I asked they said Philani had booked out the place. We decided to get massages first. When we were done we had manicures, facials, basically the whole shebang. We left and I was feeling rather rejuvenated. Although I had to lie when they asked why I wasn't drinking the champagne.

We got to the salon and sat down. I decided on a curly 30 inch weave. I must admit I looked good. As soon as I was done a make up artist was standing by to play with my face. By the time we left all we had to do was get our dresses on and we were good to go. I was so caught up on the activities of the day I hadn't thought about my dress. We got to the house and the girls got into their cars and drove home to get ready. We will meet at the dinner.

I went upstairs to my room and my dress was laying on the bed. I

jumped up and down in excitement. I didn't even notice Philani walking out of the bathroom with a towel wrapped around his waist. He walked over to me and wrapped his arms around my waist.

Philani: "Hey beautiful."

Me: "Hey. When did my dress get here?"

Philani: "About an hour ago. Have you eaten?"

Me: "Yeah I had lunch."

Philani: "You need to eat before we leave."

Me: "We are going to a dinner, I will eat there." I untangled

myself from him. "I need a quick shower. Get dressed." I undressed while he watched me. I ignored him cause if I entertain him we will get there late. I rushed to the bathroom and took a shower making sure to avoid my already made up face. A struggle I tell you. But I persevered and got it done. I got out the shower and went to the bedroom still naked and found Philani laying on the bed playing with his phone, still undressed.

I took my body lotion and lotioned myself. I won't even pay any attention to him. If he is not

ready by the time I am done I will leave him behind. I finished lotioning and unzipped the dress and took it out from the bag. I put it on and it fit like a glove. I was worried it wouldn't fit cause it was a bit bigger when I had my fitting yesterday. But luckily it was perfect. I went to Philani who was still laying on the bed to zip me up. When he was done he dissapeared into the closet, I guess to get dressed. I looked in the mirror and I looked like a dream. My dress was a red mermaid silk chiffon dress with off shoulder sleeves. It had a

beaded bodice. I put on my silver diamante strap sandals with diamond drop earrings that Philani got me for Valentine's day. I looked in the mirror and I was ready. The make up and hair just finished off the look.

Philani came out wearing his black tuxedo that had a red handkerchief in the jacket pocket to compliment my dress. He had on his platinum engraved cuff links and his platinum Rolex watch. His gift for Valentine's day. He looked yummy.

Philani: "Stop drooling." I laughed.
Me: "Maybe we should stay home."

Philani: "Why?"

Me: "You look ready to eat and I dont want those women drooling over you." He smiles and walks over to me and wraps his hands around me.

Philani: "They can drool until they run out of saliva. All this chocolate belongs to one woman only. And knowing her she is not very good with sharing. She might just stab their asses."

Me: "Lucky girl. He kisses me. I pull out after a while. "We need to leave Biyela we cant keep the people waiting."

Philani: "I cant wait to get this

off of you."

Me: "I can't wait either, now let's go." I took my clutch bag and we walked out. We kissed Theo and said goodbye to Mami nguni and we walked to the car. He led me to an SUV that looked like the type that transports ministers and presidents. There was a driver who opened the door for me to get in. Soon as I was in Philani went to the other side and got in. We drove off to the Maslow Hotel in Sandton. Philani got out of the car and came around to open my door. He held my hand and helped me out. As soon as we stepped

onto the red carpet the cameras started flashing. We walked hand in hand until we got to where journalists were taking pictures. Some were throwing questions at us but we ignored them. After about two minutes we walked into the hotel. It looked amazing. I must admit Uche knows her job. This place was beautiful.

We were given the programme at the door and our designated table number. We walked to our table and the others were standing in a circle so we joined them. A waiter brought us drinks and since I am

not allowed to drink I just asked for apple juice.

We sat down as the MC took over and the programme began.

Bab'Biyela did the welcoming speech. Dinner was served and it was delicious. I saw Uche walking towards the bathroom so I excused myself from the table and followed her. By the time I got to the bathroom she was washing her hands.

Me: "You know if desperation was a person it would have your face."

Uche: "Excuse me."

Me: "The thirst trap photos you keep sending to Philani. That's

just desperate. And woman to woman, you are embarrassing our gender sis."

Uche: "Well Philani doesn't seem to complain." She wipes her hands with a paper towel.

Me: "Is that what he told you?"

Uche: "Well he hasn't told me to stop so.... by the way I never thought you would be the type that was so insecure you have to go through your man's phone." I chuckle.

Me: "That's where you are wrong. I don't go through his phone, he shows it to me and we laugh about it and then he forwards

the pics to me." I take out my phone and show her the pictures. "Do you think your husband would get the joke if I sent these to him?"

Uche: "You wouldn't dare." She says and i could almost see the steam coming out of her ears.

Me: "Why not? I mean you keep sending these to MY husband i just figured sharing is caring."

She keeps quiet. "Cat got your tongue huh? Now listen to me. Tomorrow morning you will pack your things and go back home."

Uche: "I still have to do a debriefing."

Me: "There is something called an email. You can send it from anywhere in the world. Use it. And don't worry about your pay I will make sure it gets to you before the end of the week. And next year make sure you send somebody else to do the event because if I see you anywhere near this company or my husband I will not be so nice or so kind. Consider yourself warned." I turned and walked out of the bathroom and went back to the table.

Philani: "Everything okay?"

Me: "Perfect. What did I miss?"

Philani: "Nothing much. I am

about to give my speech."

Me: "Cool. I cant wait."

The MC calls him up and he says his speech. I look around and there is silence. Everyone is listening attentively. The women in the room are drooling over him. I see Uche also looking at him with lust in her eyes. Our eyes meet and she quickly looks away. Before he ends his speech he calls up the executive staff to the stage.

Philani: "And last but definitely not least, ladies and gentlemen I would like to introduce you to our new COO, the woman who will be

helping me through this journey. Ladies and gentlemen Mrs Landokuhle Biyela." I get up and walk to the stage. I get to him and he gives me a kiss and the room applauds. "Also ladies and gentlemen she is my wife." There are whistles and cheers. We go and sit back down.

By the end of the night my feet hurt and I just want to go home. We say our goodbyes as more people begin to leave. We get outside and the driver brings our car. We get in and drive back home.

As we are driving back Philani presses a button on his side of the car and the shield between the backseat and the front seat closes. He unbuckled my seatbelt and pulled me to him so I am straddling him.

Me: "Mr Biyela, what are you doing?"

Philani: "Do you have any idea how hot you are?" He says with his hands fondling my butt. He frees my one boob from my dress and suckled on it. "Your boobs are getting bigger."

Me: "Advantages of being pregnant."

Philani: "I like I like I like." He says between kisses. His one hand goes up my dress and moves up to my haven. I moan as his fingers move my underwear aside and he plays with my clit. I moan and grind on his fingers. He slips two fingers inside me and moves them in and out.

Philani: "Baby!"

Me: "Mhmm."

Philani: "Today is the deadline." I moan and groan as his fingers go deeper into me.

Me: "For what?"

Philani: "For your birthday gift.

We agreed you would tell me today

what you want for your birthday." His fingers make their way to my g-spot and I feel myself about to explode.

Me: "Can we not do this right now?" He stops and pulls his fingers out. "Are you fucken kidding me right now." I try to move off of him but he holds me in place. I sigh. "I told you I don't want anything. I already have all that I need and I don't think it would be fair to ask God for anything more."

Philani: "You are not asking God, you are asking me. Now tell me what you want."

Me: "You really want to know?"

Philani: "Yes."

Me: "I want unTshangase inside of me before I lose my mind." He smiles and I gasp as he enters me in one swift thrust. I dont even know when he unzipped his pants.

Philani: "If you dont tell me what you want...." he groans. "I will throw you a big party and invite anyone and everyone who cares to come." I ride him faster and before long I cum. I ride a little more and he cums.

Me: "You wouldn't dare."

Philani: "Tell me what you want

then."

Me: "Fine. I want to see my father but I am scared."

Philani: "Of what?"

Me: "What if he doesn't want me?"

Philani: "What if he does want you? What if this whole time he has been trying to find you? What if everyday he prays that he finds you? You won't know till you talk to him."

Me: "I guess."

Philani: "And just so we are clear that doesn't count as a birthday gift." He opens the door and we are parked outside our house.

Me: "How long have we been sitting out here?" He laughs.

Philani: "About ten minutes." He pulls out of me and I jump out of the car. He grabs my bag and we walk into the house. I guess the driver parked and left.

I go into the kitchen and grab a bottle of water while he goes upstairs. I take one sip and notice a letter on the kitchen counter. Its addressed to me. I open it.

'Landokuhle

Please come home when you get time. We need to talk.

Your mother.'

I chuckle. This woman is unbelievable. After all that she has put us through she thinks she can summon me and I will just come running. She thinks I am that little girl who used to be afraid of her. Mxm. I crumple up the letter and throw it in the bin. I walk upstairs and find Philani sitting on the bed with his briefs on. I leave the dress at the door and walk towards him with just my underwear on.

Philani: "What took you so long?"

Me: "Nothing important." I jump

on top of him and we fall onto the bed.

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We drive into the SunMed parking lot for our check up. Apparently we need one before we travel to Eswatini to meet my father. We get out of the car and walk towards the reception area.

Instead of stopping and asking if Dr Khuzwayo is available, this guy decides to walk past. I look at the receptionist and she pretends like she didn't see us.

We get to Dr Khuzwayo's office and turns out she is expecting us.

Dr K: "I have been expecting you, so what's the problem?" I look at Philani.

Philani: "We want to travel and we just need to make sure that it's okay for us to travel especially with the baby and stuff."

Dr K: "Where are you going?"

Philani: "Eswatini. We want to leave tomorrow."

Dr K: "Okay, I think it should be fine."

Me: "See, I told you."

Philani: "There is absolutely

nothing wrong with getting a professional opinion."

Me: "Oh, so you dont think I know my body?"

Philani: "You do but she is a doctor and you are not."

Me: "Philani I am pregnant. I dont have a terminal illness."

Philani: "I know but....."

Me: "But nothing. I know you are excited about this baby and so am I but going to the doctor for every little thing is not on."

Philani: "Traveling is not just a little thing."

Me: "We were here last week because I cut myself with a knife

and you wanted to know how that will affect the baby."

Philani: "Its called taking precautions."

Me: "Philani....."

Dr K: "Ok ok. You two. I think that's enough. Biyela, she is right, you cant come to the hospital for everything. The pregnancy is not a high risk one so everything will be fine. And you can travel."

Me: "Thank you doctor." I take my bag and walk out and Philani follows me. We walk back to the car in silence. He opens the door for me and I get in before he

gets on the other side but he doesn't start the engine.

Philani: "I am sorry. I just want everything to be perfect." I turn and look at him.

Me: "I want it to be perfect too but you are going a bit extreme."

Philani: "I am sorry."

Me: "Fine I will forgive you as soon as you buy me hot wings." He laughs.

Philani: "Okay then. Let's get hot wings." He kisses me. "I love you, you know that right?"

Me: "Of course you do what's there not to love." He laughs

again and starts the car. "I love you too."

We drive out of the hospital and we buy the wings at a chicken lickin drive thru before driving to Dainfern to see Kazi. We get to the gate and drive in. As we get out of the car his phone rings so he stays behind to answer it. I walk through the door and I hear muffled sounds coming from somewhere in the house. I follow the voices and they lead me to the kitchen. I am met with the sight of a naked Sizwe and Qhawekazi having sex on the kitchen counter.

Me: "Oh my God." They scream when they see me. I turn around and walk out the door where I am met by Philani on his way in.

Philani: "Hey, where are you going?"

Me: "Uhm, yeah ah. We need to leave."

Philani: "Why? I still need to see my sister." He tries to walk past me but I block his way.

Me: "Yeah she's not here. I just called her."

Philani: "You left your phone in the car. Lando what's going on?" Oh Lord. I say a silent prayer.

Me: "I want wings."

Philani: "You just had wings."

Me: "I want more."

Philani: "Okay we'll buy more when we leave."

Me: "No, I want them now. Or dont you care about your baby. Your baby wants wings and you want to starve him? Really

Philani?" I let the tears fall.

Thank God for Mrs Swanepoel's drama classes. Philani panics when he sees me crying.

Philani: "Okay, okay please dont cry. Let's go get your wings. We walk back to the car and I wipe my tears pretending to be upset. As soon as we drive out I take

my phone from my bag and text Kazi.

'You owe me.'

'I know. Anything you want.'

'I still need to think about it.'

'I will be waiting.-

'Why are you having sex in your father's kitchen?'

'😁😁 it's called being spontaneous.'

'What if your brother walked in first?'

'The Biyela ancestors love me that's why they sent you in first.'

'🤔🤔 whatever. I will tell you when I have decided what I want.'

'I love you 😘😘'

'I love you too. Now please clean that countertop with bleach and disinfectant.'

'😁😁 will do.'

'And you need to tell your brother about your relationship. You cant hide it forever.'

I put my phone away as we got to the drive thru and bought the wings. Not that I need them.

When we are done we drive to our house.



KAZI

I swear my ancestors together with Jesus were working overtime today. I don't know what I would have done if Philani was the one who had walked in on us. Finding us together just talking would have been better but having sex, in the kitchen now that would have been a problem. Thank God for Lando and her quick thinking. I stood by the door and listened as she put on an act for Philani, even though I couldn't hear exactly what they were saying but clearly he bought it cause they left.

I went back and found Sizwe hiding behind the counter. I laughed so hard. I know him and Philani are friends but it's scary to see how even his own friends are afraid of him.

Me: "Get up their gone." He slowly gets up and looks around to make sure they are really gone.

Sizwe: "That was a close one."

Me: "I can still feel the adrenaline rushing through my blood."

Sizwe: "You and this spontaneous thing of yours will get us into trouble." I took out chocolate cake from the fridge and sat on the counter. I took out two

spoons from the drawer and handed him one. He put on his briefs and jumped on the counter too. I took my phone as a message got in from Lando.

Me: "I think we need to tell them before things get out of hand."

Sizwe: "I know. But what is it with you Biyela's and chocolate cake. Even Philani is obsessed with it."

Me: "Its nice. Mum used to bake birthday cakes and cupcakes for the kids at the shelter and the rehab centre. Philani and I used to steal atleast one everytime. So when mum realized we would

steal them she would make some extras but we would still steal them cause we didn't know she made the extras for us."

Sizwe: "You miss her."

Me: "Everyday. But then a part of me sometimes think it's better that she is not here to see the mess I have made of my life. She would have been disappointed."

Sizwe: "Maybe. But she wouldn't have stopped loving you." Just then we hear a car pull up in the garage.

Me: "I think my dad is home." We quickly jump down from the counter, I put the cake back in

the fridge before gathering our clothes and running upstairs to my room. They say too much of anything is dangerous and they might be right. This adrenaline will kill me.



PHILANI

I woke up early in the morning and went to the gym. Lando and I are driving to Eswatini to see her father. She's so anxious about it she was busy tossing and turning. I had to give her UNTshangase just so she can sleep. I could have given her sleeping pills but I dont think

they would have been good for the baby so i gave her the first best thing.

When i was done in the gym i went to the kitchen to make myself a smoothie. I opened the fridge and I saw the wings in there. They were untouched. As excited as I am about this pregnancy I dont think I am ready for the mood swings and cravings in the middle of the night.

I was busy looking through the fridge when I felt her wrap her hands around my waist.

Philani: "Morning sunshine." She mumbled something I didn't hear. I made my smoothie with her resting her head on my back.

When I was done we walked back upstairs. "You know at some point you will have to let me go."

She let me go and threw herself on the bed.

Me: "What time are we leaving?"

Philani: "As soon as we are ready. You need to take a shower. And have breakfast." She got up and dragged herself to the bathroom. She took a while in there but she eventually came out and got dressed. I went to take a shower

too and when I came out she was already downstairs.

I joined her after getting dressed. We left and dropped Theo and MAMnguni off at my dad's since we weren't sure when we would be back and my dad likes having him around.

We drove the whole way with Lando sleeping half the time. We got to the address my guy gave me. I parked across the road from the house and woke Lando up.

Me: "Baby, we are here." She woke up and rubbed her eyes

before looking around.

Lando: "Which one is it?" I pointed it out and she looked at it for a while. "Do you think he is there?" She asked not taking her eyes away.

Me: "I dont know. Do you want me to go in with you?"

Lando: "No, I think I need to do this by myself. But promise you'll be here when I come out."

Me: "I am not going anywhere."

She kissed me before opening the door and walking out. I watched her as she walked towards the gate. She looked back at me and I smiled. I pray this works out. I

would hate to see her get hurt again.



LANDO

I have never been so nervous in my life. To think the whole way here I was okay, or maybe its because I slept most of the way but now being here, standing at the gate, just a few steps away from home my heart just went into overdrive. I took a deep breath and walked in. Lucky me the gate was not electronic so I just pushed it open and walked in. It was quiet, i looked around and didn't see anyone. The was a big

house on the side and a few small houses on the other side. I walked towards the main house. The front door was locked, even the burglar bars were locked. I walked around to the back and there was an open door. I walked to it and knocked.

I heard a faint voice saying come in so I walked in slowly. I walked through the kitchen and it was nice. It looked and felt homely, I wonder if he cooks.

I walked towards where the voice came from and it led me to the lounge. I walked into the lounge and saw an old lady, well

not old old but she looked like she was in her late sixties or early seventies. She was sitting on the couch with a bowl in her lap full of beads. She was busy making something, probably a necklace I don't know.

Me: "Sanbonani. (Hello)" I said with my shaky voice and shaky hands. She looked up and she looked at me. She put on her glasses, took them off and put them back on before removing them again. I walked closer to her and I saw the shock on her face. She took the bowl from her lap and put it on the coffee table.

She got up and walked towards me.

Her: "Sawubona (hello)"

Me: "I am looking for my father, they said he lived here, do you perhaps know where I can find him?" She stood in front of me not saying anything. She placed her hands on the side of my head and I saw a tear running down her face. My heart was threatening to jump out of my chest.

Her: "You look so much like your father."

Me: "Sorry..... I uhmm..."

Her: "Landokuhle, we have been

looking for you." She said before hugging the life out of me. I felt her tears wet my shoulder and somehow that led to me crying too. I guess I had nothing to be afraid of. Cause this sure feels like home right now.

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I dont know how long I was wrapped up in her arms. It felt warm though. I dont think even my own mother has ever hugged me like this. She pulled away from me and wiped the tears from my face. She took my hand and led me

to the couch. I sat down with her next to me and honestly, I didn't know what to say so I just waited on her to say something.

Her: "I am so happy to see you. When you were little you looked just like your dad. And I see nothing has changed." I smiled.

Me: "I am sorry, I dont mean to be rude or anything but who are you?" She laughs.

Her: "I got so caught up seeing you i even forgot to introduce myself. I am Gogo Shongwe, i am your grandmother."

Me: "Oh. I am happy to see you."

Gogo: "Me too baby. Me too. Let

me call your father and tell him to come home." My heart starts beating fast.

Me: "Where is he?"

Gogo: "I don't know, but I am sure he will come home soon." She takes out her phone from her bra and dials. She puts the phone in her ear and I am just amazed at how the phone seems to work after it's been in contact with so much body heat. She takes the phone away from her ear and places it on the table. "He is not picking up, he's probably somewhere sulking."

Me: "Sulking? Why?"

Gogo: "Cause it's your birthday month. Every year around your birthday we have to deal with his moods and temper tantrums." She looked at me and smiled. "But now that you are here, he will be so happy." I smiled too. "How did you find us anyway?"

Me: "Oh I didn't. My husband did."

Gogo: "You are married? But you are too young to be married." I laughed.

Me: "Gogo I am 25 years old."

Gogo: "No you are 24, you only turn 25 next week. Where is your husband anyway?"

Me: "He's in the car."

Gogo: "Hhayaibo Landokuhle, you cant leave your husband sitting in the car alone. Go and get him, I will make some tea."

Me: "Ok." I got up and went out to get Philani. I opened the car door and he was startled. "Two minutes and you are already sleeping. What kind of bodyguard are you?"

Philani: "The kind that is tired because you wouldn't drive." I laughed. "What happened in there?"

Me: "Nothing happened, I found my grandmother, she seems happy to see me. My father is not

around but gogo says he will be back soon and he will be happy to see me, apparently they have been looking for me, I don't know where they were looking though but it doesn't matter i am here now and everything seems to be working out the way it should.

Anyways gogo wants to see you, apparently its rude of me to leave you alone outside so come on in Mr." I stop talking and look at him, he has a huge smile on his face. "What are you smiling about?"

Philani: "I have never seen or heard you speak that fast

before. You are happy."

Me: "I think I am. Is it weird?"

Philani: "There's nothing weird about being happy. Now let's go see gogo."

Me: "I think you should park the car inside. I'll open the gate." I quickly rush to the gate and pull it open. He drives in and parks while I close the gate.

He gets out of the car and as we make our way towards the back the front door opens. Gogo calls us to come through the front. We walk in and we sit on the couch and she brings us tea with scones.

Me: "Thank you gogo. This is my husband, Philani Biyela, Philani this is my grandmother Gogo Shongwe." Philani gets up and walks over to her and shakes her hand.

Philani: "Its nice to meet you gogo."

Gogo: "Its nice to meet you too Mkhwenyana. (Son-in-law)"

I pour the tea and give it to gogo then Philani. We sat there drinking the tea and laughing about silly things. My grandmother has jokes for days.



KAZI

I woke up early and made breakfast. Lando and Philani dropped Theo off together with his nanny before they left. I like having him around. Even though I can't fully claim him as my own but I am glad I can spend time with him. Maybe one day when he finds out the truth he won't hate me as much.

I decided to take him to the mall, our own bonding session. We did a bit of shopping before we went to Spur. I called Sizwe and told him to come join us. He walked in looking all good in grey sweatpants, white Nike sneakers

and a white Nike tshirt. He had his hands in his pockets and the moment he walked in all eyes were on him.

He walked over to us with a little bounce in his step. He gave me a kiss before sitting down.

Sizwe: "Hi." I smiled, and blushed.

Me: "Hi. You look nice."

Sizwe: "Thank you. So you are babysitting?"

Me: "Yes. I ordered ribs, you want some?"

Sizwe: "Of course." He takes Theo from me and plays with him.

Me: "So I was thinking, maybe tonight we can tell my dad about

us." His head shoots up so fast.

Sizwe: "You want your dad to kill me?"

Me: "Look at it this way, with Philani gone we could tell dad and if he approves then it will be easier to tell Philani."

Sizwe: "I guess that makes sense."

Me: "Are you having second thoughts about us?"

Sizwe: "Of course not. I love you and I want us to be official so if I have to face your dad then so be it."

Me: "Good. So I will cook dinner tonight and you can come over."

Sizwe: "Okay, do I need to wear a suit?" I laugh.

Me: "No. A nice shirt will do."

Sizwe: "Okay then."

Our order comes and we eat. Soon as we are done and preparing to leave we see Buli and Faith walk in with the twins. I say a silent prayer hoping they don't see us because I am not ready to explain myself but my ancestors are probably sleeping because they March right up to us.

Buli: "Hello lovebirds." I look up and smile.

Sizwe: "Mrs Nate. How are you?"

Buli: "Good. This is cozy."

Sizwe: "Yeah I just ran into them and we decided to have lunch together." They laugh.

Faith: "Nice try, we know you two are sleeping together."

Me: "How do you know that?"

Faith: "We have eyes. But you guys are cute together I dont know why you are hiding."

Me: "Well....."

Buli: "If you are afraid of your brother, just tell Lando to tell him." That's a great idea but Philani would rather hear this from me not anyone else.

We say our goodbyes and we leave. We get to the parking and he

helps us to our car. We drive home and find my dad watching soccer.

Me: "Hey."

Dad: "Hey, you are back." He takes Theo from me.

Me: "I am going to cook dinner, we have a guest coming."

Dad: "Yeah, who is that?"

Me: "You'll see."

I leave him and Theo playing in the lounge and go to the kitchen. I need to cook my dad's favourite just to soften him up. It's just after two in the afternoon so maybe tripe will be ready by eight o'clock. Yep, we are having tripe, my dad's favourite.

By seven o'clock I was done cooking. My tripe was ready and my dad kept wanting to know what time we would eat. I went upstairs and took a shower. I lotioned and decided to put on a floral backless maxi dress and some flops. I went back downstairs and found my dad taking a piece of meat from the pot.

Me: "Hi daddy." He jumped up and quickly closed the pot.

Dad: "It was burning." I smiled.

Me: "The stove is not on." He looked at the pot and then looked at me.

Dad: "Okay, busted. I am hungry when are we eating?"

Me: "If you hadn't refused to have lunch you would be fine." I said taking the cutlery to set the table.

Dad: "I had to make sure I have space for the tripe." He said helping me set the table. "So who is this guest anyway?"

Me: "You'll find out soon."

We set the table and waited for Sizwe. My dad was busy pacing up and down being impatient. At five to eight the doorbell rang. I went to open and Sizwe was waiting there with a bouquet of red

roses, a bottle of wine and a bottle of Glenmorangie Quinta Ruban 14 year old whiskey.

Sizwe: "Hey, these are for you."

He handed me the wine and flowers. I stepped aside and let him in.

Me: "Thank you. These are nice."

Sizwe: "I aim to please." I smiled.

Me: "Let's go in before my father finishes the food." We walked in

and sure enough dad was busy taking pieces of meat. "It's rude to eat before your guests." He

turned around and saw Sizwe.

Dad: "Sizwe, what are you doing here?"

Sizwe: "Uhm, I got you some whiskey." He handed him the whiskey. Its actually funny seeing him so nervous. I mean they respect my father but they are not really afraid of him.

Dad: "This is good. Thank you. So what are we celebrating?" We took our seats.

Me: "Uhm.... dad we need to tell you something. So Sizwe and I have been seeing each other for a few months now." He looked at me and then Sizwe. He took a plate and dished up for himself. "Dad, aren't you going to say something?"

Dad: "Oh yeah. I know."

Me: "What do you mean you know?"

Dad: "I am your father Qhawekazi it's my job to know everything that happens in your life." Wait what. Has he been spying on me?

Me: "But how? Are you spying on me?"

Dad: "Well, for starters you make out on my couch and then you have sex on my kitchen counter."

Oh my God. "Didn't you know there are cameras in this house." Holy Mary mother of Jesus. Lord please open the ground and let it

swallow me. I looked at Sizwe and he had his face down, I am pretty sure he also wished he could just vanish into thin air. My dad on the other hand was busy stuffing himself with the food as if he didnt just drop a bomb on us. Me: "Dad....."

Dad: "Look, I have no problem with you two dating, Sizwe is a good kid, I know him, just stop having sex around my house. It's very awkward for me reviewing the security tapes and seeing my daughter naked with a penis inside of her. Please respect my house."

I have had awkward encounters in my life but never like this. In the morning I need to find a new place to stay, change my identity and just become a different person all together.



LANDO

I was in the kitchen cooking dinner with my grandmother while Philani watched soccer in the lounge. Yep, she roped me into cooking with her. Apparently the reason no one was home was because they had gone to the Bushfire Festival. My grandmother had the energy of a

20 year old. By the time we were done the dining room table was filled with all sorts of food. You would think there was some important function happening.

We sat down at the dining room table and waited for the others to arrive. Just before 8 o'clock the door opens and a girl walks in, she looks sixteen or seventeen. She looked upset. She came over and gave gogo a kiss on the cheek before greeting us.

Girl: "I didn't know we had guests."

Gogo: "Sit down so we can eat. Where's your uncle?"

Girl: "He is parking the car." She said as she pulled out a chair angrily, she sat down and crossed her arms across her chest.

Gogo: "Why are you sulking?"

Girl: "Your son is full of drama. I don't know why I had to come home while the others keep having fun. It's not fair."

Man: "Life is not fair sisi, the sooner you learn that the better." He shouts from the kitchen.

Girl: "But the others were there, they could have made sure I was okay."

Man: "How, when they are busy drinking alcohol?" She just clicked

her tongue and crossed her arms again. Gogo was just laughing looking at them.

He walked into the dining area with an apple in his hand. He stood by the door with his shoulder leaning on the door frame. I looked up at him and it was like looking in the mirror.

Except the person on the other side was Male and a bit older but gogo was right, I did look like him.

I blinked away the tears that were forming in my eyes. I didn't want to get my hopes up. For all I know it could be his brother. I

looked back down at the table while playing with my hands trying to calm myself down. Philani reached out under the table and held my hand. I looked up at him and he smiled and I knew everything would be okay.

Gogo: "Sipho hlala phansi sinetivakashi. (Sit down we have guests)." He walked over to the table and took his seat at the head of the table while gogo sat across from him. I looked at Gogo and she was smiling. "Sipho, do you recognize this girl?" She asked pointing at me. He brought his head up and looked at me.

I turned up and looked at him. As soon as our eyes met he couldn't take them away. He looked at me for what felt like forever before he got up and walked over to me. Philani got up from the chair he was on so he could sit. He sat down and it felt like a movie playing in slow motion. He touched my face as if to make sure I was real. As soon as he touched my face he took a deep breath and his tears came running down his face.

Sipho: "Landokuhle." I felt the tears stream down my face too. He brought me in and hugged me

so tight. I have never seen a man weep, I have seen man cry but not like this. He sobbed on my shoulder and I couldn't hold my own tears. To think all this time I had thought he was dead. And when I found out he was alive I thought he wouldn't want me, I was so afraid of being rejected when I had nothing to worry about. This right here felt like home. It felt like I belonged.

INSERT 50

I couldn't sleep. I'm not sure if its excitement or anxiety but it

felt good to be home. My dad was happy to see me. Of all the scenarios I had in my head of our reunion seeing him cry was not part of it. He couldn't stop hugging me or touching me. I slept late, my grandmother wouldn't let us go to the hotel, her and my dad insisted that we sleep here.

I figured since I can't sleep I might as well go to the kitchen for some tea cause if I keep tossing and turning I will end up waking Philani. I put on my gown and tip toed out of the room. I walked down the passage to the

kitchen and there was light coming from there. I walked in and found my dad sitting down with a cup of tea in his hands. He looked up and smiled when he saw me.

Me: "You cant sleep either?" I asked taking a seat.

Dad: "I can, I just dont want to. Tea?" He asked getting up.

Me: "Yes please, why dont you want to sleep?" He made the tea and gave it to me and he sat down.

Dad: "I dont want to sleep because I feel like if I do then I will wake up and you won't be

here." He wipes his face and looks at me. "I have wanted this so many times, I have prayed and hoped. But now that you are here it feels like a dream and I don't want to wake up from it." I held his hand and smiled.

Me: "Well this isn't a dream." He laughed. "So tell me what happened between you and my mother?"

Dad: "She was angry at me. I just didn't think she would punish me by taking you away from me." He takes a deep breath. "I have three sons who are all older than you. As much as I loved them I

wished to have a daughter. But my wife couldn't have anymore kids after having complications during her last pregnancy." He took a deep breath again as if he is suppressing some emotions. "A year after that I had an affair with your mother, I loved her, or at least i thought i did so when she fell pregnant i was happy. I hoped for a girl and sure enough you were born, that's why I named you Avumile. I felt like the heavens had said yes. When she was eight months pregnant we broke up. My wife found out and as angry as she was she forgave

me. After you were born Nelsiwe brought you here and everyone was happy, my mom was the one who named you Landokuhle. My wife wasn't happy, I guess she was hurt. Your mother wanted us to get back together but I refused. I couldn't hurt my wife like that again. When you were about four months old your mother came to the school where I was teaching, and right in the middle of morning assembly she walked up to me with the whole school watching and she handed you to me. Till this day I dont

know why she did that." He laughed.

My mother has always been dramatic so this was no surprise to me.

Dad: "I took you home and for the first time since you were born my wife held you and she fell in love with you. She was the one who said I shouldn't take you back. She took care of you and loved you like you were her own. When you were two your mother came and said that your grandfather had died so she needed to take you to the funeral. At first I refused but after some convincing from

everyone including my wife I let you go. And that was the biggest mistake I ever made in my life cause I never saw you again. I trusted her to bring you back but....." He wiped the tears that were now rolling down his face. I held his hand from across the table while wiping my own tears.

Dad: "I looked for you but I couldn't find you. It was like you disappeared into thin air. I tried so hard, God knows I tried."

I walked over to his side and held him while he cried. As much as I was grateful to have found him a

lot didnt make sense to me. Why would my own mother want to keep me away from my father. Her hatred for me, Okay maybe hate is too strong a word but she never cared about me, she never even told me she loved me, but she took me away from people who actually gave a shit about me.

We went to bed after speaking for a while. We woke up the next morning and the house was full of people, family. I met my three brothers Michael, Banzi and Andile. I also met a whole lot of cousins I didnt even know I had.

Aunts and uncles were happy to see me. We had a family lunch before we drove home. It took a while for my dad to let me go but he gave in eventually after I promised to come back as soon as I could.

When we were at the border post I asked Philani to drive to Mbuzini instead. We got there just before six in the evening. We got to the house and the lights were on so maybe mummy dearest was home. I asked Philani to stay in the car but he refused. I knocked and she opened the door.

It was almost like she was shocked to see me.

Me: "Nelsiwe, you called for me so here I am." She stood aside and let us in. We walked to the lounge and a whole lot of bad memories flooded my mind. I chucked them away when I heard my mother walking into the lounge. She sat down on the couch so we sat down too.

Me: "You said you wanted to talk, so here I am. Say what you want." She crossed her legs and looked at me.

Nelsiwe: "Where's my husband?" I chuckled.

Me: "You asked me to come here just to ask me that? Really?"

Nelsiwe: "I just need to know where my husband is."

Me: "And what makes you think I know where your rapist husband is."

Nelsiwe: "Dont call him a rapist. He dissapeared after we came to Joburg to see you. And then a few weeks back this shows up in my mail." She takes out a letter from her pocket and throws it at me. I picked it up and opened it. It was a letter Vusi wrote admitting all that he did to us. I laughed. Not because it was funny

but because even with a full confession at her fingertips my mother still didn't want to believe what her husband was capable of. I folded up the letter and threw it right back at her.

Me: "So you are telling me that even with a confession in your hands you still think he is innocent. What more needs to happen for you to actually believe? Are you waiting for Jesus to come back first?"

Just then a knock comes through and she goes to open. She comes back with four police officers and one of them happens to be Vusi's

friend Masondo and an old friend of mine Khabo.

Nelsiwe: "That's her and that's her supposed husband. They know what happened to Vusi."

Masondo: "Lando, how are you?"

Me: "I am good. What's going on?"

Masondo: "Your mother opened a missing person's case for your father...."

Philani: "Stepfather!"

Masondo: "For your stepfather. We just have a few questions since he was last seen at your house."

Philani: "He was at our house, he left together with his wife and

their daughter Ntombi. That was the last time we saw him."

Nelsiwe: "We were hijacked soon as we left their house and I haven't seen my husband since."

Masondo: "Look if you have information please let us know."

Philani: "Did you tell them why you came to Joburg?" He asks looking straight at Nelsiwe.

Khabo: "What do you mean?"

Me: "Show them the letter Nelsiwe, show it to them so they know what kind of monster they're looking for." They all look at each other. I take the letter from the coffee table and hand it to Khabo.

She reads it and a tear falls from her eyes. Masondo takes the letter from her and reads it too. Masondo: "This letter simply means you had enough motive to do something to him."

Philani: "Let's see, they were at our house months back, this letter appears days or weeks ago? What do you think we would have done to him. Kept him locked up all these months and then force him to write that letter."

Masondo: "Its a possibility."

Philani laughs and gets up from the couch.

Philani: "If I wanted to do

anything to that man I would have done it by now.

Unfortunately I also can't find him. Now I think it's time for us to head out. When you do find that son of a bitch, tell him I am coming for him. He will pay for what he did to Lando and Gugu. Baby let's go." He holds out my hand and I take it. Before we walk out I turn to look at her. Me: "By the way, Siphiso, my father, the one you told me died when I was little, he says hi." I see her swallow as shock registers in her face, we walk out.

We get into the car and drive back to Joburg. I realised at that point that any answers that I need I will not get them from her. She hates me. And theres no point pretending or hoping that she will one day believe us and apologize and we can be a normal family for once. Dreams are good but sometimes some dreams are not worth it. I have a father now and I need to focus on building a relationship with him and my siblings. I rest my head on Philani's shoulder and just fall asleep. This is my family now, it has its flaws but it's still

a family and every day I seem to attract more people into it.



PHILANI

We got to our house and Lando was already sleeping. I figured it was late to pick Theo up from my dads so we would do it tomorrow. I carried my wife into the house and took off her clothes before tucking her in. I went to take a shower before heading to the study to catch up on some work before tomorrow. I decided to call Lindani.

Lindani: "Bafo. You are back?"

Me: "Yeah, I am back. So we went past Mbuzini on our way back, your guy delivered the letter and that woman opened a missing person's file."

Lindani: "What the fuck is wrong with her? Even with a confession she still cant believe her children?"

Me: "If I didnt know any better I would say she wasn't their mother. No sane woman would allow her children to suffer like this. I mean she hasn't spoken to Gugu in months and she doesn't care."

Lindani: "Yeah well she went ten years without talking to Lando so what's a few months."

Me: "Yeah. How is the handover going?"

Lindani: "So far so good. Razor seems to have everything under control. Plus we aren't entirely cutting the apron strings so it should be fine." I sigh.

Me: "I cant believe we are really letting this go."

Lindani: "Its been a good 15 years man. It's time to let somebody else take over. Plus we will just be in the shadows."

Me: "Yeah, anyways bra thanks

for your help I need to go sleep now."

Lindani: "Okay, we'll talk tomorrow." We hung up.

I went back upstairs and found Lando awake sitting on the bed smiling.

Me: "I hope that smile isn't because of another man." She laughs.

Lando: "It is actually. My dad. I just called him to tell him we arrived safely. He says he misses me already." She has a huge ass grin on her face. She's happy.

She's free. I want this feeling to last. I pray it lasts. No one

deserves more happiness than her. I take off the shorts I am wearing and get into bed. We lay there looking at each other.

Me: "Its nice to see you happy. I want you to always be happy."

Lando: "I am. I just need to make peace with certain things but other than that, I am happy.

Mostly because of you. If it wasn't for you I never would have even thought to find my father. I would have lived my entire life thinking he was dead."

Me: "Well I aim to please." She smiles and comes closer to me. She kisses me.

Lando: "Well I am very pleased Sir. Tell me what I can do to repay you." She says with her hand on my chest and moving down to my stomach.

Me: "Well anything will do really." She smiles and plants a passionate kiss on my lips. I pull her close to me and she gets on top of me. We make love before she falls into a deep slumber.

We woke up the next morning and prepared for work. We decided to go to Dainfern first to see Theo before work. We got there and

Kazi was already in the kitchen feeding him.

Kazi: "Hey, you are back."

Lando: "Yep, we need to have lunch so we can catch up." She says picking up Theo and kissing her. He giggles with every kiss he gets. I look at Kazi and she is blinking away tears. Lando takes over and feeds Theo. When she is done she takes him upstairs to bathe him. Which gives me time to talk to Kazi.

Me: "What's going on?"

Kazi: "Nothing, why?"

Me: "I saw the tears you tried to suppress when Lando took Theo."

What was that about?"

Kazi: "Nothing, really."

Me: "Kazi!"

Kazi: "He loves her."

Me: "Of course he loves her. She's his mother."

Kazi: "I know. I just....." she takes a deep breath. "I wish I hadn't fucked up so much that I cant even raise my own child. He will hate me one day. His first word will be mama or dada and it won't be to me but someone else. I just wish things were different." I walk over to her and hug her.

Me: "He won't hate you sis,

there's no way he will hate his cool aunt." She laughs.

Kazi: "I know. By the way Sizwe and I are in a relationship." She says with her hands wrapped around my waist. I try to push her away but she holds on tighter.

Me: "Please let me go and explain what you just said."

Kazi: "Not unless you promise not to get mad." I clench my teeth. My friends know my family is off limits to them and now one of them is sleeping with my sister. "Promise you won't get mad."

Me: "I promise." She let's me go

and twiddles her thumbs instead.
"When did this little affair start?"

Kazi: "A few months ago."

Me: "Why didnt you tell me sooner?"

Kazi: "I wasn't sure how you'd react." She turns away from me.
"You know my track record when it comes to men. I just wasn't sure where this was going."

Me: "And now you know?" She turns around and looks at me, almost like she is pleading with me.

Kazi: "I dont know what the future holds but I know that I

love him and he loves me and i want to see where this goes."

Me: "Fine." She looks at me almost shocked. I guess she wasn't expecting that. She gives me a bone crushing hug.

Kazi: "Thank you."

Me: "You know I want you to be happy."

Kazi: "I know. I know."

Me: "But if he breaks your heart I will kill him, the fact that he is my friend won't matter." She laughs and pulls away from me.

"Where is your father anyway?"

Kazi: "He left early. I have been avoiding him."

Me: "Why? What happened?" She looked at me like she remembered something.

Kazi: "I will go help Lando." She rushes upstairs leaving me with unanswered questions.

I might not like my friend dating my sister but if he makes her happy who am I to stand in the way if that. I love them both and I want them to be happy.

INSERT 51

I woke up to the sounds of Stevie Wonders version of happy birthday blasting on the

speakers. Although not too loud it was enough to wake me up. I turned over on the bed and I was met with gold and black balloons floating around in my room. I smiled. I am officially 25 years old. My phone beeped and I turned over to take it from the side table and there sat a large bouquet of red roses. There was a card so I took it and opened it.

'Happy Birthday Mrs Biyela.
Here's to many many more. I love
you.

Mr Biyela'

I smiled and put the card back in its place. I was excited for my birthday. I don't usually celebrate it but this year is different. This year it's worth celebrating.

Everything seems to be coming together just fine. I am married and happy, I just found my father and my paternal family. I have my son and a baby on the way. Work is going well, what more could a girl ask for.

I turned back around to look at the balloons and I noticed one of them had a little note. I sat up and took the note and read it.

'Your water is getting cold.'

I got out of the bed and as soon as I stepped on the carpet there were rose petals going from the bed to the bathroom. I followed the rose petals and opened the bathroom door. I found the tub filled with bubbles and rose petals on top. There were small candles lit up and a bottle of champagne on the side with a glass. I got in the tub and poured the alcohol free champagne on the glass and just relaxed. Good thing my birthday was on a Saturday otherwise I would be late for work.

I got out of the tub when the water was almost cold. I put on my gown and went to the bedroom. I lotioned and went downstairs. When I got to the kitchen I found Philani and Theo making breakfast. Well Philani was trying to make breakfast and Theo was just messing up. I stood by the entrance and watched them for a while before they noticed I was there.

Theo noticed me first and he started jumping around in his high chair wanting me to pick him up. I picked him up and kissed him

all over while he giggled. I went over to Philani and kissed him.

Philani: "You know this was supposed to be breakfast in bed right." I laughed. With this mess it would have been lunch in bed.

And he is nervous. Mr tough guy who has made me countless breakfasts in bed is nervous about my birthday breakfast.

Sweet.

Me: "I know baby. But breakfast is breakfast regardless of where it's eaten."

Philani: "Okay have a seat food will be ready soon." I looked at the mess that is here and decided

the lounge will be better.

Me: "I think we will sit in the lounge." He laughed and we left him there.

I sat on the couch with my baby and played with him. My phone rang and I took it out from my gown pocket. It was my dad. Yep. I get to say that now. I have a dad. The moment I said hello there was a loud chorus of people singing happy birthday. They weren't Destiny's Child but it's the thought that counts. By the time they were done I had a tear running down my face.

Dad: "Happy birthday Sthandwa Sam."

Me: "Thank you. How's everyone?"

Dad: "We are good. I wish you were here though. It's been 23 years since I last celebrated your birthday."

Me: "Well now we have a lifetime to celebrate." He chuckled.

Dad: "Yeah. Tell that boy to buy you a huge ass cake. And you will get your birthday present the next time I see you." I laughed.

Me: "Okay I will pass on the message. I love you."

Dad: "I love you too baby." He hung up.

I went back to Theo cause this guy was not done with breakfast yet. A few minutes later there was a knock on the door. I went to open and found Buli and Faith. They splashed me with champagne soon as they saw me. Buli: "Happy birthday bitch." She said hugging me once they were done drenching me.

Faith: "Happy birthday love." She hugged me too. They walked in and just as I was about to close the door a guy in a chef's uniform walked in followed by another guy and they had serving plates. I looked at Buli and Faith.

Buli: "What? They are here for your birthday breakfast. Guys please set up outside by the pool. We will be out in a sec." They left and we went to the lounge.

Me: "But Philani is making breakfast." Faith peeked into the kitchen and came back laughing.

Faith: "I dont think he is making breakfast, I think breakfast is making him. Did you see the mess that side?" We giggle like schoolgirls.

Philani: "I can hear you." He shouts from the kitchen and we laugh some more. He came out of the kitchen. "Okay I am done.

Breakfast is a bust."

Me: "Lucky for you we have plan B." He went upstairs to take a shower and I decided to go change since I was now drenched in champagne. I changed to a white maxi dress and blow dried my weave.

Philani came out of the bathroom and wrapped his hands around my waist, looking at me through the mirror.

Philani: "Happy birthday babe."

Me: "It really is a happy one.

Thank you for making it beautiful." He smiled and started kissing my neck. "Babe, we have

guests."

Philani: "I know." He turned me around and kissed me before picking me up and wrapping my legs around his waist, lifting my dress up. He pinned me against the wall and let the towel fall and I felt my underwear being moved to the side before I felt him enter me. He moved in and out of me for a while before I released. He moved a few more times and then released.

He moved and sat on the bed with me on top of him and his dick inside of me. We kissed for a while

before I pulled out and smiled at him.

Me: "Babe you do know we left our son with our guests right. We cant sit here forever." He stopped kissing my neck and looked at me.

Philani: "They won't steal him. I know where they live." I laughed. He got up still carrying me. He placed me on the bathroom counter and took a wet towel and cleaned me. When he was done I got down and we went back to the bedroom.

I left him while he was getting dressed.



PHILANI

She left and I got dressed. I decided to wear all white to match with her. She thinks matching outfits are cheesy but I think she lowkey likes it when we match, especially when Theo gets involved too. I decided to call her dad to find out how they are doing. They arrived last night for Lando's surprise dinner party. He answered after the second ring.

Mr S: "Mkhwenyana (son-in-law)."

Me: "Baba, ni right? (Are you okay?)"

Mr S: "Yeah we are fine. How are the preparations going?"

Me: "Good. I actually wanted to find out if everyone has an outfit for tonight."

Mr S: "Yeah, everyone has an outfit. I am pretty sure no one travelled all the way here without one."

Me: "Ok. I will see you later then."

Mr S: "Ok. Tell me something though. Will Lando's mother be there as well?"

Me: "No."

Mr S: "I take it they aren't that close then cause she doesn't want to talk about her. Everytime I try she changes the subject."

Me: "Its complicated, I am sure when she is good and ready she will tell you all about it. But please just dont push her. Let her tell you in her own time."

Mr S: "Ok. Thank you. We will see you later then."

Me: "Sure thing. Bye." I hung up. I went downstairs and the gang was already here. Mbusi even brought the twins. We went out to the pool area and had our breakfast. Lando was happy. She smiled a lot and laughed a lot too. This was perfect.

After breakfast I left to go pick up Ntombi from campus. After

that we went to the airport to pick up Gugu. We waited for a while before we saw her coming. Ntombi ran to her and they had a loud but beautiful reunion. We got into the car and drove to the mall. We went to the Louis Vuitton shop first because they wanted bags for tonight. Ntombi hesitated a bit. I took a seat and let them look around.

Ntombi: "I have a question, these bags, do they come with a lifetime guarantee and insurance cause they are fucken expensive." She said and Gugu laughed.

Gugu: "They are nice though."

Ntombi: "Yep but you will need 24 hour security for each of them."

Sales Assistant: "Sweetie, I think these are out of your price range, maybe you can try Mr Price, I am sure it will be better for you." She said to them before walking over to me with a smile on her face.

"Sir, how can I help you today?
See anything you like?"

Me: "Yes actually I do. But dont worry your colleague will help me."
I call another saleslady over.

Lady 2: "Yes sir."

Me: "Please help my sisters over there. They are looking for bags and possibly even shoes. Please

get them whatever they want."
I look at the first lady. "Money is not a problem."

Lady 2: "Of course sir. Glad to help." She walks to where Gugu and Ntombi are. I turn back to the first lady.

Me: "The next time you decide to disrespect people remember this, you work here, this is not your father's shop. Do your job and leave the judgment at the door. Are we clear?" She nods and I go back to replying my emails and she goes to wherever, I don't care as long as it's far from me or the girls. Mxm.

When we are done shopping we bought takeaways and drive to Dainfern since they'll be here till the party tonight. We got to the house and found Sihle and Banele in the kitchen cooking.

Me: "Hey."

Sihle: "Brotherman."

Gugu: "We bought takeaways."

She says showing them the food.

Banele: "Thank God for you

Gugzin. Sihle was about to kill me with his food." They take out the takeaways and eat. It's nice to see Gugu laugh and be a kid. I see Ntombi look at her and wipe a tear from her eyes. I dont know

how long it will take but she needs to let go of her self-inflicted guilt.

I say my goodbyes and drive to the hotel to see how its going. I find Kazi busy shouting orders at the staff. She has appointed herself as the event planner.

Me: "Hey sis." She gives me a hug.

Kazi: "I am so tired. I didnt think planning this dinner would be this exhausting."

Me: "You seem to be enjoying it though."

Kazi: "I am. I might just even turn this into a business."

Me: "Good. That means I will

save money when you start planning our wedding."

Kazi: "Heck no. Family or not business is business. Everyone pays. Have you seen your father?"

Me: "Not today. Why are you avoiding him anyways?"

Kazi: "Promise you won't get mad."

Me: "I will try not to."

Kazi: "Dad saw me and Sizwe having sex on the kitchen counter. Now I cant look at him in the eyes." I want to laugh but I control myself.

Me: "You and Sizwe need to respect dads space. You cant be

fucking anywhere you want."

Kazi: "I know. I didnt know dad had installed cameras in the house."

Me: "Cameras or not, you shouldn't have done that. Anyways I need to go try and convince Lando to come to dinner with me." I give her a peck on the cheek and leave. Now to convince that anti social wife of mine to go out.



LANDO

A lot of people I know usually look forward to their birthdays. They are always excited about it but not me. This is the first birthday

I have truly celebrated. Not the fake forced to celebrate type of thing but to truly celebrate.

There is a lot that I am thankful for.

After breakfast the boys decided to braai. Although Philani disappeared saying he had some business to take care of I still had a great time. My friends showed up and gave me some gifts. Even Ntombi and Gugu called me to wish me a happy birthday.

After the others left I decided to take a shower and curl up on the bed with a good book. I was

just about to start my book when Philani walked in.

Philani: "Hey, why are you in bed?" He asks almost like he is shocked to see me there.

Me: "That is what people usually do in the evening, they get into bed and sleep."

Philani: "Not today you are not." He pulls the covers away. I am only in my underwear and one of his vests. He sees that and he walks over to me with a smirk on his face.

Me: "What are you doing?" I can feel myself drip into my underwear. He starts kissing me

from my feet and goes all the way up to my face. I let out a little moan with every kiss he plants on me. He gets to my face and kisses me so passionately my hands involuntarily go to the back of his head drawing him in. He pulls out when things get heated.

Philani: "You need to get ready we are going out for dinner." He says before walking away to the bathroom. He leaves me here dripping wet. Mxm. If he thinks I am going anywhere with him after this then he doesn't know me very well.

I pull the covers from the floor and cover myself. I take my book and start reading. He comes out a few minutes later from the bathroom stark naked. He seems shocked to see me still in bed. I look at him and forget that I am angry and just admire his physique. He is really hot and well endowed and all I want to do right now is have him buried inside of me. He shakes his head and walks to the closet with my eyes following his every movement.

He comes back with a black dress and puts it on the bed.

Philani: "Get dressed we are leaving in a few minutes." He snaps his fingers in front of my face. "Stop drooling and get dressed."

Me: "Where are we going?" I ask coming back to my senses.

Philani: "I told you, dinner. And I am not taking no for an answer." He walks back to the closet to get dressed. I decide to indulge him and put the dress on. It's nice but it's a little tight around my abdomen and if I am going to be eating I need room to breathe. I take it off and walk back to the closet to get another dress.

It's also black but it's a little stretchy so my expanding tummy can breathe. He zips me up and I put my shoes on. I do a little makeup and leave my hair flowing. I need to change it soon and go back to my braids.

When we are done we leave. He won't tell me where we are going no matter how many times i ask and beg so i decide to let it go. We got to the hotel where we first had our "date" if i can call it that. We are led to the same private dining area we used before and many times after that. We get inside and it's dark. It's not

loadshedding because the lobby has lights. He walks with me till I am in the centre of the room.

Philani: "Let me see if the lights are working." He tries to leave but I hold on tight to his hand.

"Lando I am coming back."

Me: "I am going with you." He laughs.

Philani: "Fine." He holds me close to him. "Lights!" He shouts and the lights immediately go on.

While I am amazed at that I hear the deafening sound of people screaming "Surprise!"

He takes a step back and I look around me. As beautiful as this

room is it's the people in it that make it extremely amazing. My whole family is here including my dad and grandma. Gogo Biyela is also here and so many of the Biyela family. Basically this is what love looks like. Everything seems to be happening in slow motion, even the tears falling down my face.

INSERT 52

This chapter of my life is called..... Well I cant decide between Gratitude, Happiness, Love, Content, Family, Blessed and

Joy, so I will just bundle it all into one. I am happy and overflowing with joy seeing both my families laugh and talking to each other. I sit on this little throne that has been set up for me with my gold crown on. Yep Kazi went all out. I have my husband on my right and my father on my left.

Philani holds my hand under the table and looks at me with concern in his eyes.

Philani: "Are you okay?" I smile.

Me: "I am good. Thank you for this, i know i said i didnt want a party but this is nice, thank you."
He lifts my hand up to his lips and

kisses it.

Philani: "Anything for you wifey."
He smiles.

After dinner is served the party moves to the makeshift dancefloor and everyone dances the night away. My feet are killing me already so I decide to take my shoes off and sit on the side. I notice my dad's ex wife coming over to me. She grabs a seat next to me. They said her name was Mam Busisiwe.

Mam'Busi: "Hey, tired already?"

Me: "Yeah, if I had known I would have worn sneakers. I can't believe gogo is still standing. It's

way past midnight." She laughs.
Mam'Busi: "That one doesn't want to get old. Or maybe it's the excitement of having you back."

Me: "Maybe. I cant believe I missed out on so much love." She looks away like she feels guilty about something.

Mam'Busi: "I am sorry." She says looking back at me. I look at her waiting for her to continue. "If I hadn't convinced your father to let you go none of this would have happened."

Me: "I dont think he blames you for it."

Mam'Busi: "No, but I blame myself. I saw the pain he went through. You were his little princess and I convinced him to let you go and he hasn't been the same since."

Me: "Is that why you got divorced?"

Mam'Busi: "Partly, I just couldn't stand seeing him in pain and knowing I contributed to it."

Me: "That's noble but you can't blame yourself. I am pretty sure my mother let some tears flow and reached out to the mother in you. She's manipulative like that."

Mam'Busi: "How is she anyway? I

haven't seen her since we got here."

Me: "And you won't see her. We are not that close."

Mam'Busi: "I'm sorry." I laugh. This woman somehow knows how to apologize even for shit she had nothing to do with.

Me: "You are not Jesus, stop apologizing for things that are out of your control." Now it's her turn to laugh. "But now that I am back, is there a chance of a reunion?"

Mam'Busi: "Don't go playing matchmaker. It's over between your father and I."

Me: "And yet you are here. He can't seem to keep his eyes off of you. And you blush everytime he looks at you. Which makes me believe that what you two have is more than just co-parenting."

Mam'Busi: "Babygirl....."

Me: "I promise I will be a good stepdaughter. I wouldn't mind having a cool stepmom like you."

She laughs.

Mam'Busi: "You are impossible you know that. So how far along are you?" I swallow.

Me: "Nice, changing the subject. That's clever. Far along with what?"

Mam'Busi: "I have been pregnant three times and I have been around pregnant women, I know a pregnancy glow when i see one." I smile. I guess theres no point lying about it.

Me: "12 weeks."

Mam'Busi: "Congratulations. Come on let's go dance some more. We cant let that old woman beat us."

Me: "We are not done with the stepmummy topic just so you know." She laughs and I let her lead me to the dancefloor.

I woke up the next morning and my poor husband was busy snoring

next to me. Thank God for this pregnancy otherwise I would be right there with him dying of ibhabhalazi. I get up and go to the bathroom. I pee and take a shower. I get out, lotion and get dressed. I decide on wearing Philani's Nike short and tshirt. I wear my slippers and head downstairs. I find aunty Kholiwe and aunt Bonakele in the kitchen making breakfast while gogo Biyela is sitting in the lounge with Bab'Zweli having tea. In my tired state I forgot that they slept here after the party and

it's a little too late to rush back upstairs and change.

Bonakele: "Is this really the time for umakoti to wake up? And why are you wearing that when your in-laws are here."

Gogo: "Hhaybo Bonakele this is her house she can wear whatever she wants and wake up anytime."

I go to the lounge and greet Gogo and Bab'Zweli.

Me: "Ngyacolisa (I am sorry) gogo I forgot you were here I will go and change."

Bab'Zweli: "No need wena Koti.

This is your house and I am sure your husband likes seeing you like

that." I chuckle and leave them and go to the kitchen.

Me: "Aunty, sanibonani. What can I do to help?"

Bonakele: "If you had wanted to help you would have woken up early like a proper Makoti not a spoilt golddigging brat." She says taking a bowl of scrambled eggs to the dining room. I decide to make Philani Faith's hangover remedy.

Kholiwe: "You know if you stab her we can just blame the pregnancy. Hormones can drive some women crazy so it would be easy to get away with it." I look at aunt

Kholiwe and just burst out laughing. This woman knows how to bring a smile to my face.

Me: "Maybe I should. Where is her agent of Satan of a daughter?"

Kholiwe: "Oh that one. She didn't want to come because she is pregnant but her mother forced her to come. She slept in Dainfern. She faked some cramps so she wouldn't go to the party."

I want to laugh at the way aunt Kholiwe is so nonchalant about this, it's like she has been expecting it.

Me: "What did her mother say?"

Kholiwe: "What can she say. She

keeps shielding and protecting that child forgetting that she won't always be here and she does all this knowing mummy dearest will be there to pick up the pieces. I mean who in their right mind has 4 kids before even turning 23." She sighs. "Forget that one go wake Philani up so we can eat." I pour the smoothie in a glass and walk back upstairs and find Philani groaning on the bed. Me: "I told you to stop drinking but you wouldn't listen to me. Drink this." I hand him the glass and he drinks. Philani: "This tastes like shit."

Me: "I know. Breakfast is ready. Go get dressed so we can go down."

He gets up and goes to the bathroom. I decide to go to the closet and change into a denim skirt and a tshirt.

Philani comes out of the bathroom and takes the short I was wearing and puts it on and he takes a vest and wears it and we walk back downstairs. We sit down and have breakfast.

After breakfast we all drive to Dainfen where we are to have lunch with both families before they all head back home.



PHILANI

We drove to Dainfern with aunt Kholiwe and gogo while Bab'Zweli and aunt Bonakele drove together. I don't know what aunt Bonakele's problem is with Lando but I just hope for her sake she doesn't stress her out cause if anything happens to my child I will descend on her like a tonne of bricks.

We get to Dainfern and my dad and Bab'Shongwe are already braaiing meat outside while the others make salads and pap. I walk out to see my dad soon as

Bab'Shongwe makes his way in with some meat.

Me: "Hi dad."

Dad: "Hey. wheres my grandbaby?"

Me: "Inside being fussed over by everyone." He laughs.

Dad: "A true Biyela man. He will break hearts."

Me: "Dont let Lando hear you say that." He laughs again. "You do realize Kazi and Sizwe are trying so hard to avoid being anywhere close to you?" He laughs again.

Dad: "She and Sizwe think I saw them having sex."

Me: "Didnt you?"

Dad: "Of course not. My security told me about it and I had no desire to see my daughter being fucked. Although I did tell them I saw them so now they are walking on eggshells around me."

Me: "Dad!" He laughs.

Dad: "What? I am five to retirement and I need something to keep me busy."

Me: "And playing with your daughters feelings is keeping you busy?"

Dad: "Not really, but it's fun to watch. Help me get the meat inside." He hands me a tray of wors and I take it inside the

house. I walk back outside and find Lando's dad by the pool area.

Me: "Hi!"

Mr S: "Hey, your father's house is beautiful."

Me: "It is. So I was hoping to talk to you about something."

Mr S: "I am listening."

Me: "Uhm. I uh I was hoping to talk to you about Lobola." He turns to look at me.

Mr S: "Arent you already married?"

Me: "We are, but not traditionally. The first Lobola we did wasnt really done right that's why I wanted to find you so we can do

things the right way."

Mr S: "What about Lando's mother, didn't you at least try and pay lobola to her?"

Me: "No, and Lando would die before she let's her mother accept her lobola."

Mr S: "Fine, do things the right way and I will be happy to help. But I still want to know what happened between Lando and her mother."

Me: "I am sure when she is ready she will tell you all about it."

Mr S: "Yeah, do you know where her mother stays? I have questions that only she can

answer."

Me: "Of course, I will text you her address."

We stand there and talk about some other stuff. Turns out he is a Kaizer Chiefs fan, just like Lando. We were busy talking when Lando joined us.

Lando: "My two favorite men, getting along, laughing and talking, what more could a girl want."

Mr S: "There's no getting along, he is a Pirates supporter. Only losers support Pirates." They both laugh at me.

Lando: "See, I told you."

Me: "Say that again the next time we beat you."

Lando: "In your dreams." She hooks her arms with ours and we go back inside to have lunch.



NARRATED

In Mbuzini, Siphho and Busisiwe Shongwe have just parked the car outside Nelsiwe's house.

Busi: "Are you sure you want to do this?"

Siphho: "I need answers and she is the only one who has them."

Busi: "Before we go in I need to tell you something."

Sipho: "What?"

Busi: "I found out why Lando and Nelsiwe don't get along. But you have to promise not to ask Lando about it. Until she decides to tell you herself." He takes a deep breath.

Sipho: "Okay, I am listening."

Busi: "I said Promise Mtimandze!"

Sipho: "Fine. I promise."

Busi: "Nelsiwe's husband raped Lando, when she was 12 years old and Nelsiwe protected him."

Sipho: "WHAT?"

Busi: "Yeah, apparently he continued for a while until Lando ran away from home when she

was 13, she lived on the streets for a while before Mr Biyela found her and took care of her." She turns to look at him and she sees the tears running down his face and his hands holding the steering wheel so tight his knuckles are beginning to turn white. She reaches out and touches his hands.

Sipho: "I failed her. I failed my baby." He sobs with his head on top of his hands on the steering wheel.

Busi: "You didn't fail her, Nelsiwe did, she's the one who failed to protect her."

Sipho: "I should have tried harder to find her."

Busi: "You did the best that you could." He looks up, wipes his tears and looks at her.

Sipho: "How do you know all this? Did she tell you?"

Busi: "No, it turns out Buli speaks a lot when she is drunk. Ask the right questions and she will spill.

Sipho: "Are you sure it has nothing to do with the fact that you are a cop who can pretty much drag the truth out of anybody." She laughs.

Busi: "That too. So are you sure you want to talk to her?"

Sipho: "I am." He wipes his tears and they get out of the car and walk to the house. They knock and Nelsiwe opens. Her surprise or shock is registered on her face when she sees the people she never thought she would see ever again.

Busi: "Hello Nelsiwe, can we come in?"

Nelsiwe: "I am sure whatever you want to say you can say it from where you are standing."

Sipho: "Are you sure you want your neighbors hearing about your rapist husband?"

Nelsiwe: "Dont you dare."

Sipho: "Dare what Nelsiwe? Talk about how you failed to do the one thing you were supposed to do, protect your child?" She opens the burglar gate and let's them in. They walk to the lounge and take a seat.

Nelsiwe: "I dont know what Lando told you but she lied. Vusi didnt do anything to her. She cooked up that story to cover up her hoe ways."

Busi: "Do you really believe that Nelsiwe or you tell yourself that just so you can sleep better at night?" She doesn't answer them.

Sipho: "Why did you take her from

me Nelsiwe, you knew how much I loved her, how much my family loved her. Was this your way of trying to punish me for not rekindling our affair?"

Nelsiwe: "Don't flatter yourself Siphho, not everything revolves around." He gets up and stands before her.

Siphho: "You are just as selfish as you were back then. You want everything to be about you. You abandoned your child with me and when you realized I wasn't coming to beg you, you came up with another plan. Take her from me and disappear. It worked for a

while, drove me nuts not knowing where my daughter was, if she was okay, if she had clothes on her back and food in her stomach. And now I find out she was homeless for a while, all because you failed to protect her. But you know what, she found her way back home. Back to the people that love her for real. And there is absolutely nothing you can do to keep her away from me now. She is back home. And you are slowly losing all the people around you. Karma is such a bitch." He walks out.

Busi gets up from the couch and

walks to Nelsiwe.

Nelsiwe: "I think you should leave."

Busi: "I don't understand why you have a hard time believing your own child. You are a nurse who has done so many rape kits on victims of sexual abuse but you couldn't even do that for your own child."

Nelsiwe: "I think you should leave."

Busi: "You know what I think, I think you do believe Lando, but your pride won't allow you to admit it. Such a pity you are denying yourself a chance to know the incredible woman Lando has

become." She turns and walks out, leaving Nelsiwe standing there. She walks to the car and gets in and Sipho drives off.

INSERT 53

I love being pregnant. It seems the pregnancy gods have been quite generous. I am halfway through my second trimester and all seems to be going good. Except maybe my craving for chilli things. Everything has to have chilli sauce, even something as simple as a sandwich. I know, disgusting but what baby wants baby gets.

And thanks to this baby my libido has shot up to its ultimate high. And right now I just put Theo to bed and I am laying on the bed with my clit throbbing but my stupid husband is not home to quench the fire burning between my thighs. I call him and he picks up just before the call goes to voicemail.

Philani: "Hey baby."

Me: "Where are you and when are you coming home?" He laughs.

Philani: "Let me guess, theres a fire that needs quenching."

Me: "Please come home." I say pretending to sob.

Philani: "You know I am beginning to feel used. These days I am like your obedient side dish that has to be readily available for sex."

Me: "Would you rather I have a side dish to help you?" He laughs.

Philani: "Stop trying to threaten me, it won't work."

Me: "Why?"

Philani: "Because you are way too stubborn for your own good, no sane man can put up with your crazy ass." The bedroom door opens and he walks in looking all types of delicious. "Besides that he wouldn't live long enough to get your panties off." I get up

from the bed and throw myself at him.

Me: "I am so happy to see you."

He carries me to the bed and lays me down while planting kisses all over me.

Philani: "I have something to tell you." He says between kisses.

Me: "What?"

Philani: "Your family representative, he said he was a Gozolo (head negotiator) went to Mandawe to deliver a stick stating how many cows your father wants for you so next week we are going to your home to deliver the cows." I stop

moving my hands all over him.

Me: "But what about negotiating. Isn't that supposed to happen first?"

Philani: "I don't know I don't care, all I know is that next week we are delivering cows to your father and apparently we need to get there Friday before midnight." He gets up and takes off his suit. I sit up on the bed and watch him. Once he is fully naked he walks to the bathroom and has a shower. I decide to call my dad.

Dad: "Hey princess." I laugh, that has become my nickname that my dad uses no matter how many

times I tell him I am grown now.

Me: "You do know grown people like me aren't called princess anymore."

Dad: "Well I never got to call you princess when you were little so I am making up for lost time." I smile and just shake my head.

Me: "Okay then, so Philani tells me they are coming home next weekend."

Dad: "Yes they are which is why you need to be home at least by Wednesday cause I know you have to work."

Me: "You know he is Zulu right. I am not sure how things will be done."

Dad: "That will be discussed next weekend when both families are here in terms of what needs to be done going forward." I nod my head as if he can see me.

After discussing everything he let me talk to my grandmother. I miss them but i will see them next week so it's good.

I hang up and wait for Philani to finish with his shower. He comes out with a towel around his waist and throws himself on the bed.

Me: "Are you hungry? I can make you something."

Philani: "No I am good, I had something at my dads." He takes

a deep breath. "I found out something."

Me: "What?"

Philani: "Rafael and Raul are missing?"

Me: "What?"

Philani: "Yeah. Apparently they have been missing for a while."

Me: "Do you think they are coming to get Theo?"

Philani: "I wouldn't put it past Rafael but Raul swore he wanted to keep him safe too so he might not come here."

Me: "Philani....."

Philani: "Relax, I already have guards waiting for you. I am not

going to let anything happen to you or Theo. I promise!" He lifts himself up and plants a very passionate kiss on my lips. "Now let's quench that thirst you had." I smile as I allow him to distract me. Scared as I am about the Rodriguez brothers suddenly going MIA I have faith and trust that my husband will protect our son.



PHILANI

I woke up early in the morning, careful not to wake Lando up. I took a quick shower and wore some brown chinos and a black golf

tshirt and some sneakers. I drove to the Lounge where I was meeting the squad. I got there and Sbu was already waiting inside so we waited for the others. Eventually they showed up.

Nate: "Gentlemen, we are gathered here today to officially handover the running of our enterprise to the one and only Razor Blade Mogale and Sbusiso Matrix Mashaba." Razor and Sbu mock bowed and we laughed.

Lindani: "I cant believe the ride is coming to an end."

Razor: "Not technically." we laugh

again.

Me: "Seriously though, what are we going to do with all this free time?"

Nate: "Well you have a wife and kid and another on the way. You have a wedding to plan so you are good. Lindani has finally handed in his player card even though he is yet to get laid." We laugh but Lindani doesn't.

Lindani: "Please leave me and my blue balls alone."

Nate: "Sizwe has a girlfriend, which I still don't understand, how she agreed to be yours is still a mystery to everyone."

Sbu: "The answer to that is simple, Mhlab'uyalingana." We all burst out laughing.

Sizwe: "Really Trevor Noah, wheres your girlfriend?"

Me: "And then theres you mlungu Omnyama, when are you officially wifing Buli."

Nate: "Ah ah dont rush me. Let's focus on you for now. So what's happening with the Rodriguez brothers?" We all turned to look at Sbu since he has been trying to trace them since we found out they were missing.

Sbu: "Well my guy in Miami hasn't found anything. Its honestly like

they just evaporated. None of their credit cards have been used in three days, their passports have not been stamped."

Me: "What if they are using false passports and cash instead of cards?"

Sbu: "They could be but we have hacked into many of the street cameras all over the States but nothing has popped up yet."

Me: "You will let us know when something comes up right?"

Sbu: "Will do."

Me: "Gentlemen I have to go to work. We will talk later." We fist bumped and I left.

I decided to go past chicken lickin to get wings for Lando. I then went to KFC and got more wings since she sometimes cant decide what she wants. I got home and found her in the kitchen feeding Theo.

Me: "Hi baby." I kissed her on the cheek.

Lando: "What did you bring me?"

Me: "Wow. No hello hubby, how are you today?" She smiles, grabs my face and kisses me all over. She let's go after perking my lips.

Lando: "Now what did you bring me?" I give up. I hand her the chicken lickin and she looks like

she is about to cry.

Me: "Baby what's wrong? You dont want them?"

Lando: "No they are fine thanks, I just wanted dunked wings." I see a tear fall from her eye. I take a deep breath and just remind myself that I have 4 more months to go and I am home free. I give her the KFC packet and her face lights up.

Lando: "You are the best husband ever." She kisses me before taking a dunked wing and throwing it in her mouth. She closes her eyes as she savors the

wing like it's got some magic in it.
Women are so dramatic.



BULI

My girls are coming over to my place, well Nate's place but you know. Anyways we are having a mini celebration, my sister wrote her final examination yesterday, soon she will be getting her LLB degree and her path to independence becomes brighter and shinier.

I decided to get a caterer who provided all her favorites and I even bought a whole lot of

champagne, even non-alcoholic one since Lando is pregnant. All my friends have babies and I have decided I will be the cool aunt who spoils their kids. Motherhood is not in my cards. Having had a mother like mine can put anyone off of having kids.

I hear the doorbell ring and I literally run to open the door. I see my sister and we just scream and run into each others arms. We hug for a while and somehow the tears flow, happy tears though. We pull apart and look at each other and smile and then hug

again before I pull her into the house.

Me: "I am so proud of you." She laughs.

Nqobile: "Calm down, it's too early to celebrate." I just roll my eyes.

Me: "If you weren't as smart as you are then I would believe that. But this is you we are talking about I know you will ace that exam and then you will be a step closer to being free."

The doorbell rings and before I can even answer it Lando and Faith walk in. Lando has a gavel in her hand and Faith has a Judges robe on. I wonder where

they got that. Even before anyone can say anything Faith drapes the robe around Ndobile and Lando hands her the gavel. She laughs and looks at me but I just shrug.

Ndobile: "Guys, what's this?"

Faith: "For the future supreme court judge."

Ndobile: "You do know I want to be a lawyer not a judge right?"

Lando: "Every judge had to study law and become a lawyer before they became judges."

Ndobile: "Can we atleast try and aim for magistrate, supreme court seems so far away."

Me: "Please, not that theres anything wrong with being a magistrate but that will just be a step towards the top."

Nqobile: "Thank you guys for your faith in me. I really appreciate it." We group hug.

Lando: "Okay I am hungry, what is eatable in this house?" She asks walking to the kitchen. She comes back with a plate full of food, you would think she doesn't get fed at her own house the way she eats. We decide to also dish up as well. We eat our food and pop the champagne and dance around the lounge.

After sometime we throw ourselves on the couch and watch a movie. We hear the doorbell ring and Faith goes to open since she is close to the door. She comes back and sits down on the couch. I look behind her and see my mother walk into my house. I get up and look at her. What is she doing here?

Me: "Ma, what are you doing here?" She walks over to me and slaps the shit out of me. Nqobile quickly gets up and stands between us and Lando and Faith do the same.

Ma: "Your brother is languishing in

jail and you two are busy throwing parties. How selfish can you two be?"

Nqobile: "Hhaybo mama, what do you expect us to do, go babysit him in jail?"

Ma: "Dont try me Nqobile. Your sister could have done something but she chose not to."

Nqobile: "You mean the same way you chose not to do anything when utata sold her off to the highest bidder? Or when you said nothing when he sold me off?" She chuckles.

Ma: "You are full of shit Nqobile. You have a husband who provides

you with everything you want. You drive a nice car, live in a fancy home and you are going to act like what Ndoba is going through is a game. Really Ndobile? Really?" I pull myself out of the zombie state I have been in since that hot slap and look straight at my mother after moving the girls from standing between us.

Me: "You know you are the selfish one. Ndobile is right, you dont care about us, you promised when you married dad that you would love and protect both Ndobile and Ndoba like they are your own flesh and blood, instead you let dad

force her into marrying a man she didn't love and you babied Nqoba to such a point that he can't even think for himself, a grown man like him still putting his hand out for daddy dearest to take care of him. Well newsflash mummy, your husband is gone and Nqoba needs to grow some balls and face this like a man." She looks at me shocked, as if she is digesting all that I have said. "Can I get him out of jail? Yes. Do I want to get him out of jail? Heck no. So if you are here to plead on his behalf I would suggest you go back home cause it won't happen."

She clears her throat like she is getting ready to say something but doesn't say it. And then I remember, she didn't tell us why she was here, her little rant only happened because we were having fun.

Nqobile: "Why are you here mama?"

Ma: "We need money for food and school fees for the kids." I laugh.

Me: "Of course, that's all I am to you, a cash cow. The only time you even think about calling or visiting me is when you need money. Really ma? Is that all I am to you?"

She says nothing and I can feel the tears threatening to fall. I rush upstairs to our bedroom. I open the safe and take out two stacks of cash amounting to fifty thousand rands. I close the safe and go back downstairs. I shove the money in her hands.

Me: "Consider this the last money you will ever receive from me.

From this day forward, dont ever ask me for shit. I am done paying for you to give a shit about me, I didnt ask to be born you made that choice. Now please leave my house and never set foot here

until you decide to actually be a real mother to us."

She takes the money and shoves it in her bag before walking out. The mood in the room has changed from happy to somber. We sit back down and sip on our drinks in silence like we just smoked a joint.

Lando: "Some say a mother's love is a divine blessing, others have testified to it. So what did we do wrong to be given such shitty mothers?" She asks to no one in particular. Or maybe she is just thinking out loud. But she has a point though, not many people

talk about toxic mother's and their effect on their children and yet we live it every single day. Maybe someday God will reveal to us why he entrusted us to these women, until then we live our best lives and be happy.

I get up and take the champagne and fill everyone's glass. They look at me like I have lost my mind.

Me: "What we won't do is allow that woman to ruin this day.

Today is about you Ndobile and no one else." They smile and get up with their glasses raised. "To the most amazing woman I have

ever had the privilege to know, to the strides that await you and to your bright ass future, I have my shades ready." They laugh.

"But seriously though, I love you." We toast and get into a group hug.

This right here is what I hope my own daughter gets to experience, should I decide to have one. A love so strong that no one can break it.

INSERT 54

Philani decided to drive me home on Tuesday, Although he couldn't

stay he insisted on driving us since apparently pregnant women aren't allowed to drive. I decided to take Theo with me. Five days without him will drive me nuts.

I woke up when I heard the door open and my aunt Norah walked in with breakfast, she is my dad's younger sister. I sat up on the bed and she sat next to me and handed me the breakfast.

Norah: "Hi babygirl, did you sleep okay?" I smiled.

Me: "I did thank you, although the pampering is sweet it's not really necessary." She laughs and moves to sit with her head on

the headboard like me.

Norah: "Of course it is. We never got a chance to spoil you when you were little so now we are going to make up for it."

Me: "Thank you."

Norah: "No need to thank me."

Me: "So where is Theo, last time I checked he was sleeping next to me next thing he is nowhere to be found." She laughed out loud.

Norah: "That one is being paraded all over the community by Siyanda. She thinks he is a toy but he seems to be enjoying it."

We sat on the bed as she told me all the latest gossip. She is really

funny. When I was done eating she took the tray to the kitchen and I decided to take a shower before joining everyone. When I was done I decided to call Gugu to find out if she told her principal that she has to come home, they have extra classes during the first half of the holidays and she decided to join them. I think it's less about the classes and more about her squad. They seem tight.

Her phone went straight to voicemail so I decided to call Philani. His phone went unanswered so I decided to call

the office. His PA answered and put me through to him.

Philani: "Hi wifey, miss me already?"

Me: "I do, come back." He laughed.

Philani: "I will be there tomorrow."

Thursday, I thought they were coming on Friday.

Me: "What happened to Friday?"

Philani: "Friday is too far I miss you."

Me: "You know for someone who was ready to pay me off you really do this husbanding thing very well. I am impressed." He laughs.

Philani: "Well that's because you

wife very well. So what's happening, wheres my boy?"

Me: "Winning hearts all over the community. Listen can you please try and call Gugu, i have been trying to call her but her phone keeps going straight to voicemail. I am getting worried."

Philani: "Relax, I will call her school I am sure she is just busy with school work."

Me: "Thank you. I love you."

Philani: "I love you too, I have to go okay my next meeting is in two minutes. I will call you later about Gugu."

Me: "Ok. Bye." I hung up.

I got dressed and went to the kitchen but there was no one, I looked around the house and I was alone. I went back to the kitchen and made myself a cup of tea. I sat down at the table sipping on the hot beverage since it was a bit chilly outside. Aunt Norah came in and took me to the outside kitchen which had a blazing hot coal stove. Siyanda and Theo were back from their little trip.

I sat down and Theo crawled to me and I picked him up. Siyanda put her hands in her pockets and put some notes on the table in

front of me. I looked at her waiting for an explanation.

Siyanda: "That is Theo's money to buy sweets."

Me: "Where did it come from?"

Siyanda: "From most of the people we met. He is way too cute for his own good and people love cute babies." We all laughed. There was almost four hundred rand on the table. "Oh and even gogo Sigwane gave him the two hundred." I was busy smiling I didn't notice the mood went from ten to zero real quick.

Gogo: "Why would you let that woman anywhere near my

grandbaby?" Ok I am confused. What is going on right now? As i was busy trying to digest that aunt Norah just took the two hundred rand note and opened the stove before throwing it inside and letting it burn.

I was in so much shock i didnt know what to think. Aunt Norah clicked her tongue and took the rest of the money and threw it in the fire too. Siyanda and I looked at each other in shock, I mean I have never in my life thought of ever burning money, not even the old one cent coins. Siyanda just

clapped her hands once and walked out.

Me: "Ok what was that about?"

Gogo: "Nothing for you to worry about dear, but whatever happens stay away from that woman, she is Satans twin sister." Ok.

I decide to let go of whatever this is and just enjoy myself.



PHILANI

After Lando's call I went into my meeting a bit distracted. Gugu never switches her phone off no matter what. She is supposed to

come back tomorrow so we can drive down together. I tried calling her but I got her voicemail too.

After the meeting I decided to call the school to find out what happened and where she might be. The Secretary put me through to the principal's office.

Principal: "Mr Biyela what can I do for you?"

Me: "Hi, I am trying to get a hold of Gugu but her phone is off, it's been off for a while now, do you perhaps know where she might be?"

Principal: "Oh, Gugu left already,

her uncle came to pick her up."

Me: "I am sorry, what uncle?"

Principal: "A man came here looking for her, I asked Gugu if she knows the man and she said yes it's her uncle. He said her mother was not feeling well so she had to go with him."

Me: "And when did all this happen?"

Principal: "Yesterday afternoon."

Me: "I know you have security cameras so please send me a picture of the man ASAP, we will come back to why you allowed a child to go with a stranger when you have the names of her

guardians. For now I need to find her so please send me that photo as in yesterday."

Principal: "Mr Biyela I....."

Me: "I need that photo, Now!" I hung up.

I dont know any of Gugu's uncles but I know not a single one of them knows where she goes to school so how did that man get to her? I decided to cancel the rest of my meetings and go to the lounge. Hopefully by the time I get there I will have a photo of this uncle so Sbu can run his face through the face recognition system he uses.

I get into my car and drive off. I can't tell Lando about Gugu because she will be worried sick and I can't have her stressing herself, especially right now. I get to the lounge and go straight to the office, luckily it's midday so it's not too busy, just the lunch crowd. I find Sbu in the office.

Sbu: "Bafo, this is a surprise, are you here to check up on us?"

Me: "No man, I need your help. I can't find Gugu and her principal says some man claiming to be her uncle picked her up from school yesterday."

Sbu: "Ok let me try and trace her

phone."

Me: "Her phone is off."

Sbu: "Her phone has a tracker. It will work for about 72 hours after the phone has been switched off."

Me: "Ok then." He fires up his laptop and starts working. My phone beeps and I check, it's an email from the principal with a pdf attached to it. I immediately forward it to Sbu.

He does what he needs to do while I pour myself a glass of whiskey and sip it slowly trying to figure out how I will tell Lando about this.



NARRATED

In White River Nelspruit, Gugu is sitting in a bedroom looking outside the window when her uncle walks in with a tray of food and places it on the small table on the side of the bed and he takes a seat on the bed.

Uncle: "You have to eat."

Gugu: "I need my phone." She says without even looking at him.

Uncle: "Not until you tell me where my brother is."

Gugu: "I don't know where he is, but I do know that if Lando can't get a hold of me she will get

worried." He chuckles.

Uncle: "You really think I am afraid of her? Sorry to disappoint you." She turns to look at him.

Gugu: "Its not her you should be afraid of."

Uncle: "You and Lando made up some bullshit story about Vusi raping you, and then all of a sudden he dissapeared without a trace. Now, theres a letter supposedly written by him as a confession. I may be a lot of things but stupid is not one of them. I know Lando had something to do with his disappearance and you also know

what happened to him."

Gugu: "What do you mean theres a confession letter?"

Uncle: "Oh Lando didn't tell you?"

Gugu: "So he has admitted to all that he did to us yet you still dont believe us."

Uncle: "Vusi is my brother, we grew up together and I know he can never do that to anyone, let alone his own child."

Gugu: "Clearly you didnt know the man as well as you think you do. He told me what he did to Lando, and he also told me about Gogo's death, he might not have said much about that but I know he

killed her." He gets up from the bed and walks over to her.

Uncle: "This little smear campaign you are on will not work. My brother is a respected man and no one will believe the lies you are busy spewing. Now you will tell me where my brother is or I will get my friends to do to you what you are busy accusing my brother of and then you will cry for something real." He walks out and Gugu let's the tears fall.

She sits down on the bed with her knees on her chest. She says a prayer as her knees get wetter from her falling tears. She cries

herself to sleep. When she wakes up the room is dark and the sun has set. She takes the cold food and tries to eat but she cant.

Meanwhile in Mbuzini Philani, Nate and Sbu knock on Nelsiwe's door after driving down from Joburg while Lindani and Sizwe drove to Nelspruit since that's where Gugu's phone was last located at before it went dead.

Ntombi opens the door and she is surprised to see them there.

Ntombi: "Bhuti Philani, what are you doing here?"

Philani: "Is your mother in?"

Ntombi: "Yeah she is inside, come in." They follow her in and find Nelsiwe sitting on the couch watching TV. "Ma, you have visitors." She turns around and gets up from the couch when she sees the trio.

Nelsiwe: "What do you want?"

Philani: "Do you know this man?" He shows them a picture of the man.

Ntombi: "That's uncle Siphso, he's my dad's younger brother."

Philani: "Do you know where he lives or where I can find him?"

Ntombi: "He stays at....."

Nelsiwe: "Ntombi shut up. Nine

what do you want from him? Do you want to make him disappear like you made Vusi disappear?"

Nate: "If he even touches a hair on Gugu's head disappearing will be the last of his worries."

Ntombi: "What's that supposed to mean?"

Sbu: "Your uncle went to Gugu's school and took her, we don't know where they are and we need to find her."

Ntombi: "I will grab my jacket and I'll take you to his house."

She says walking to her room.

Nelsiwe: "Ntombi, if you walk out that door don't bother coming

back." Ntombi stops and looks back at her mother.

Ntombi: "You are not serious right now."

Nelsiwe: "All your uncle is trying to do is find your father, and if Gugu can help him then we should let him do what he needs to do."

Ntombi: "I really cant believe this, papa is gone, he left us, the letter he wrote is proof enough that he is too much of a coward to come back and face his demons. He's probably sipping on cocktails in Zanzibar. You know how short tempered uncle Siphos is, if anything happens to Gugu again

I will never forgive you." She leaves and comes back with a jacket. They leave with Ntombi but Nate stays behind.

Nelsiwe: "Your friends are leaving you. You should go."

Nate: "Not yet. You and I need to have a very serious conversation."

He takes Nelsiwe's phone from the coffee table before walking to the kitchen and comes back with a butcher knife. He sits down on the coffee table facing a shaking Nelsiwe.

Nate: "How many fingers do you need to do your daily chores Nelz."

Nelsiwe: "Please dont do this."

Nate: "I bet that's how Lando and Gugu begged your husband when he violated them. But don't worry, we have the whole night. We are going to get to know each other better tonight."

INSERT 55

NARRATED

Nate: "You know I am tired of you doubting your kids and invalidating their pain. A mother is supposed to protect but you keep failing to do that even when countless opportunities have been presented to you to make things

right."

Nelsiwe: "Ntombi will know what happened to me."

Nate: "Not really."

He takes the knife's sharp end and runs it down Nelsiwe's cheek and she flinches and winces as blood pours out.

Nelsiwe: "Please stop."

Nate: "People like you don't deserve to be called mothers. Your husband might have been the one to rape them but you are no different to him you are just the same. And you know what I do to people like you? I send them to their maker so they can quickly

answer for their crimes because judgment day is too far. Now let's play Nelz."

He makes a phone call and a few minutes later Razor walks in with a toolbox. He places it on the coffee table next to Nate.

Razor: "Why do you always want to have fun without me?"

Nate: "Someone has to pave the way."

Razor: "Mxm. So where do we start? Liver or kidneys?"

Nate: "I think we should start with the liver. Then the kidneys. And finally the heart. I have a patient who needs a heart

transplant and hopefully this heart will beat so much better in another body." Nelsiwe panics when she hears that.

Nelsiwe: "Please, do whatever you want to do to me but, beat me or whatever but you can't kill me."

Nate's phone rings, he looks at the caller ID before walking out to answer it.

Nate: "Bra!"

Philani: "Whatever you do make sure she doesn't die and nothing leads back to us."

Nate: "Wheres the fun in that?"

Philani: "Nate trust me I would also love to rip that womans

heart out with a teaspoon but she is still Landos mother." Nate sighs and wipes his face with his hand.

Nate: "Fine. I will figure something out."

Philani: "Thank you brother. But do make sure she suffers."

Nate: "Will do." He hangs up. He stands outside trying to come up with a way to punish Nelsiwe without anything leading back to him or Philani, but it seemed impossible at first until he texted someone. They replied quickly and the smile on his face assured him that Nelsiwe would get what's

coming to her eventually. And eventually would be tonight.

He walked back into the house and sat on the coffee table in front of a shivering and crying Nelsiwe.

Nate: "You are lucky Philani has such a good heart. He says he will kill me if anything happens to you. Unfortunately for me I value my friendship with him so I guess your ancestors are watching over you." He runs the knife down her cheek again creating another cut on her face. "Let's go man." Razor takes the toolbox and they walk out.

Razor: "So vele we are gonna leave her just like that?" He asks as they get into the car.

Nate: "Dont worry about it man. That woman will get what's coming to her." They drive off.

Meanwhile in White River, Philani and Sbu together with Ntombi park just outside Siphos house, behind Sizwe and Lindani. Ntombi tries to get out of the car but Sbu stops her.

Ntombi: "Arent we going in?"

Philani: "We will, but you will stay in the car. We dont know what your uncles plans are so it's better you stay in the car until

we get Gugu to safety."

Ntombi: "He's my uncle, he won't do anything to me or even Gugu."

Philani: "I am sure that's what Gugu thought about your father but look how that turned out." He says before getting out of the car and walking towards Sizwe and Lindani's car. He opens the backseat door and gets in.

Sizwe: "Bafo."

Philani: "So what's happening?"

Lindani: "From the looks of it the uncle is alone. He went out earlier and came back with takeaways so maybe Gugu is being kept here."

Philani: "That's good. Makes our

work easier."

Lindani: "So how did it go in Mbuzini?"

Philani: "Not good. We found Ntombi there too and since we couldn't carry out our plan with her there we had to make some changes."

Sizwe: "What changes?"

Philani: "We had to leave Nate and Razor behind. But since Ntombi saw us there we had to make sure nothing comes back to us. Nate said he had a plan."

Sizwe: "You know all you had to do was say the word and I would gladly put one between her eyes

even from miles away." Lindani and Philani laugh.

Lindani: "You and Nate are always itching for blood."

Sizwe: "Nope, I hate blood that's why I shoot from far away most of the time."

Sipho walks out of his house and locks the door, he gets into his car and drives off. Lindani, Sizwe and Philani get out off the car soon as he leaves, they go to the house, Lindani picks the lock and they walk in. The house is dark, they try to turn the lights on but they lights dont go on. Philani takes out his phone and switches on his

torche. They walk into all the rooms and find nothing. Philani goes to the room on the far end of the house and tries to open but its locked. He picks the lock and opens the door. He moves his torch around and the light finds a figure curled on the single bed fills an entire side wall of the room. He walks over to it slowly.

He flashes his light on her and she shields her eyes from the brightness of it.

Philani: "Gugu!" She quickly turns around when she hears his voice. She looks at him for a few seconds before jumping into his

arms sobbing. "Its okay, you are safe now."

They take her to the car with Ntombi and they hug for a while. Philani, Lindani, Sizwe and Sbu are standing outside the second car discussing what to do with Sipho when Nate and Razor finally join them.

Lindani: "Finally, what took you so long?"

Nate: "Logistics brother."

Philani: "What did you decide?"

Nate: "Nothing that leads back to us but by the time the sun rises she will know the pain and heartache her daughters had to

go through."

Philani: "Good. It's time to get back to Joburg."

Razor: "What about the uncle?"

Philani: "That is for you to decide. Do with him whatever you want. Just keep it clean and leave no footprints."

Razor: "Sure sure brazzo."

Sbu: "And Ntombi?"

Philani: "We'll drop her off at her uncle's house, and then take Gugu back to Joburg. We will see you guys at my wedding."

Sbu: "Sure thing."

They four guys get into the other cars and drive off while Sbu and

Razor walk back into Siphos house. They wait in the dark for almost half an hour before they hear a car drive in. They hear voices coming towards the house.

Guy 1: "How old is she anyway?"

Siphos: "Fifteen, she's beautiful though so you will survive, I know you dont like ugly girls."

Guy 2: "As long as I get my money I dont give a shit how she looks." They walk into the house and close the door. Siphos walks to the main switch in the kitchen and switches on the lights. He comes back to the lounge and finds the two guys with pistols

pointed to their heads. He tries to run but Razor shoots him on the leg with the gun in his other hand and he falls to the floor screaming in pain.

Razor looks at Sbu and nods before they both hit the two guys with the pistols on the back of their heads and they fall to the ground unconscious. They then walk over to Siphos and squat next to him.

Razor: "Have you ever played Russian Roulette Siphos?" Siphos shakes his head. "Don't worry today we will teach you, of course

there will be twists and turns
somewhere but you will learn"

They pull him up by the collar and
sit him on the chair.

Sbu: "Let's play."



LANDO

It's been a couple of days since I
have heard from Gugu and Philani
keeps telling me she is fine she
just lost her phone. I guess that
is better than finding out she has
been kidnapped.

Today they are coming over to
pay Lobola. I am nervous. I dont
know why because I have been

married to the man for a while now. Anyways my grandmother refuses for me to leave the house. I have been locked up in this room for three days now. Not that I am complaining, being spoilt is nice. I can hear the sounds of people walking up and down outside preparing for the big day.

Yesterday morning my dad woke me up and told me to prepare for my welcoming ceremony. It was a nice surprise and I am glad we had it done. Now i fully feel like I belong in every way.

If you thought merging two races had too many obstacles try merging two different cultures. I dont know the logistics of what needs to be done and what won't be but my father has assured me that everything will work out for the best. I was busy on my phone trying to call Philani when my dad walked in.

Dad: "Babygirl."

Me: "Hi daddy." He gave me a hug before sitting next to me.

Dad: "Are you ready?"

Me: "I am nervous a bit but I am okay."

Dad: "It feels like I am losing you

again."

Me: "You will never lose me ever again."

Dad: "Biyela senior told me about your deal and why you married Philani, are you sure you want to spend the rest of your life with him?" I take a deep breath before answering him. Truth is no one has ever asked me that so I never had to formulate an answer to it.

Me: "He's no saint but he loves me and I love him. I never thought we would get here but love has a weird way of creeping in when you least expect it." He laughs. "To

answer your question, I do want to spend the rest of my life with him."

Dad: "Good. And I can see he is overprotective of you, but most importantly I like the way he loves you. You deserve to be happy babygirl. And with all that you have been through I am happy that you came out on the other side strong as you are. I wish I could have been there to protect you." Yes, I finally decided to tell him about Vusi and his shenanigans. For the first time since we were reunited he was lost for words. All he did was hug

me and I felt his tears wet my hair.

We had a lengthy discussion with him explaining to me what would happen. After a while he left. I sat in the room and said a long prayer thanking God for all he has done for me, at that moment I understood why my late grandmother loved the verse in Isaiah 41 verse 10. God really had come through for me.

I ended up falling asleep while putting Theo down for his nap. I woke up and Faith, Buli and Taki were quietly chatting on the couch. As soon as I saw them I

started screaming and they joined me on the bed and we had a group hug before having a catch up session. Apparently Gugu and Siyanda had gone out together, I guess I'll see her later.

Later in the night just before midnight sounds of singing were heard from the gate. It went on for a while before they were let in. I watched from the bedroom window as they draped one of my cousins draped a blanket around Philani and Lindani since he was the head negotiator. It was beautiful to watch, but the big ceremony would happen tomorrow.

I walked back to the bed preparing to sleep when my phone rang. I picked up.

Me: "Hello."

Ntombi: "Hey, it's me."

Me: "Hey where are you? I thought you'd be here by now."

Ntombi: "I won't be able to come, there was a robbery at home, they beat up mum and raped her and right now she is in hospital.

Lando I dont know what to do, she has been unconscious since i found her." I could hear her sniffles through the phone. I kept quiet waiting for some sort of emotion to consume me but

none came. I cut the call because I didn't know what words I could say to comfort Ntombi, my mother might have been a monster to me but she was a mother to her. I sat on the bed and asked God for forgiveness, not because I was responsible for her pain but because I felt joy sympathy at all. What kind of a daughter does that make me? What kind of a human being does that make me?

INSERT 56

I woke up with someone climbing all over me. The sounds coming

from outside didnt help either. I slept very late. Ntombi's call last night unsettled me a bit. As much as I tried to will myself to feel some sort of empathy or pain for my mother I felt nothing, well that's a lie, I did feel something, it wasn't pity or pain, I dont know if it even has a name but to me, it felt like justice. Justice for every whip lash I endured when I told her what Vusi had done to me, justice for every insult she had hurled to me, justice for gogo's life that was cut short, justice for the many sleepless nights I had spent under bridges

on cold nights, justice for Gugu and her suffering and justice for every nightmare we have had since our innocence was brutally taken from us.

This is probably a cruel thing to say but Karma knows everyone's address and sooner or later it comes to visit. For some it leaves them with a slap on the wrist, such that they quickly forget it was ever there, and for others it leaves a cut so deep it takes a lifetime to forget. I guess my mother was the latter.

I got up and went to the bathroom to wash my face

careful not to step on anybody. My friends and I slept in the same room, we talked and laughed for most of the night while our visitors were singing and dancing in the rondavel they had been assigned to sleep in. I washed my face first before deciding to take a shower instead. I got out and went back to the bedroom with a towel around me, I lotioned and put my gown back on. I took Theo and bathe him.

After dressing him I also got dressed and went down to the kitchen to make him food. I walked in and aunt Norah saw me

first and she broke out in ululating before the other women joined her. I smiled and got hugs from everyone.

Norah: "Hi nana, I was about to bring you breakfast."

Me: "Thank you, I have been up for a while since this guy woke me up. And now he is hungry." She handed me a bowl with soft porridge and milk. I have never given Theo porridge before, just the usual cerelac and purity. She looked at me with a smirk on her face, I guess she could see the look on my face.

Norah: "Give him the porridge and

if he doesn't like it then I will make him your fancy food." I laughed, he's hungry anyway and porridge never killed anybody, at least no one that I know off. I took the little spoon and fed him, he lapped it up like he hadn't eaten in months and before I knew it the bowl was empty. He even took the bowl and buried his head in it. Talk about licking your plate clean. I looked up and aunt Norah was laughing.

Norah: "See, he loves it. You should give it to him more often. Go and wake the others up, and get dressed, we will have the

lobola this morning and then umembeso later on."

I went back upstairs and luckily the girls were up already. They took turns taking showers before we went to the room where the ceremony would take place. We got in and it was mostly just family, I bowed my head and sat on my side of the room with my family and the Biyela's were on the other side. Lindani spoke and said how many cows they had bought including insulamnyembeti which technically was supposed to go to my mother but since she was not here, Mam Busi accepted it, as I

had requested her to do. Bile was poured on me and Philani, we were now married in almost every way. Lunch was served before we had umembeso, everything went well, dad was right, as nervous as I was about the logistics of everything the families had come to a compromise and all things worked out well.

The next day another cow was slaughtered and chunks of it was given to everyone to take home. And since the Biyela's requested that I return home with them we packed our bags and by late evening we were already on the

road. Most of them went straight back to Mandawe while we went to Joburg together with the others.

Philani went straight to his study soon as we got home and Gugu went to her room. I decided to bath Theo and put him to sleep before taking a shower myself. I went downstairs when i was done and unpacked all the food we got from home out of the cooler bags and packed them in the fridge cause it was clear no one was going to eat. I went back upstairs and decided to talk to Gugu after hearing laughter

coming from her room. I knocked once before going in. She was laying up on the bed busy on her new phone, an iPhone 10 or 11 I dont know, all I know is that Philani spoils her way too much.

Gugu: "You know you should wait for someone to say come in first, what if I was masturbating?"

Me: "Please do not say that." She laughed I sat on the bed with my head on the headboard and she put her head on my lap. "When last did you speak to Ntombi?"

Gugu: "This morning. She told me what happened to mum."

Me: "And how do you feel about

it?" She puts away the phone and looks at me.

Gugu: "I dont know. A part of me wants to feel bad but then theres the other part of me that just doesn't care. Am I a horrible person?"

Me: "Of course not. Look I also dont know how to feel about it but we cant really change what happened. The only thing we can do is pray she heals and finds peace somewhere in her heart."

Gugu: "I guess."

Me: "When last did you have nightmares about Vusi?"

Gugu: "Its been a while. I think

a part of me has accepted that he won't be coming back."

Me: "And how did you figure that out?"

Gugu: "I had a dream once, I saw Vusi coming after me, he was chasing me through some dark forest, I could hear his footsteps getting closer and closer but then they stopped. I turned around and you were there, you stood between us but then he laughed, he had this mocking laugh. I got closer to you and you held my hand, we walked away with him laughing but then he started screaming, asking for help, when

I looked back he had blood coming out of him, his eyes and nose and mouth. It was horrible, but eventually he slumped to the ground and died. And when I woke up I had a sense of peace. And I knew everything would be okay." This I didn't know. I guess this explains her new attitude and zest for life.

We spoke a little while longer before I retired to bed. I got to my bedroom and found Philani already in bed. I took off my gown and got into bed and placed my head on his chest. I told him

about my mum and all he said was Mhmmmm.

Philani: "Have you decided on a wedding date yet?" I guess the mum topic is over.

Me: "Not yet. But it will have to be after I give birth. I am not wearing a wedding gown with a big tummy." He laughs and kisses the top of my head.

Philani: "I think you would look perfect even with a little princess inside you."

Me: "It could just be a prince."

Philani: "You know if we allowed the doctor to tell us the sex of the baby we wouldn't be having

this argument."

Me: "Nope, I want it to be a surprise." He has been begging for the doctor to tell us the sex but since I am the patient the doctor is respecting my wishes. Even though he hides it very well, not getting his way is not sitting well with him. I fell asleep still laying on his chest.



NARRATED

In Mbuzini, Busi has just parked outside the hospital where Nelsiwe is, after driving for almost four hours to get there. She takes a bottle of water from

the backseat and drinks it before getting out of the car. She walks to the reception area and asks the receptionist for directions to Nelsiwe's ward. She gets there and finds Nelsiwe sitting up on the bed with bandages covering more than half her body.

Busi: "Sawubona. (Hello)"

Nelsiwe: "What do you want?"

Busi: "Lando told me what happened to you, I just came to see how you are doing."

Nelsiwe: "As you can see I am fine."

Busi: "So what happened?"

Nelsiwe: "No one is here Busisiwe

you can stop pretending like you care."

Busi: "You are right. I don't care about you but I care about your children." Nelsiwe chuckles.

Nelsiwe: "Which kids? The same kids who didn't even bother to come see me even though they know what happened to me? You mean those kids?"

Busi: "It must be such a bitter pill to swallow when you experience the same thing your kids went through, and them reacting the same way you did. After all you put them through you really expect Lando and Gugu to drop

everything and come rushing to you just because you birthed them? Really Nelsiwe?"

Nelsiwe: "I think it's time you left."

Busi: "I don't know how long you plan on being stubborn but it's not helping you in any way. Just a few days ago Biyela paid lobola for Lando and you weren't even there to celebrate with her or even accept your cow. Is this really what you want Nelsiwe, to die alone."

Nelsiwe: "I am not alone."

Busi: "Let me guess, you have Ntombi. How long do you think

she'll stay here holding your hand, she is young she has her whole life ahead of her. You really want to hold her back?" Nelsiwe looks away as a tear falls down her face. "Make peace with your children Nelsiwe before it's too late." She walks out of the ward and back to her car. She makes a phone call to Lando while sitting in the car.

Lando: "Hi mummy."

Busi: "Hi baby, how are you?"

Lando: "Good. Did you speak to her?"

Busi: "I did. Your mother is almost half as stubborn as you

are." She laughs. "But I think she has a lot to think about."

Lando: "I told you my mother dances to the beat of her own drum. Thank you for trying though."

Busi: "Anytime. Anyways let me drive back, I have a long way to go."

Lando: "Ok, drive safe." They hang up and Busi begins her journey back home.



PHILANI

Fridays are the best days for work, for me at least. And most of the time I enjoy it but not today.

I have been stuck in this meeting for almost two hours now. And these people won't stop talking. But I guess this is what I have to do if we are going to find a solution for the burst oil pipe in Nigeria. And these people have invoices that are enough to buy a small country. After a few more minutes the meeting comes to an end and I say a silent prayer, take my things and go back to my office.

I walk in and find Lando sitting on my chair with her baby bump in full display. Whoever said pregnant women weren't sexy

clearly hadn't met my wife. I walk up behind her as she watches the city with her back turned to me. I kiss her neck and she instinctively arches her neck giving me proper access to it.

Me: "You know how sexy you are right now?"

Lando: "Thank you kind sir, but you won't be thinking that once you hear what I have to say." I stop kissing her and sit on top of the desk.

Me: "Hit me, what is it?" Shd takes a file from the desk next to me and places it in my hand.

Lando: "The invoices that those

guys sent for the rebuilding of the oil pipe have been inflated. I called the first two companies that can rebuild it and they had the same estimate as the ones we have. I figured all seems to be in order until I called the third company and the person I spoke to told me an estimate that was less than what we have on the invoice. So I called the other two companies again and asked to speak to different people from the ones I spoke to before and those people gave me a number that's less than what we have." Me: "You mean to tell me that

someone is trying to use this to swindle money out of the company?"

Lando: "Yep. You need to find out who this is cause clearly these other two companies are in on it too."

Me: "See this is why I love my side hustle. All I would have to do is pull out a couple of teeth and fingers on someone and I would get what I want. Now i have to go the legal route."

Lando: "Yes you do. But i already got the auditors to find out what's going on and i hired a P.I to do the rest." I smiled and

pulled her up to stand between my legs."

Me: "Man, I love it when you take control." She puts her hands around my neck and kisses me. She pulls out just as I feel my dick waking up.

Lando: "I would love to stay and chat but I have one last meeting to attend before I head home." She kisses me one last time before heading out. I decide to call Sbu.

Sbu: "Bafo."

Me: "Sbuda, I am going to send you a list of people, I need a thorough background check on all

of them."

Sbu: "Sure thing." We hang up and I send him the list of everyone I was in the meeting with. I continue with work. Just as I am about to knock off I get a text from Dladla.

'Bafo dont call me on my usual number. The IPID is investigating a few officers from the station so I need to lay low a bit. I will get in touch with you.

D'

I decide not to reply to his text but instead I delete it. Lucky for me this is just a burner phone and

not my known number. But I need to make sure there is nothing there that will trace back to me so I text Sbu to wipe any and every thing that may connect us to Dladla.

I gather my stuff and drive home. I get home and Lando is already there cooking. I kiss her and go to the lounge. My phone rings and its an international number.

Me: "Hello."

Man: "Biyela, its Marco Lopez."

Me: "Marco my man, it's been a while."

Marco: "Yeah it has been. I

thought I should give you a heads up. Rafael Rodriguez killed his brother a couple of weeks back and today he boarded a flight to South Africa. He is headed your way."

Me: "Do you know why?"

Marco: "He is coming for Raul's son." I swear when it rains it pours.

Me: "Ok man, thanks for letting me know. I will get my house in order."

Marco: "Do me one favour, when you see him put a bullet between his eyes. And another through his heart just to be sure."

Me: "I will do my best man.
Thanks."

I hang up and look at Lando in the kitchen humming as she cooks. I need to protect her, and I need to protect Theo.

INSERT 57

It's been almost a month since I got that call from Marco and theres still no sign of Rafael and that just drives me nuts. If it was any other person I wouldn't be stressing this much but this is Rafael, he is calculating and evil. All that he does is always planned

from A to Z with room for contingencies. I have had to up security for both Lando and Kazi. I was even able to convince Lando to take her maternity leave early. I drive into the lounge parking hoping that Sbu has an update on Rafael and his whereabouts. I walk in and it's already packed. It's not even nine o'clock and people are already partying up a storm,

On a Wednesday Nogal. I guess our Woman Crush Wednesday events are coming along good.

I walk into the office and he is on his laptop doing only he knows

what. I look at him and he doesn't even notice I am there. I pour myself a drink and take a seat on the couch. I decide to let him be cause clearly he is busy. After a few minutes he whispers a yes and punches the air with his fist. He then swings around on his chair before his eyes land on me. I smile when I see the shock on his face.

Sbu: "Bafo. When did you get here?"

Me: "About ten minutes ago. You were so engrossed in your work I didnt want to disturb."

Sbu: "I guess it's a good thing

you are here. I just got an email from an associate of mine in Durban. Apparently Rafael has been spotted there." I sit up and put my elbows on my knees while playing with my hands. This is great news.

Me: "And when was this?"

Sbu: "About an hour ago."

Me: "Good. Make sure they don't lose him."

Sbu: "So what are you going to do with sis Lando and Kazi?"

Me: "I don't know man. I just hope I can keep them safe."

Sbu: "The safe house in Limpopo is still available you know." A

lightbulb goes on in my head. I have been so consumed with wanting my family safe that I forgot the most important thing, keep them safe! The safe house in Limpopo is perfect, the security is state of the art and its impenetrable.

I take my phone and text Kazi to pack her staff and get ready to leave. I know she won't even argue about this cause she knows Rafael and what he is capable off. Lando on the other hand is a different breed of stubborn. I cant tell her via text I have to

sit her down and convince her to go.

I leave Sbu and drive back to my place. I find Lando sleeping on the couch with Theo right next to her on the floor. I decide to just pack their stuff. I rush upstairs and pack Theo's clothes first, and I make sure his favourite toys are in there too otherwise we will be faced with world war three. Once I am certain I have all he will need I go to our bedroom and pack Lando's clothes, which is mostly dresses since my little princess has grown almost double overnight, but I am not

complaining, as long as they are both healthy I am grateful. I finish packing and head downstairs.

Just as I am about to wake Lando up I hear a knock on the door, I open and Kazi walks in with her luggage in tow. Anyone who saw her would assume she is going on vacation perhaps.

Kazi: "Hi Bhuti." She gives me a hug and walks to the kitchen.

She's not her usual bubbly self. I follow her to the kitchen.

Me: "Hey, are you okay?" I ask her while she has her back to me and facing the sink with her head

down. She looks up, takes a deep breath and turns around to look at me.

Kazi: "I am sorry."

Me: "For what?"

Kazi: "For everything. If I had listened to you, If I had listened to dad we wouldn't be here right now, looking over our shoulder all the time." I walk over and stand next to her.

Me: "If you had listened to us then we wouldn't have Theo." I say trying to lighten the mood. She gives me a faint smile. "Look we can't change the past but we can look forward to the future."

The should haves, would haves, could haves will not help us now. Besides, theres a silver lining for every cloud. And ours just happens to be a naughty stubborn little boy that we all love." She smiles, and this time it's a genuine smile. She gives me a hug.

Kazi: "Thank you for always protecting me and him."

We hear a car pull up outside and I know the guys are here. We break the hug and walk into the lounge and find Lando already up.

Lando: "Why didnt you wake me up, my back hurts." She says trying to stretch her tired

muscles. I walk over and sit next to her.

Me: "Babe, I have to tell you something."

Lando: "What's wrong?"

Me: "Nothing. But you have to go. I've already packed your stuff."

She looks around the room and her eyes land on the suitcases standing by the door.

Lando: "You found Rafael?" She asks as her eyes come back to me.

Me: "Sort of. He's been spotted in Durban so I think it's a matter of time before he shows up here. That's why you are leaving. I need to make sure that the

three of you are safe." She takes a deep breath and closes her eyes. Lando: "So where are you taking us?"

Me: "The safehouse in Limpopo. It's the only safe place I can think of." She opens her eyes and looks back at me.

Lando: "Are you coming with us?"

Me: "I cant. I have to find him and end this once and for all."

Lando: "What if something happens to you? What if he hurts you? What then? Philani I am not ready to be a widow." I can hear the panic in her voice. I put my hands in her face and let her face

me. Her eyes are glistening with tears that she is trying so hard to blink away.

Me: "Baby nothing will happen to me. I promise you."

The guys walk in as her tears win the battle with her eyelids and they fall down her face. I bring her in for a hug.

Lindani: "Its time to go."

Lindani and Sizwe take the suitcases and walk out while Kazi follows them. I pick up the sleeping Theo and carefully place him in his car seat. I hold out my hand to Lando and she takes a

deep breath before placing her hand in mine. We walk out and I place Theo in the car next to Kazi. Good thing its an SUV and all three can fit in the backseat. I give Lando one last hug and it lasts a little longer than usual. After a while we break apart. I kiss her forehead and she gets into the car and they drive off. My heart starts beating a little faster than normal. I'll admit I am scared. I know in my line of work fear shouldn't even exist, but its easier to be fearless when you have nothing to lose. I should be celebrating my one year

anniversary instead I am spending time trying to find a psychopathic narcissist who is on a wipeout mission. This past year has shown me that theres more to life than drugs or diamonds or heists. This year I finally got a high that I never wanna come down from. I finally got to understand the saying "love makes the world go round". My life has been on a never ending spin since Lando slapped the shit out of me and I wouldn't have it any other way. And now all that might end unless I find Rafael and put a bullet in his head.



NARRATED

The girls drove out with a convoy of at least ten cars each with a minimum of three guards each. They both fell asleep as soon as the convoy hit the freeway. It was almost morning when the sign 'Welcome to Limpopo' stood high and strong on the side of the road. Unbeknownst to them their convoy had grown to fifteen cars. Lando woke up when she heard a phone ringing in the car. The driver answered using the bluetooth speaker.

Driver: "My man, what's happening?"

Man: "There's about five cars following us. They've been behind us for almost forty five minutes now."

Driver: "Are you sure about this?"

Man: "Certain. What should we do?"

Driver: "How did they even know?"

Man: "Beats me."

Driver: "Decoy?"

Man: "Yep." He hung

They drove on until the next offramp. Some of the cars went left and others went right while the rest kept going forward. The

cars with the girls inside kept going till they got to a garage. They parked next to a Quantum and the driver went to it. He came back and made a phone call still unaware that Lando was already up.

Driver: "We have a spy among us. The driver of the Quantum is dead and that means Rodriguez knows where we are going. I think we need to change direction."

Man: "The problem with that is we don't know who this person is and if we change direction what makes you so sure the person is

not in your convoy."

Driver: "Any suggestions?"

Man: "We let the boss know we've been compromised."

Driver: "Okay then you call him. We'll keep going." He hung up and they drove out of the garage.

They made it to a long narrow road that had forests on each side. The tall trees hid the rising sun and made the road dark.

As they drove amid the dark natural tunnel gunshots were heard from the back. Before long their car tyres were shot leading to the car driving off the road and into the forest and hitting a

tree, waking Kazi and Theo started to cry.

Kazi: "What's happening?" Kazi asked with her voice in a panic.

Lando: "He found us."

Kazi: "Oh God." Tears flowed down her face as the driver got out of the car firing shots too.

Lando: "We need to get out of here."

Kazi: "Where will we go?"

Lando: "I don't know but I am not letting that monster take my son. It's not happening."

Kazi: "You are right. Take Theo and run into the forest. If Rafael is here I will try and stall him to

give you a headstart."

Lando: "Kazi I am pregnant, how will I run with a baby on my back and another in my stomach."

Kazi: "Lando, I know you, you are stronger than this and I know you will make it. Please you have to save yourself and the children. Please."

Lando: "Fine." Kazi opened the door and they got out. She helped Lando strap Theo on her back. Lando ran into the forest while the gunfire seemed to be far from over. Kazi went up to the road and sure enough Rafael was there. He ordered his men to

cease fire before he walked over to an injured Kazi who was bleeding from a cut in her forehead and another on her arm.

Rafael: "Mi amor. (My love). I finally found you. Where is our son."

Kazi: "You dont have a son Rafael."

Rafael: "True, but my brother's son is just as good as mine. So where is he?"

Kazi: "Hopefully as far away from you as possible." He chuckles.

Rafael: "You and Raul thought giving his son to your brother would keep him safe? I have worked hard and trained harder

to be able to take over the Rodriguez empire, my dad literally taught me since birth all I needed to know. But the moment he found out about Raul's son he willed all he owns to him as the heir and future of the Rodriguez family. All my hardwork, all my dedication to that son of a bitch and he thanked me by giving everything he owns to a bastard." Kazi: "Clearly he didnt think he was a bastard. You are the only one who feels that way." He laughs.

Rafael: "If I didnt know better I would say you and Raul have some

telepathic shit going on because that's exactly what he said before I put a knife in his chest. It's such a pity I didn't get the opportunity to do the same thing to my father, I would have loved to look in his eyes as he took his last breath, unfortunately for me that unknown sniper beat me to it."

Kazi: "So what are you going to do with him? Use him to claim your "inheritance"?"

Rafael: "I don't need to claim my inheritance I will take it. Your son on the other hand will be six feet under."

Kazi: "He's a child." She says with her teeth clenched.

Rafael: "I know, that's why he needs to die now before he even knows what's happening." He signals to his men to go into the forest and find Lando while he grabs Kazi by her hair and drags her to the car.

Kazi: "Rafael please dont do this. I will do anything but please dont hurt Theo." He laughs before smacking her on the side of her head with the back of his gun. She falls to the ground unconscious and bleeding. He picks her up and puts her in the car

where he ties her up before locking her in. He follows his men into the forest.

Meanwhile Lando has been running for almost half an hour. She makes it to a little stream inside the forest. She bends down to drink before she continues on. Soon the sounds of footsteps coming behind her propel her to run even faster. She is almost at the end of the forest when someone puts their hand on her shoulder stopping her. She turns around to find a man she doesn't know.

Lando: "Please let me go." She pleads but her pleas fall on deaf

ears. Soon Rafael catches up with them. He bends over with his hands on his knees as he catches his breath. After a while he looks up at her.

Rafael: "For a pregnant woman you sure can run Mrs Biyela."

Lando: "What do you want from me?"

Rafael: "Don't act dumb, you know exactly what I want. I want my brother's son."

Lando: "Theo is not your brother's son he is mine." He walks over to her and lifts her face with his hand.

Rafael: "You are feisty, I like

that. However I prefer my women meek and submissive. That's why Kazi and I were always at each others throats. I thought I could tame her but she's like a wild animal. She's untamable." He takes a step back from her. "But let's save the stories for the afterlife. Give me the boy."

Lando: "No. You'll have to kill me first."

Rafael: "That's easy." He takes his gun and fires two shots at her before taking Theo from her.



PHILANI

Someone once said when we make plans God laughs, I am not sure if that saying applies to this moment but it sure feels like it. With all the plans I had made to protect my family all it took was Rafael planting one person into my camp to dismantle all those plans. I trust my man, I always have, they've been loyal and I would have easily bet my last dime on their loyalty, so getting a call and being told that Rafael was right behind them spooked me. I know how heartless he can be and the thought of him hurting Lando or Kazi and even Theo scares me.

We got into our cars soon as the call came through and we drove to Limpopo. A drive that in some instances would take five to six hours took us less than three. I used the cars tracking device to find them. We drove into this narrow road and sure enough there were cars abandoned on the side of the road, and just a little inside the forest was the car Lando was in, crashed into a tree. All the other cars were left with doors open and riddled with bullets except for one. Nate and Sizwe walked to it with firearms drawn. Sizwe tried opening one door but

it was locked. Nate decided to break the glass but it was bullet proof. I walked over to the car and tried to open the door too but it was locked. I walked around to the front of the car and I was about to shoot the car when Sbu stopped me.

Sbu: "I can hack the cars system and disable the doors." He said with his iPad in hand. I just nodded and let him do it and before we knew it the doors were opened. I looked in and Kazi was laying on the backseat with her hands tied I picked her up and took her out of the car and

handed her to Sizwe.

Me: "Get her to a hospital.

Please." He took her and got into his car with Razor on the driver's seat and they drove off.

We decided to follow the trail into the forest to find Lando and

Theo. We walked for a while

before we heard a baby crying. I

knew it was Theo. We followed

the cries and we found Rafael and

his men surrounding a crying Theo

who was sitting on the ground.

Lando was behind them sprawled

out on the ground. I signalled to

my man and they shot Rafael's

men before they noticed we were

there. Rafael quickly turned around and picked up Theo and put a gun to his head.

Rafael: "Biyela."

Me: "You have nowhere to go

Rafael. Let my son go."

Rafael: "If I were you I would be more worried about my pregnant wife with bullets in her body, who knows, maybe one of those bullets went through your unborn child's body. But you are more concerned about my brother's son. You need to get your priorities in order Biyela." I felt the saliva in my mouth turn sour. My jaws clenched and my unoccupied hand balled

itself into a fist. There was so much I wanted to do to him but he had my son in his hands, with a gun to his tiny head and my wife laid unconscious or even dead behind him.

Rafael: "Tell your men to put their guns down, I will walk out of here and you can help your wife. But the boy comes with me."

Marco: "The boy is not going anywhere Rafael, you on the other hand are going straight to hell." He said sneaking up behind Rafael and putting a gun to his head. I walked over to him and took Theo from him before going

to Lando. I turned her over and she was bleeding. She was covered in blood and that just turned my insides.

I handed Theo to one of the boys and picked Lando up. I was about to walk away with her in my arms when Marco spoke.

Marco: "What do you want us to do to him?"

I walked over to Nate and handed him Lando. He carried her out of the forest together with Theo. I took my gun and shot Rafael in one knee before moving to the other until he was kneeling down screaming in pain.

Me: "Take him to the safehouse, we'll deal with him later. I ran out and found Nate waiting for me in the car. I got in and Lando was still unconscious in the backseat. I sat next to her while Lindani sat in the front with Theo in his arms.

I texted Sbu as soon as we drove off and told him to burn everything, the abandoned cars, Rafael's men and to make sure our men get help and those that lost their lives get a proper burial. I held on to my wife hoping and praying that she and our baby are okay. Although at that

moment I knew if I have to save one of them, I would die inside. I pray to God that both leave.

INSERT 58

Death be not proud. People say that all the time when someone's life is cut short. Truth is I will never be able to understand that because death didnt kill those people, sicknesses did, or accidents or even other people and death just became their final destination. So in this case I would say Rafael be not proud.

I stood next to the small tent meant for family and watched as my sisters coffin made it's way down to the ground. This was it, the last level. Like in any good game there is a level where you have to defeat the big boss or monster or whatever. Some people defeat the monster and get a second chance and even move to a whole new level and others lose and that annoying sound that signals game over comes on and its annoying and defeating. Right now that is the sound I keep on hearing, except it's not my life that's ended but

my sister's. I should have helped her defeat the monster, I should have helped her fight that monster but I failed and now it's over. All her dreams and plans are now buried six feet under inside her coffin. I failed her.

I don't know when everyone left but when I looked around it was just my friends and I. We sat down under the tent with our eyes fixed on the mound of dirt that covered my sister. It felt like it was just a dream. I wiped the tears that kept falling. I know they say man don't cry but at this moment none of us cared.

Qhawekazi had become a little sister to each and everyone sitting in this tent, we vowed to protect each other and all that concerns us, our families had become one big family, we loved each other and we promised to always look out for each other, and right this moment we had just buried a member of our family. The anger in all of us could not be missed, the sense of failure we felt at that moment could not be erased but the guilt was even worse.

After a while we got up and got into our cars and drove to the

Biyela family home in Mandawe. It was buzzing with people who had come to mourn with us. As crazy as Kazi was she was loved, the speeches people made were heartfelt and sincere, or maybe it was one of those cases where people proclaimed you as a saint soon as your soul left your body, either way none of those speeches could bring her back or make the sound of her laughter fill the room.

I walked over to my dad's house and went straight to my room to take a shower. I got dressed and went into the lounge, I found

aunt Kholiwe with a plate of food on a tray and a sleeping Theo on her back. I kissed him and sat down on the couch. She sat down next to me. I felt more tears fall and she brought me in for a hug and for the first time since Nate told me my sister was dead I let it all out. I sobbed on her shoulder.

I don't know when I fell asleep but I woke up on the couch with a throw to warm me up and my grandmother sitting on the single couch.

Gogo: "Hi baby."

Me: "Hi gogo."

Gogo: "How are you feeling?"

Me: "Like I have been hit by a runaway train."

Gogo: "I know."

Me: "I failed her gogo. There's no beating about it I failed her."

Gogo: "You did the best that you could do baby, you gave it your all and sometimes no matter how hard we try the end result is not always what we had hoped for, it doesn't mean you have failed."

Me: "Then what does it mean?"

Gogo: "It means you tried. That's all we can do, try."

Me: "I need to go back to Joburg, Lando needs me."

Gogo: "Still no sign of her mother?"

Me: "I gave up on that woman a long time ago."

I took the plate of food that aunt Kholiwe left on the table and warmed it up. I made tea for my grandmother and I found some scones and handed them to her. I sat down and we ate our food.



SIZWE

I drove out of Mandawe as soon as the funeral was over. I didnt even wait for my friends. I dont know how I made it to Joburg

without an accident cause I was crying the whole way. Just when I had found my own little piece of heaven it was taken away from me, I would like to blame God for it but the truth is God didn't fracture Kazi's vein and let it bleed into her brain. It's crazy how our bodies can endure a lot but open one crucial vein in your body and you might bleed to death if help doesn't come fast.

That's what happened to Kazi, she bled to death, all from an open vein because Rafael thought it would be cool to bash a woman with a gun on her head. When

Philani handed her lifeless body to me her face was covered in blood, at first I thought it was just a head wound. I could hear her faint heartbeat, I hoped and prayed the whole way to the hospital, we handed her to the doctors and nurses and they wheeled her off to theater. They immediately started working on her ruptured vein and by the time Philani and the guys came in with Lando she too was immediately taken to another theater. After about two hours a doctor came out with bloody scrubs, he seemed scared to even come to us so Nate

went to him instead, I guess it's a doctor thing. They spoke while we waited in anticipation.

I knew it was over the moment Nate turned around. I didn't know which one of them we would have to bury but I knew someone had died. I swear I could hear my heart break into a million pieces when Nate told us. I was in so much shock I couldn't even cry. It felt like a bad dream I so badly wanted to wake up from. But no matter how many times I pinched myself I couldn't wake up. I drove to the safehouse where Rafael had been kept for the

past couple of weeks and found Razor sleeping on the couch, good, cause what I need to do doesn't need an audience. I walk down to the basement and switch the light on, Rafael closes his eyes to avoid the glare of the light. I walk over to him and today he is kneeling on his wounded knees. I guess Razor had time to play because this guy looks like he could do with some help. I pull up the chains which makes him slowly stand up. He winces with every pull.

I go to the cabinet and pull out Nates first aid kit, or torture kit

if you prefer that. I walk back to Rafael who is now fully awake.

Rafael: "water." He whispers with a little difficulty. I guess his mouth is dry, not drinking liquids for an entire week will fuck one up. I pull up a chair and sit next to his dangling body.

I open the first aid kit and put on some latex gloves. I pull out a scalpel and test it out on Rafael and its sharp. I get up from the chair and pull up another one, I untie him and put him on the other chair and tie his legs and hands to it. I take a bottle of

water and give it to him. He laps up the liquid like a hungry dog.

Me: "Are you good?"

Rafael: "When my people find out what you are doing to me you will regret it."

Me: "You mean the same people who aren't even looking for you? They don't give a shit about you Rafael, the same way you didn't give a shit when you bashed Kazi's skull in or when you shot a pregnant woman leaving her unconscious and laying on the ground."

Rafael: "I have friends."

Me: "In your head perhaps. Tell

me have you ever watched Game of Thrones?" He looks at me and says nothing. "No? Okay. Let me tell you one of my favourite parts. There's this crazy guy, I don't remember his name but you know what his specialty was when it came to killing people, skinning them alive. It's impressive to be quite honest. So now let's see if I can be just as impressive as he is."

Rafael: "You wouldn't dare. My family has a deal with the Biyela's."

Me: "Luckily for me I am not a Biyela. But most importantly you

forgot that deal when you killed Kazi and shot Lando so trust me they will thank me."

I take the scalpel and start skinning through his dick skin while he screams. After peeling the skin of his dick, I lift it up to his face.

Me: "Okay this is impressive even if I say so myself. I guess I will move on to the other parts now."



PHILANI

I drove into Joburg around midnight. I decided to leave Theo with my family because with all

that's happening right now
Joburg is no place for him. He
needs to be around a stable
environment and right about now
I cant give him that.

I drive to the hospital, I know
visiting hours are over but since
I co-own this hospital i can show
up whenever i want and no one is
going to stop me.

I get to Lando's ward and greet
the guards waiting outside. I go
in and in my head I am hoping for
some sort of miracle but there is
none. She is still the same as she
was when I left two days ago.
She is still strapped up to those

machines that are supposed to help her breath. I sit down on the chair next to the bed and kiss her hand.

Me: "Hey baby, I miss you. I know you are here but I miss talking to you and hearing you laugh.

Please come back. We need you, Theo needs you, now more than ever. Please come back to us."

I wiped the tear that fell from my eye and laid my head next to her with her hand still in mine. I wanted to say a prayer but I figured maybe the guy upstairs doesn't hear me anymore. I mean I prayed for my sister to live but

she didnt, so maybe God is too occupied to even hear me.

I heard the door open and footsteps coming towards the bed. I looked up and saw Nate standing on the other side of the bed with his iPad in hand.

Nate: "I thought I'd find you here."

Me: "What are you doing here? Its almost morning, you should be home."

Nate: "You should be home too. Anyways it's a good thing you are here. There are some complications." I get up and walk over to him. He fires up the iPad

and shows me scans. To be quite honest I have no idea what's going on but I look anyway.

Nate: "The bullet wound on her shoulder is healing since the doctor in Limpopo was able to remove that bullet, but the one in her chest is causing problems, since it is only a couple of centimeters away from the heart trying to remove it would be risky, especially in her condition. But the problem now is that since the bullet didn't hit a bone or even a muscle but it shattered into three pieces, how that happened is a mystery to me too but that

means the three particles are able to move around her bloodstream. Now the problem is if any of those particles make their way to her brain or even her heart she might die."

Me: "What do you suggest we do?"

Nate: "We perform an emergency C-section and then we can do the surgery to remove the bullet particles before they cause too much damage."

Me: "Do you think the baby will survive? She's only six and a half months pregnant."

Nate: "There is a fifty fifty chance both might make it but if

we dont do the surgery soon we might lose both of them."

I took a deep breath and tried to think about what to do. I know what Lando would do, probably keep the baby, but she's not the one with a decision to make I am.

Me: "Do it."

Nate: "Are you sure?"

Me: "Yes. I can only hope that the baby falls on the positive fifty percent."

Nate: "Okay then. But in order to make this happen I need to call in another doctor."

Me: "Dude just do what you need to do, all I want is my wife and

kid to be safe."

Nate: "They might be, if Dr Dlamini performs the surgery."

Me: "Dr Dlamini as in Ngcebo Dlamini?"

Nate: "Yep. He is the only doctor I know who studied both cardiology and neurology so he can make this happen."

Me: "For a man that smart he sure can be stupid sometimes."

Nate chuckles.

Nate: "He is book smart not street smart."

Me: "Okay then, I guess I am about to come face to face with the good doctor."

Nate: "Okay, i will set up the surgery." He walks out.

I am not sure what to feel right now. I have just agreed to have my baby pulled out of her mother's womb before her time. She might live or she might die. If I keep her in there a little longer I risk losing both her and her mother and if I take her out Lando will survive but she might not. And if that happens I don't know if Lando will be able to forgive me. But I guess I will just have to take my chances.

INSERT 59

I was woken up by my phone buzzing in my pocket. I looked around and I was on the couch in Lando's ward, the sun was out and on the window sat a white dove. It looked pretty. I took out my phone and answered.

Me: "Biyela."

Razor: "Brazzo you need to come to the safehouse. Now."

Me: "Why? What's going on?"

Razor: "You have to see this for yourself." I hung up and stretched myself on the couch. I sat up and my back was in so much pain. I forced myself up and

went to the bathroom and washed my face. I need a shower. But first I need to attend to business.

I walk back into the ward and kiss Lando before walking out and heading to the parking lot. I get into my car and drive to the safehouse. When I get there I go into the lounge and find Nate, Lindani and Sbu watching Razor pace up and down the lounge. He stops soon as he sees me.

Razor: "Thank God you are here." He comes over to me and hugs me. Firstly Razor doesn't hug and he doesn't believe in God, he says

God was used by the white men to enslave black people, so he doesn't fucks with the guy. So hearing him say "Thank God" is a surprise.

Lindani: "Ok so we are all here now why did you call us."

Sbu: "Bra Siz is not here, arent we waiting for him?"

Razor: "That's why I called you. You have to see this." He leads us down to the basement. The light is on so we walk down the stairs. We get to the bottom of the stairs and when I looked up I couldn't take another step. It felt like I had been glued to the

floor. I have never been to a haunted house but this sure felt like it. There was so much blood on the floor. A bloody Sizwe sat in a chair looking at a hanging Rafael who had his skin peeled off, literally.

Sizwe has never been the inflict pain type of person. He loved his rifle more than anything. He always said a rifle and a few feet between your target leaves no mess. So seeing this, whatever this is, was a shock to the system. I looked around and we were all in shock. No one was ready to say anything, instead we

slowly tiptoed our way back up the stairs. We got back to the lounge and sat in silence for what felt like an hour.

Razor: "Off all of you bra Siz was the one I was never afraid off. But now, now i am not sure what to feel."

Lindani: "If still waters run deep was a person it would be him."

Nate: "I still dont understand how he was able to do that without killing Rafael." We all looked at Nate in shock. There's no way Rafael is still alive.

Me: "What do you mean he is still alive?"

Nate: "He is alive. I saw him blink a couple of times."

Lindani: "There is no way he is alive Nate, did you see what we saw?"

Nate: "Trust me that idiot is alive."

We all got up and quickly ran down to the basement. Sizwe got up and turned to look at us. His clothes were bloody, his hands and arms were covered in Rafaels blood.

Sizwe: "Yoh, dont scare me like that."

Me: "What happened here?" He smiled.

Sizwe: "Oh this. I had time so I figured I would try something new. You like it?"

Lindani: "Its impressive alright. Impressively scary."

Sizwe: "I know we were supposed to do this together but I got a headstart."

Nate got closer to Rafael and looked at him up close before turning back to look at us.

Nate: "He's alive."

Sizwe: "Unfortunately but he will give in soon." He said as he walked to the bathroom and closed the door. We left soon as we heard the shower running. Nate and I

went back to the hospital for the surgery. When we got there the operating room was already set up and all I had to do was sign the papers and it would be done.

We were in the reception area when Buli and Faith walked in.

Buli: "Hey." We hugged them.

Nate: "What are you doing here?"

Faith: "We came to see Lando before the surgery, If that's okay."

Nate: "She's being prepped for surgery but you can go in." They leave us and go into her ward. I signed the papers and handed them to Nate. We went to

Lando's room and she was already being wheeled out. I gave her a kiss and watched as she was wheeled off into theater. I might not pray much but she does, so I hoped that God still has his eyes on her.



NARRATED

At OR Tambo airport Uche has just landed. She walks to the parking lot where a car is waiting for her. She gets in and drives off to SunMed hospital. She makes it to the reception area.

Uche: "Good morning."

Nurse: "Morning maam, what can I do for you?"

Uche: "I am here to see Lando, Lando Biyela, I was told she is admitted here."

Nurse: "Are you family?"

Uche: "Yes I am, she's my husband's sister."

Nurse: "Okay, she's in surgery right now but her ward is on the fifth floor private ward three."

Uche: "Thank you." She walks away.

She gets to the ward and finds Philani sitting on the couch with his head bowed and buried in his

hands. She sashays over to him and sits next to him. He lifts his head up soon as he feels the couch move next to him.

Philani: "Uche, what are you doing here." She pulls him in for a hug and he doesn't fight her.

Uche: "I am sorry about your loss, I wish I had been here for you earlier but you know with work." He pulls out and looks at her.

Philani: "Thanks. But it wasn't necessary."

Uche: "Of course it was honey, no one deserves to go through all you've been through the past couple of weeks."

Philani got up and walked over to the side table and poured himself a glass of water. He took a sip as Uche walked over to him and wrapped her hands around his waist and kissed his back.

Uche: "You know sometimes I forget how strong you are, but even the strongest soldiers need people to lean on. And I am here to be your shoulder." He turned around and looked at her, releasing himself from her hold.

Philani: "Do you think I am cursed?"

Uche: "Of course not, why would you even think that?"

Philani: "Everything that has happened to Lando somehow always leads back to me, she was kidnapped and almost sold to human traffickers because of me, she's had to have guards around her even though she hates it all because I was trying to protect her from my own enemies, and now she is having her child pulled out of her before it's time because she was shot, all because of me. She had an easy life before I waltzed into her life and changed it all. Now she might die, my child might die all because of the choices I have made." He said as

tears flowed down his face. Uche wiped away his tears and gave him a hug. She pulled out and held his face in her hands.

Uche: "This is not your fault Philani, yes you have made some shitty decisions before but you cant bear the cross for someone else's choices. Think about it, you have made shitty decisions before but none of the people you were with at the time were ever affected, in fact I would say she is the one who is cursed. You were forced into a marriage with her, adopted a child weeks into your marriage, you were shot trying to

protect HER friend, Philani, she did this not you."

Woman: "The next time you decide to call my daughter cursed make sure you know exactly what you are talking about before saying that rubbish."

They turned around to find Nelsiwe, Gugu and Ntombi standing by the door looking at them.

Philani: "What are you doing here?"

Nelsiwe: "I came to see my daughter, unless you have a problem with that."

Philani: "No, I have no problem with that. Excuse me." He walked out and Gugu followed him.

Gugu: "Bhuti Philani." He turned around and hugged her.

Philani: "I am sorry I couldn't protect her. I am sorry." He pulled out and they sat on the benches in the hallway.

Gugu: "Its not your fault, I know you did all you can to help her."

Philani: "Arent you supposed to be in school?"

Gugu: "I should be."

Philani: "And what are you doing with her?" She chuckles.

Gugu: "Well she showed up to

school a couple of days ago,
apologized and now we are good."

Philani: "You trust her?"

Gugu: "It will take a while but
we'll take it one step at a time."

Philani: "I am glad to hear that.
Lando will be happy."

Gugu: "I hope so."

Philani: "You hungry?"

Gugu: "I could do with some food."
He laughs.

Philani: "You could never say no to
food. Let's go." They leave.

Meanwhile in the ward Ntombi,
Nelsiwe and Uche have been in a
stare off with no one willing to
speak first. Uche decides to leave

but Ntombi and Nelsiwe block the door.

Uche: "Move!"

Nelsiwe: "Where the hell do you get off calling my daughter cursed?"

Uche: "Its a little too late for you to be playing the concerned mommy now. We all know how you feel about your daughter so you can take that I care attitude and shove it where the sun dont shine mummy dearest." She tries to push past them but Ntombi pins her against the wall making it hard for her to breath.

Ntombi: "My sister is not dead yet

for you to come here and act like a vulture, she will wake up and when she does her husband will be right there with her and you will be out in the cold as always. Stay the fuck away from Philani or so help me God I will personally send you back to whatever hole you crawled out from under." She let's her go and Uche fixes herself.

Uche: "Little girl you have no idea who you are dealing with." She walks out.

Philani and Gugu walk back into the ward with some takeaways and give Ntombi and Nelsiwe.

They sit in silence while eating.

Soon Buli and Faith walk in too followed by some of the Biyela family, including Sihle and Banele, together with Bab'Biyela and aunt Kholiwe. They all greet and take seats while waiting for news on Lando.

A few minutes later Siphho and mam Busi walk in too followed by Lindani, Sizwe, Sbu and Razor.

Busi walks over to Nelsiwe who is standing by herself in the corner with a cup of cold coffee in her hands.

Busi: "I am glad you could come. I am sure Lando will be happy too."

Nelsiwe: "I dont know about that."

I have hurt her way too many times. I don't think she'll ever forgive me."

Busi: "Gugu forgave you right, trust me Lando will forgive you too, it might take a while but she will eventually."

Nelsiwe: "Its crazy to think that every person in this room knows more about my own child than I do."

Busi: "We all make mistakes

Nelsiwe, the trick is being able to acknowledge those mistakes and do better." She rubs her shoulder before leaving her and walking to the others.

The door opens and Nate walks in with a nurse behind him. The room goes silent and everyone looks at him waiting for him to speak.

Nate: "Baby is okay. She has just been taken to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. You can all come see her but it will have to be through the glass.

Sipho: "What about Lando?"

Nate: "The doctor just started removing the bullet shards."

Busi: "How long will that take?"

Nate: "Its hard to say, but it might take a while. We need to make sure no pieces get left

behind."

Bab'Biyela: "Can we see my grandbaby now."

Sipho: "You mean our grandbaby. She is half Shongwe you know."

Bab'Biyela: "Half Shongwe in spirit, and a full Biyela."

Sipho: "Mxm, I shouldn't have accepted your lobola."

Bab'Biyela: "Too late, you cant return it now."

They walk out still joking around and making the others laugh.

Philani and his friends stay behind.

Philani: "Is the baby okay?"

Nate: "She is perfect, but we still

need to keep her in the incubator until she is strong enough to breathe on her own. But other than that she is okay."

Lindani: "Good, now let's go see my goddaughter."

Nate: "Dude stop being weird, everyone knows she's my goddaughter."

Lindani: "Keep telling yourself that if it helps you sleep better at night."

Sizwe: "We'll just let them fight this out cause we all know I am the godfather." He whispers to Philani who just laughs and walks away leaving them still arguing.

He gets to the NICU and the others are standing outside looking at the baby through the glass. He walks into the NICU and a nurse hands him some scrubs to put on. When he is done he walks over to the incubator where his baby is. He pulls up a chair and sits down.

Philani: "Hi baby, its daddy." He wipes the tears that keep falling from his eyes. "I am so happy to meet you babygirl. You have no idea how much I love you but I promise I will spend the rest of my life reminding you of that."

He wipes some more tears before putting his hand into the incubator and holding his daughter's tiny hand. She wraps her little fingers around his thumb.

Philani: "I love you my angel."

INSERT 60

It's been two days since the surgery was done. Baby is doing okay. Yes for now its baby, Lando would kill me if I named her without her approval. According to her all my names are old fashioned. I told her if it's a boy

we would name him Philani Junior, and if it's a girl then it would be Philiswa, so we can at least have the same initials, but my wife put her foot down and told me she ain't giving her daughter an old people name. So the naming has been put on pause.

I decided to drive to my house to take a shower and change clothes. I haven't been to my house since I came back from home. I got home and soon as I walked through the door I was welcomed by the most delicious aroma. It reminded me of Lando's cooking. Sometimes I could tell just by the

smell what she was making, but I just left her in a hospital bed so who was in my house? I took out my gun and walked slowly to the kitchen.

I immediately put the gun away when I saw Uche standing over the stove stirring something in a pot. I swear I am being tempted right now.

Me: "Uche!" She turned around and smiled when she saw me. "What are you doing here?"

Uche: "Well I thought I might make you a home cooked meal, i am sure you haven't had that in a while."

Me: "Thanks but it wasn't necessary, I just had food an hour ago."

Uche: "Takeaways dont count as food Philani. Take a seat I will dish up for you." She said turning back to her cooking. I decided to ignore her and go take my shower instead. I got upstairs and I took off my clothes and got into the shower. When I was done I walked out with a towel wrapped around me. I walked into Lando's closet and her scent immediately filled my nostrils. I took her maxi dress that was lying on the floor and held it close to my chest. It

still smelt like her. I put it back in its place and went to my closet. I wasn't sure what to wear.

I was busy trying to decide what to wear when I felt warm hands on my back. I quickly turned around and found Uche standing there in lingerie. She looked good I will admit that much, she wore a black lace thong and I could clearly see she had just got her Brazilian wax done. Her boobs were spilling out of the little cups of the bra she was wearing. She wore black heels with black stockings that ended just above her knees.

She walked over to me with her sexy walk and I felt my dick waking up. Talk about having a mind of it's own. She put her hands on my naked chest and started planting kisses on my chest. It has been a few weeks since I had sex and this felt good. But common sense wouldn't allow me to let this happen. I held both her hands and pulled her up just as she was trying to go down on me.

Uche: "What's wrong?"

Me: "You need to get dressed and leave." I could see the disappointment in her face.

Uche: "Philani, I miss you. I know I fucked up but I am divorced now so we can be together again."
She smiled.

Me: "And I am married. And right now my wife is in a hospital bed fighting for her life. I am sorry about your divorce....."

Uche: "I'm not. I love you and I am sure we can work this out."
She said as she tried to put her hands back on my chest.

Me: "Uche....."

Uche: "Philani there was a time when I meant something to you....."

Me: "Yeah and that time is long

gone. You made sure of that."

Uche: "And I am trying to fix that now. We can make this work I know we can. Please."

Me: "Uche like I said, I am married, so you need to get dressed and get the fuck out of my house. You and I were done a long time ago. I am married now and my wife needs me. So please leave and dont bother contacting me for anything. If it's about work you can call my PA." I pushed her out of the closet and closed the door.

I heard her footsteps fade away. I dont know why she doesn't get

the message. I hope this time she gets it cause it would be a pity if what befell Ayanda would end up befalling her.

I put on my black Nike sweatpants and a black tshirt. Since the sun is out I decided to just carry a jacket to put on later. I put on my sneakers and walked out of the closet after spraying some cologne on.

I was busy putting on my watch when I heard a commotion happening downstairs. I grabbed my jacket and my phone and made my way downstairs. I stood on top of the stairs to see what's

happening when I saw Gugu and Ntombi blocking Uche's way. Gugu had a knife in her hand and Ntombi had one too, hers looked like an Okapi, I cant be too sure. Clearly this knife wielding business runs in the family.

Ntombi: "You dont listen do you, I told you to go back to whatever hole you crawled out from but here you are."

Uche: "I dont take orders from little girls like you and you should be careful with that knife, you might hurt yourself."

Ntombi: "Not if I hurt you first."
She says with the knife aimed at

Uche's chest. I figure I have heard enough so I walk down the stairs. Uche turns and sees me, she rushes to me and hugs me with tears in her eyes.

Uche: "Thank God you are here, they are insane, they tried to kill me." I push her off of me.

Me: "I saw everything Uche there's no need for you to be dramatic about this. Since you were on your way out you can go. Girls, where's your mother?"

Gugu: "She's at the hospital."

Me: "Okay, i have to go there too. I will see you later. Uche have a safe flight. Bye." I leave them

there. I get to the gate and instruct the security guards to make sure Uche never sets foot in my house ever again.



This place is beautiful. The endless green fields, blue skies and even the yellow sunflowers that seemed to grow everywhere. I dont know how I ended up here but I dont think I want to leave. I have been walking for a while now but I cant seem to be getting tired and I dont even know where I am going.

After walking for a while I hear the sound of a river flowing. I

decide to follow the sound and sure enough I find it, theres a waterfall and endless rocks that go uphill. I am thirsty so I make my way down to the river. I kneel down and drink and I swear the water is amazing. I know water is tasteless but this one just tastes like natural God given water. When I get up I notice my dress has mud on the edges. I bend down and try to wash the mud off but it just spreads the mud so I give up.

I get up and look around me trying to figure out where to go next. Despite the fact that i

seem to be the only person here I am not scared or panicking.

Voice: "It's time to go back home now baby." I quickly turn around and find my grandmother standing behind me.

Me: "Gogo?"

Gogo: "Kuhle wa gogo, it's time to go home baby. They need you."

I couldn't even hear a word she said cause I just ran and threw myself at her. She engulfed me in her embrace and her hug was the way I remembered, warm and peaceful. I held on to her for dear life not wanting to let her go. After a while she pulled away

from me and we sat down on a rock by the river and I laid my head on her lap. She brushed my hair and I could feel myself falling asleep. I fought it though cause I didnt want to wake up and find her gone.

Gogo: "Baby, you cant sleep, you have to go home."

Me: "No gogo I want to stay with you."

Gogo: "You dont belong here Lando. You cant stay here

Sthandwa sam, you have to go back. They need you, your babies and your husband, they need you."

Me: "Then let's go together."

Gogo: "I cant baby, I have to stay here. I cant go with you."

Me: "You can, if I can go back then so can you."

Gogo: "Sthandwa sam I have been here for so long going back is impossible. But you still can." I lifted my head up from her lap and looked at her with tears in my eyes.

Me: "I dont want to leave you, not again." She held my face in her hands and looked at me.

Gogo: "Of course you can, you have so much to live for, your babies are waiting for you to love them, and your husband too, you cant

give up now, you have to go back. And forgive your mother too."

She planted a kiss on my forehead before she walked away from me.

I watched her for a while not knowing if I should follow her or not, after a while I got up from the rock and went after her. I ran after her but it felt like with every step I took my legs got weaker and weaker, I screamed for her to wait for me but she kept going. I stopped to catch my breath, I looked up again and she was nowhere in sight. There were clouds on the sky now, I could tell the rain was coming. I started to

run again but my legs wouldn't move.

I looked around me and the green luscious grass was gone, the sunflowers had wilted, this wasn't the place I was at just a few moments ago, I went back to the river and it had become scary, its flow was no longer musical and calming. I saw Philani on the other side with a baby in his arm, the baby was covered in a pink blanket, Theo was on his other arm. He looked up and smiled when he saw me.

Philani: "Lando." He shouted my name. I wanted so badly to go to

them but the river was too dangerous to cross, and there's no bridge anywhere, what if I don't make it to the other side.

Me: "I don't know how to get there."

Philani: "Cross the river."

Me: "I can't, it's too dangerous."

Philani: "Trust me. Cross."

Me: "I'm scared."

Philani: "Baby trust me, come." I hesitated a bit as I put my one foot to see how deep the river is, the water came up to my knee, I wanted to go back but I decided to put my other foot in as well. I heard Theo saying mama, I guess

that was the fuel I needed. I took more steps in till the water was on my neck but I kept going. In the middle of the river I looked up and saw Philani was no longer just with the kids, my friends and family were there too. Even my mother was there cheering me on. I lost focus for a bit and I found myself under the water. I could feel it filling up my lungs. The more I tried to gasp for air the more the water filled my lungs. After a while my eyes couldn't stay open.

I opened my eyes and I could hear voices around me. My eyes darted

around the room, it was white and there were some beeping sounds. I felt something big going down my throat. My mouth was dry, I wanted to remove this thing in my mouth so I can drink some water. I tried to move my hand up but I couldn't. I tried and tried again but each time I tried I would feel my body in pain. I got frustrated and the machines started beeping faster and rapidly.

I heard the voices I had heard before coming towards me, I noticed one of them was Nate, and then it clicked, I am in a

hospital. And immediately I remembered why I was here, I was shot. My heart started beating faster.

Nate: "Lando calm down, you're okay now. Calm down." I don't know why but hearing Nate's calm voice made me believe when he said I am okay. "I am going to remove these tubes okay." I nodded my head.

He removed the tubes and gave me a glass of water before he propped up the pillows behind me and helped me sit up. I looked at the doctor behind him and realized it was Ngcebo. I haven't seen

him in a while. I smiled at him and he smiled back.

Ngcebo: "Welcome back to the land of the living Mrs Biyela."

Me: "Thank you Doctor." I said with a bit of difficulty. He laughed.

Ngcebo: "Let's check you out to make sure you're fully okay." He said coming closer to me with a file in his hand, I guess it must be my medical file. I looked at Nate with a questioning look. How did Ngcebo end up being my doctor and how did Philani allow it?

Nate: "Dr Dlamini here is the reason why you are back with us."

I guess I have some catching up to do.

Ngcebo: "Well everything looks in order." He says stepping back again. "I will be back cause we still need to run some more tests." He walked out leaving me with Nate.

Me: "Philani." I wanted to ask where Philani was but my throat was still a bit painful but Nate understood.

Nate: "Let me call him." He took out his phone and dialed.

"Brother, where are you?.....
I have someone here who needs to speak to you but since you are

in the building already I will wait for you." He hung up and looked at me. "He is on his way." I nodded. I looked out the window and my hand involuntarily made it's way to my stomach. I felt my heart slow down when I realized I wasn't pregnant anymore. A tear escaped my eye. I said a little prayer hoping my baby didnt die when I was shot.

Just then Philani walked in with his eyes glued to his phone. Nate grabbed the phone from him and he looked up at him.

Philani: "What the fuck is wrong w....." he didnt finish his

sentence as he turned to look at me. "Lando?" He asked almost unbelieving it was me. I smiled at him inspite of the tears that filled my eyes. He slowly walked over to me and sat on the bed next to me.

Me: "Hi." I saw a tear fall from his eye as he brought me in for a hug. I could feel the pain on my shoulder but I didnt care. This is where I wanted to be. Pretty soon my other shoulder was now wet from his tears. I felt him wipe the tears before pulling back to look at me. I smiled and he attacked me with a kiss. A

hungry and passionate kiss. My hand still hadn't moved from my stomach.

I pulled away from him and the only thing connecting us were our foreheads. I figured he didn't want me to see him cry.

Me: "Philani."

Philani: "Mhmmmm."

Me: "What happened to our baby?" He moved back to look at me, he had this smirk or grin on his face, in spite of his red eyes I could see the joy in them too.

Philani: "She's okay baby, she's in the NICU, I'll take you to her later."

Me: "We have a daughter?"

Philani: "Yeah, and she's perfect baby. She's literally an angel." I smiled. I loved how he talked about her. She's daddy little princess already.

Me: "You didnt name her did you?" He laughed. I moved a bit as he came and laid next to me, putting my head on his shoulder.

Philani: "No, wouldn't dream of it. I was waiting for you." I sighed and held on to the man I love.

Gogo was right, this is where i belong.

INSERT 61

It's good to be back. But right now it feels like I am inside a flower shop. There are different kinds of flowers and gift baskets that have filled this room the past two days, some I've had to give away to the nurses and others Ntombi and Gugu were more than happy to indulge themselves with the chocolates. And for the third time today, and it's barely even ten o'clock a delivery guy walks in with a huge bouquet of red roses. It looks like there are about fifty roses in this bouquet.

Guy: "Good morning, delivery for Mrs Landokuhle Biyela?" He asks reading my name on his board. He looks around and smiles when he sees the flowers in the room.

Me: "That would be me, and if you can find space please put them there." He looks around the room then takes the flowers on the table at the end of the bed and puts them in the floor till the table is empty. He takes the roses and places them front and centre in the table before walking over to me with his clipboard.

Guy: "Will you sign this for me please." I take the clipboard and

just as I am about to sign I notice at the top corner in red ink, theres an instruction. 'Make sure these flowers are the first thing she sees in the morning.' I smile and just sign cause I already know there's only one person who can boss people around even if they dont work for him.

Me: "I dont have my wallet with me, I would give you a tip." I say handing back the clipboard and the guy smiles.

Guy: "Thank you but I already got a big fat tip just for finding space for those." He says as he walks out the door.

I need a shower so I try to get out of the bed but it's a struggle. The wound running down my chest and the C-section cut aren't making it easy. I move my legs like I am a tortoise hoping that no one walks through that door cause technically speaking I shouldn't be out of bed but my stubborn self can't stand sitting on my butt all day doing nothing, heck I haven't even been able to see my baby girl.

I manage to get down from the bed but I have to hold on to something since my legs feel like jelly and I feel a bit woozy. I

stand there holding on to the bed and the side table and try to will my legs to move. After a while I feel like my legs are strong enough so I take one step, it's not bad, I take another until I make it to the bathroom.

The great thing about private hospitals and private wards is having private bathrooms too, I can take as much time as I need here without anybody wanting to use the bathroom. I take off the hospital gown and I am left with nothing but the bandages on my body. I take my shower and when I am done I look at myself in the

mirror, my bandages are wet, and I'm no doctor but i know that's not good for my wound.

I strip the bandages off and the sight of the stitches make me feel some kind of way. The vanity in me comes full force when I realise I will probably never be able to wear a low cut shirt or even a crop top ever again. I take the towel hanging from the rack and cover myself with it and walk back to my room. I find a set of pyjamas in the little closet but there are no bandages. I press the little red button and soon a nurse comes rushing in.

Nurse: "Ma'am, you shouldn't be out of bed." She says coming over to help me back onto the bed. She leaves and comes back with another set of bandages and covers me up. She helps me put on the pyjamas and get me under the covers. She hands me my pain medication before heading out. The pills soon kick in and I drift off to dreamland.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

I don't know how long I have been out but I am woken up by the sounds of people talking in the room. I open my eyes and look

around. It's Mam'Busi and aunt Kholiwe. They are sitting on the couch next to the bed. I sit up in the bed.

Me: "Hi!" They smile.

Mam'Busi: "Hey baby. Are you okay?"

Me: "I'll live. Where's everyone?"

Kholiwe: "At home, your husband told us to give you some space."

Me: "He's way too overprotective for his own good. I am bored."

Busi: "Hopefully you'll be discharged soon, and we went past the NICU and baby girl is growing."

Kholiwe: "Yeah, she's just as

strong as her mother."

Me: "I haven't seen her, they say I have to wait a while."

Busi: "That's not right."

Kholiwe: "Yeah, I will talk to Philani, I'm sure he can convince them to let you see her."

Me: "I hope so." Mam'Busi gets up and walks out, she comes back a few minutes later pushing a wheelchair. "And now?"

Busi: "We are going to see your baby girl."

Now I know why she and aunt Kholiwe get along. They are both nuts. She helps me out of the bed and helps me sit on the

wheelchair. They push me out and we go to the NICU.

The nurse on duty let's us in. She leads us to where baby Biyela is, that's what's written on her nametag. She's perfect, even with drips and tubes on her body she is still perfect. She's sleeping but I can already tell she looks like Philani, I know they say babies change a lot but this little princess is her father's twin. I put my hand into the incubator and touch her skin. Its soft. I hold her tiny hand and she grips my finger. Almost like she wants to tell me everything will be fine.

I feel a few tears drop from my eyes.

I never in my wildest dreams ever thought something this amazing would come from me, I swear women are Gods very own miracle vessels, if this isn't Gods perfect plan I dont know what is.

Philani: "She's perfect isn't she?"

I've been so lost in this tiny perfect world of mine that I didnt even notice him walk in, or Mam'Busi and aunt Kholiwe walking out.

Me: "Yeah, and she looks nothing like me, the betrayal." He laughs and squats next to me holding my

other hand.

Philani: "Well we have six more kids to have, I am sure one of them will look like you." My head has never turned that fast. I swear my tears ran back into my eyes when he said that.

Me: "Are you drunk?"

Philani: "No, I want eight kids. We have two now so six more to go."

Me: "As long as you carry the rest of them then it's fine by me."

Philani: "We'll see."

Whoever bewitched him needs to come and help him now.



PHILANI

I took Lando back to her room after almost an hour just sitting and watching our babygirl. She does look like me though which is nice for me. We get to her room and I help her back into bed. Since her lunch is on the table I bring it close to her so she can eat. She digs in while I watch her.

Lando: "Stop watching me, you're being weird." I smile. "Where's Theo?"

Me: "Home."

Lando: "Home as in?"

Me: "Mandawe."

Lando: "Oh okay, please ask Kazi to bring him this side, I miss my

little guy."

Me: "Kazi?"

Lando: "Yeah, she's with him right?" I swallow when I realise she doesn't know that we buried Kazi already. I look at my watch.

Me: "Listen, I have to go to work, I will come see you later okay." I kiss her on the forehead before rushing out. Cowardly I know but I need to talk to Nate first, make sure she is in a right space for me to tell her about Kazi. I don't want to set her back.

I walk to his office and walk in without knocking. Instead of Nate I find Ngcebo sitting on the

desk with a nurse between his legs and his tongue down her throat. I guess he hasn't changed much. I clear my throat and they look at me startled. The nurse quickly walks out.

Ngcebo: "Cockblocker much?"

Me: "I was actually looking for Nate."

Ngcebo: "As you can see he is not here." Obviously, I walk back towards the door. I turn back to look at him.

Me: "Thank you."

Ngcebo: "For what?"

Me: "For saving Lando's life."

Ngcebo: "I didnt do it for you

Philani, Lando might be married to a murderer but she is still important to me. I wasn't going to let her die just to stick it to you."

Me: "I know, I am still grateful either way."

Ngcebo: "Whatever, Nate is doing his rounds so you can wait for him outside. I have work to do." He says turning his back to me. I stand there for a while debating if I should do what I am thinking or if I should walk away. The angel on my shoulder wins.

Me: "Give me your phone." He turns around to look at me.

Ngcebo: "You're still here?"

Me: "Yes. Give me your phone."

Ngcebo: "Why?"

Me: "Dude just give me your phone." He takes out his phone, unlocks it and hands it to me. I take it and transfer some photos to his phone and hand it back.

He takes the phone and goes through the pictures. I see tears form in his eyes but he blinks them away.

Ngcebo: "Is this supposed to be a joke?"

Me: "No."

Ngcebo: "Oh, you just figured it would be cool to send me pictures

of my dead daughter and her mother. Really how heartless can you be?"

Me: "They are not dead, they are alive and in the States. Palesa just got accepted into varsity there and she's also an outpatient in a rehab facility and well Simamkele is growing I guess." He looks at me like I have an extra eye on my forehead.

Ngcebo: "Please dont play like that."

Me: "I may be a lot of things Ngcebo, but just like you I wouldn't kill innocent people just to stick it to you."

Ngcebo: "Then why would you make me believe they are dead? Why would you torture me like that?" He says walking towards me, his shock has been replaced with anger and he seems ready to pounce on me. I have my hands in my pockets and a part of me wants to let him do whatever he wants if it will make him feel better but then the macho man in me won't allow any man to put his hands on me.

He swings at me and I duck. He comes back and punches me and this time he succeeds, I turn and land a hard punch on his face and

he stumbles back but balances with the desk. Just then Nate walks in and looks at us.

Nate: "Did I miss something?"

Me: "Nah, I was just leaving." I walk out and rub my jaw. The doctor knows how to punch. I need ice. I walk back to Lando's room and I pass a nurse in the hallway and ask her to bring me ice and a cloth.

I walk into Lando's room and find her busy on a phone. I wonder how she got one in here cause hers is at home. As I get closer I notice she is crying. I lift her face

up and sure enough she has tears running down her face.

Me: "Baby what's wrong? Why are you crying?"

Lando: "Where's Kazi?" I take the phone and realize it's my work phone. I must have forgot it when I left earlier. She is on Twitter and going through the [#RIPKazi](#) tweets. I put my phone in my pocket and sit next to her and hug her.

Me: "I am sorry, I know I should have told you sooner, I'm sorry baby." She sobs on my chest.

Lando: "So Rafael finally got what he wanted." She says after

calming down.

Me: "Please dont worry too much about Rafael. He's not important okay."

Lando: "You made him suffer right? And made him beg for his life?"

Me: "Trust me, Rafael will never be a problem ever again." She holds me tighter.

Lando: "I want to see my son."
I take out my phone and text aunt Kholiwe. I guess Theo is coming home.

INSERT 62

Discharge day. I hate hospitals and being here for almost a month has not been nice. The sad part though, I have to leave my babygirl behind. As hard as that is it will give me a chance to get the nursery ready and do a bit of shopping for her. Philani is coming over to pick me up and like an impatient child my bags are packed and ready and I am just sitting on the bed waiting for him to show up.

I pick up my phone and dial Kazi's number and like the hundred other times I have called it, it sends me straight to voicemail,

but hearing her voice is in it's own weird way soothing. It's almost like she will call me back. I realize it will take a while for me to accept her death, she trusted me with her son when she didnt even know me that well, her bubbly and infectious laughter always lit up a room, but now she's gone and I didnt even get to say goodbye. I hope and pray I can be the mother to Theo that he deserves, that she would have been.

I was lost in my own world thinking about Kazi I didn't even hear the door open. I look up and

my mom is standing in front of me.

Nelsiwe: "Hi."

Me: "Hi." Honestly I don't know how to react to her being here, as much as she has been here since I woke up we haven't had a chance to talk. And I really don't know what to say to her.

Nelsiwe: "Uhm can we talk." She looks nervous. I never thought I'd see the day.

Me: "Sure." I get down from the bed and sit on the couch with a bit of difficulty but I manage eventually. She joins me.

Nelsiwe: "I will understand if you

never want to see me again but I just want to say I am sorry. I know I failed to protect you and for that I don't deserve your forgiveness but I hope that someday you can find it in your heart to forgive me. I failed you and I will live with that for the rest of my life." I look up and she has tears running down her face. She quickly wipes them away.

Me: "Are you saying that because you mean it or this is because of what happened to you?"

Nelsiwe: "A bit of both I guess. What happened made me realize what you went through. I am an

adult and it's still hard for me to wrap my head around it. You were just a child and I can't imagine how that must have affected you, and me not believing you must have made it a hundred times worse. I'm really sorry

Landokuhle, if I could turn back time God knows I would do things differently."

She seems sincere enough about her apology, but I have wanted to know this for a long time.

Me: "Why didn't you believe me?"

She looked down at her hands that were on her lap.

Nelsiwe: "Honestly I wish I knew.

I have been asking myself the same question over and over again. And realizing that had I believed you I would have saved Gugu from having to go through the same thing."

Me: "You spoke to her?"

Nelsiwe: "Yeah, after Ntombi told me you were shot I had to put whatever toxic pride I had aside and be the mother to you two that you deserve. I just hope it's not too late." She said looking at me with pleading eyes. As much as I have forgiven her I still need answers.

Me: "Why did you take me from my

father and then tell me he died?" He sighs. I guess she wasn't expecting the questions I was posing to her.

Nelsiwe: "After I left you with him the first time, I thought he would bring you back begging and pleading, instead he did the opposite. I knew he wouldn't hand you back to me again no matter how much I begged so when my father died it seemed like the perfect opportunity to get you back so I did. Looking back now I wish I hadn't done that. I know your life would have been different, you wouldn't have gone

through half the shit you went through."

Me: "You really loved him?" She smiles.

Nelsiwe: "I did, but no matter how discreet we were about our affair, the truth always comes out. And at some point I needed to accept the fact that he would never leave his wife and I didn't want a relationship built on another woman's tears."

Me: "So you took me to punish him for not loving you enough to leave his wife?"

Nelsiwe: "No. Truth is I took you because I wanted a reminder of

our relationship and you were it. But then i started resenting you, in my head i thought that if you hadn't been born we would still be together. Stupid I know. Please forgive me." I sigh.

Me: "Truth is I forgave you a long time ago. My therapist made me realise that if I wanted to claim back my life and live it to the fullest I had to start by forgiving everyone who has hurt me, including you. So yeah, I might have held on to some parts of the hurt but I did forgive you."

I look at her and she has tears in

her eyes. She pulls me into an awkward hug, even though I know it will take a while to build a mother daughter relationship, I guess awkward hugs are just the beginning.



PHILANI

Today Lando gets discharged. Her friends decided to plan a little welcome home for her but I convinced them to have it at my dads cause once she decides she's tired I need her to be able to rest without any distractions.

I drove into the hospital parking lot and sat in the car for a while. Lando's mother asked to speak to her before she goes home so I figured I would give them time. I saw Nate walking out with another doctor. They stood at the entrance and spoke for a while before he spotted my car and came over. He opened the car door and got in.

Nate: "Brother."

Me: "Nathaniel." He laughed and I joined him.

Nate: "Dude no one calls me that besides my mother, and only when she's angry."

Me: "Your dad calls you that all the time."

Nate: "I know. Everytime he calls he never says hello. It's always 'Nathaniel, Nathaniel.' That's why I blocked his ass." I laughed.

Nate and his dad have a love hate relationship. I guess Nate stealing some of the drugs from his hospital to sell to students in boarding school didnt help their relationship. Although we did have to pay him back by working at the hospital during school holidays, washing his patients and cleaning their soiled sheets. For a normal person like me that was

enough to make sure I never into medicine. But because Nate is a little psycho he became a doctor.

Nate: "So I need to ask you something."

Me: "Shoot."

Nate: "I need you to help me with the whole lobola thing."

Me: "But you already did that before Mdoda offered himself."

Nate: "I know but I feel like it wasn't done right. And I want it to be special to Buli, I don't want her to feel like her father agreed just because we held a gun to his head. I want it to be real and special and meaningful to her."

Me: "I understand man, i mean i just redid my own lobola so I will help. But you do know this means you have to unblock your father Nathaniel?" He laughs.

Nate: "Man fuck off. My mother will tell him. Or I can just tell them myself since I am introducing Buli to my family this weekend. They are flying to Cape Town and I decided we should join them."

Me: "Does Buli know."

Nate: "Of course she knows man and she's nervous as hell."

Me: "She needs to relax, your mum is cool. Your dad on the other hand

is....."

Nate: "Stuck up? I know. And speaking of in-laws I saw yours earlier going to Lando's room."

Me: "Yeah, she wanted to talk to her. I figured I'd give them time. You think they are done yet?"

Nate: "Only one way to find out." We get out of the car and walk into the hospital. We walk to Lando's room and we find her laughing with her mother.

Me: "This is cozy."

Lando: "Hey, you are late."

Me: "It doesn't look like you missed me." I say helping her up.

Lando: "I didnt."

Me: "I'll remind you of that."

Nate and I grab her bags and follow them as they walk out. We walk to reception first and sign her discharge papers. We walk out to the parking lot and put the bags in the car while the two ladies get in the car. And they both decide to take the backseat. As soon as we are done loading the bags in the boot Nate nudges me a bit and points with his head. I look at the direction he is pointing at and see Razor playing tongue wrestling with a nurse, oblivious to his surroundings. We

decide to surprise him. We walk towards them trying our best not to alert them to our presence. We walk behind them and they are busy moaning right in the middle of the parking lot.

Nate: "You two need to get a room." They jump and I notice Razors hand immediately goes to his gun. He relaxes when he sees it's just us.

Girl: "Dr Samuels."

Nate: "Nurse Gcina."

Gcina: "I'm on my lunch break."

Nate: "I can see that. You like meat." I want to laugh but I try my best to hold it in. Poor girl is

turning red. I'm not sure if she's blushing or it's from embarrassment.

Gcina: "I need to get back to work." She literally runs from us and doesn't even look back. As soon as she is out of earshot we burst out laughing, Razor included.

Razor: "Why would you embarrass my girl like that."

Me: "And you couldn't even defend her but you call her your girl?"

Razor: "Actually, I was thinking, now that you are here, I want to move Gcina to the house."

Me: "The safehouse?"

Razor: "Yes. It's a big ass house in a prominent suburb with just two guys living there, it might draw a bit of attention as time goes on."

Nate: "True, but two men can stay together, especially if they are in love." I chuckle.

Razor: "See this is why we need a woman there. There are too many conservative and even racist neighbors, we need to make sure they have nothing to suspect."

Nate: "Yeah and the fact that you bring different girls every chance you two get might be a problem."

Razor: "Exactly. One girl with a respectable career will be less suspicious."

Nate: "That would work. But one problem though, how do you keep her away from the basement?"

That's where most work is done."

Razor: "About that, I was thinking we could use the warehouse for the torture and killings and use the basement for storing the drugs and diamonds and stuff before they go to the buyers."

Me: "And you dont think that will draw attention."

Razor: "No, the business side can

be done at the office and only the high profile buyers can get their stash from the house. If they go to the warehouse in their luxurious cars it draws attention, we've had three raids this year alone. But if their cars are parked outside a suburban home....."

Nate: "Less suspicious."

Razor: "Exactly."

Me: "Do what you need to do man." We shake hands and he gets into his car and drives off.

Nate: "You think this will work?"

Me: "It might actually work."

Nate: "I guess our business is in

good hands then."

Me: "Yep." We walk back to my car and find Lando sleeping in her mum's lap. She wakes up as soon as I start the car. We drive to my dads.

I help Lando out of the car while her mum and Nate walk into the house. I hug her.

Me: "I love you Landokuhle."

Lando: "I love you too. Now can we go get our son so we can go home. I miss my bed." I laugh.

We walk into the house. I open the door and let her walk in first.

As soon as she steps into the

house everyone screams 'surprise'. She tries to hold her tears in but they prove to be stronger than her willpower. The house is decorated in a whole lot of pink. There's one banner written 'Welcome home.' And another written 'Baby Shower.'

Buli and Faith hug her before draping two sashes on her and placing a crown on her head. As perfect as this moment is, it's still missing a bit of Kazilicious swag. I have to get used to moments like these now, celebrations, birthdays, graduations and weddings knowing

she isnt here to be a part of it.
Why does life have to be so cruel.

INSERT 63

A year ago my family consisted of two people, Faith and Buli. In all that time I had made peace with the fact that I would be alone, no husband, no kids, no mom and no dad. A year later I have all of that and more. I'm married, unconventional as it was it has turned out better than I thought. And I have two kids all under two, my dad is back in my life and so is my paternal family,

my mum and I are taking baby steps towards rebuilding our relationship. So overall I would say my life is great.

Sitting in this room right now with all the people I love, having conversations and sharing laughter, to say I am blessed would be an understatement. I have my baby boy in my arms watching him sleep. I have missed him. And I can tell he missed me too, since he wouldn't leave my side since I walked in here.

After opening almost all the gifts I got I can fully say Lakhawe

Iminathi Biyela will be a spoiled little girl, she already has everyone wrapped around her little finger and she's still lying in a hospital bed. Talk about being lucky.

We drove home around 7 PM, we left most of the gifts there with Philani promising to come back the next day and pick them up. We got home and I tried to bathe Theo but Philani would have none of that. He let me watch as he bathed him though and I got to put him to bed.

I took a shower and fell right into sleep after. Or maybe it's

the pain medication that knocked me out. I didn't even hear Philani come in.

I woke up and took a shower, although I wanted to take a bubble bath I couldn't because of my wounds. When I was done I stood by the mirror with a towel around me, the scar from the surgery was peeping on the top of the towel. I pulled the towel off and as much as I was healing, physical scars can make one insecure. The baby fat wasn't helping either. I heard the door open and I quickly put the towel back on.

Philani: "Hey, breakfast is ready."

Me: "Ok thanks. I'll be down in a minute." I say hoping he will leave instead he stands by the door and I dont know how to react.

Philani: "What's wrong?"

Me: "Nothing."

Philani: "Are you sure?"

Me: "Of course I am sure.

Nothing is wrong I promise."

Philani: "Ok. Hurry up your food is getting cold." He walks over and kisses my forehead before heading out. As soon as the door closes I let out the breathe I didnt know I was holding in. I really need to

make an appointment with Dr Steenkamp as soon as possible.

I walk out of the bathroom and find Philani sitting on the bed. I walk to the closet and wear a long sleeve round neck tshirt and a pair of jeans. I walk out and he holds his hand out for me to sit next to him and I do.

Philani: "What's wrong?"

Me: "Nothing."

Philani: "Lando I know you, remember, I know when something is bothering you. So tell me what it is." I sigh and look away from him.

Me: "My scar. It's big and ugly.

It's not fully healed yet and I can already tell it's going to be really ugly and unattractive." That was a mouthful. I don't know why I just told him that but I am glad it's out now.

Philani: "Your scar is going to heal."

Me: "I know that, I just won't be able to wear a crop top or a low cut top or a bikini. It's like this one thing will be a constant reminder that I almost died."

Philani: "Almost being the operative word. Instead of seeing it as a negative thing, look at it as a reminder that you survived."

Inspite of bullets being shot into you, you survived and you brought a child into the world. So stop thinking too hard about this and just enjoy being back home."

Maybe he is right. Although mentally I believe him a part of me still needs to adjust to this new body, but I am not taking of this tshirt though. We got up and went downstairs and had breakfast before heading to the hospital to see Lakiwe.

We got to the hospital and Nate decided to take Theo to his office since technically speaking babies aren't allowed in the hospital. We

went to the nursery and my babygirl was breathing on her own. The tubes were out and she had gained weight. The doctor said if she keeps up her progress we might be able to take her home soon. Music to my ears.

Exactly three weeks later baby came home. Philani had turned her nursery into a pink wonderland, well not him personally but he hired people, and according to him observing and giving orders is as good as doing the job himself. I must admit as nervous as I am about having to raise a daughter

in this world we live in, having a baby daddy like Philani makes things a bit better.

Today we are having a photoshoot for her second month in the world, we were supposed to do it when she turned one month but since she was in hospital we had to wait a bit. Theo seems excited to have a baby sister. Since he has started talking he has mastered three words, 'mama, dada and sisi' since Philani has been drilling that into him since he said his first word, which was 'mama'. Next week we are heading down to Mandawe for

Lakhiwe's imbeleko ceremony, but tomorrow it's her christening. Even though I haven't been to church for a while now bringing my babygirl into the house of the Lord is a great comeback, even if I say so myself.



PHILANI

I decided to take Paternity leave, well partial leave since I still work from home. I swear babies are magic in human form. And I have also learned that raising a son is different from raising a daughter. With Theo I just want him to be a man, a good man who

values and respects everyone, man and women. But with Lakhawe I just wish I could shield her from the world and all its cruelties.

I've been sitting in her nursery watching her sleep. She's probably tired from her christening. Our family and friends are downstairs and I can't seem to pull myself away from this little girl.

Lindani: "You will bore holes into the poor child looking at her like that." I turn around and he is standing in the door watching me.

Me: "Say that again when you have your own." He laughs and

walks over to the window.

Lindani: "That's a long way off my man."

Me: "Yeah I didnt think you would ever get a steady girlfriend but look at you now, you've been with the same girl for almost a year now." I say walking over to stand next to him.

Lindani: "Yeah I didnt think I would either but man I think I hit the jackpot with Taki. Or maybe I am fucked, she's everything I could ever want in a woman."

Me: "So what's the plan?"

Lindani: "I am thinking once we

sort out that issue with the Durban supply I want to pay lobola." He says that last part almost in a whisper and he gulps down his whiskey. I want to laugh but we are in a nursery with a sleeping baby so I have to hold it in. My friend looks scared as fuck.

Me: "Dude stop making it seem like you are walking into a slaughterhouse. Marriage is good when you find the right girl. Look at Nate and Buli."

Lindani: "This is all your fault you know. You opened the floodgates and now all of us are drowning."

The laugh I was holding in finally makes it's way out. "Dude it's not funny, I am supposed to be a bachelor for life. Now I am hooked on this one girl, Nate just got married, heck even Razor has a girlfriend. And I am pretty sure if Kazi was still here Sizwe would be headed down the aisle."

Me: "So what's so scary about being in love?"

Lindani: "Everything." Our phones beep at the same time. We take them out and look at them. It's a message from Sbu asking us to come to the lounge. I kiss my baby and walk out.

We get downstairs and Nate and Sizwe are already standing by the door waiting for us. I kiss Lando and we leave.

We get to the lounge and head straight to the office. We find Sbu on his laptop as usual and Razor pacing up and down. Dladla is sitting on the couch sipping on some whiskey. He better pay for that.

Me: "What's going on?"

Razor: "Bozza I know that technically speaking Sbu and I should be running this but we have a problem."

Nate: "And what's the problem?"

Dladla: "I know who has the Durban Supply."

Lindani: "Okay can y'all stop going around in circles and tell us whats going on."

Dladla: "We traced the supply back to Ngwenyama."

Sizwe: "Okay who the fuck is Ngwenyama?"

Sbu: "Msebenzi Ngwenyama. He is the head of the hawks. A known criminal who hides behind his political alliances. Corrupt as fuck."

Me: "Ok so what does he want with us? We have nothing that belongs to him."

Dladla: "Actually you do. Lando and Taki, they technically belong to him."

Me: "I am not understanding."

Razor: "Ngwenyama is in partnership with some Thai business people. On the outside they are into imports and exports, but what they are hiding is that they deal in human trafficking.

Ngwenyama is their Sub Saharan partner, he makes sure that the girls they traffic from Southern Africa make it to Thailand

without any hassles. Now at the beginning of the year we rescued Lando and Taki from those guys

Ayanda sold her to, well those guys were just small fish. The Thai guys want them, they say they paid a lot of money for them. And they know they are under your protection which is why they came after you. They want what belongs to them and they won't stop till they have it."

I can see Lindani's jaws clench right next to me. And at that moment it finally dawned on me. In the underworld there is no such thing as retirement. If you do make it out alive consider yourself lucky. This life we chose, it seemed easier and fun at first

but now we have more to lose than just our lives.

Nate: "I think it's time we brought in the big guns."

Me: "You cant be serious."

Lindani: "Nate is right bra. We need your dad on this. We might run Joburg and even Durban but your father's reach is international. And if we are going to protect our women we need to pull out all the stops."

I've spent my entire life trying to prove that I can do things on my own. That I am just as capable of protecting myself and my family, but maybe my friends are

right. I still have a father and I know he would do anything for me, and I know he would do anything for Lando and his grandkids, so maybe it's time I humbled myself and asked for his help. I am not willing to lose another loved one.

INSERT 64

LANDO

Philani has been gone for the better part of the afternoon and its almost ten o'clock and he is still not back. I am sure whatever it is they are working on is big. I knew it was serious

the moment I saw Nate and Sizwe stand up together to leave before Lindani and Philani walked down the stairs. I just hope no one gets killed.

I put the kids to sleep and took a shower then got into bed. I tried calling Philani and his phone rang right outside the bedroom door. He walked in with the phone in his hand.

Philani: "I am here." He said waving the phone.

Me: "Hey, I was worried about you."

Philani: "I know, I'm sorry I just have a lot going on." He sat on

the bed next to me.

Me: "Anything I can help with?"

Philani: "No it's okay. I will figure it out." He got up and went to the bathroom and soon I heard the shower running. He came back almost thirty minutes later, i swear i wasn't watching the clock.

He walked to the closet in his zombie like state and came back a couple of minutes later with his PJ pants on and got into bed.

Me: "You know I dont mind"

he shut me up with a kiss. A hungry and provocative kiss. He pulled the covers off of me and

pulled me down so he could lay on me. My nightie came off and he attacked my skin with endless kisses with a bit of biting here and there.

I put my hand on my scar soon as he moved down towards my boobs. He moved my hands and kissed my scar all the way from the top down to the bottom. He even had time to worship my C-section scar too. I must admit that made my insides jiggly and dancy and my clit was on overdrive. I mean we have had sex a few times since coming back from the hospital but

in all those times I insisted on the lights being off.

He made his way down to my little haven and worshipped it like it should be done. I arched my back and held on tight to the sheets.

The moans that were coming out of my mouth were like fuel to him. I felt two hands make their way into my vagina while his tongue made magic with my clit. I don't know how many times he made me cum with just his fingers and tongue.

He moved up to my face and kissed me with some of my juices dripping off him. He took off his

pyjama pants and his dick sprung out like the magnificent beauty it is. He entered me in one swift movement and Thank heavens for my wetness otherwise that would have hurt. He pounded into me with so much intensity I thought his dick would pull my intestines out.

It was when he flipped me over like a pancake and entered me from behind that I realized something is going on with him. Of all the times we have made love it was never like this. I am sure whatever he was feeling or going through was huge. I came

and he kept going and I heard him groan behind me about a minute later. His limp body fell on top of mine. And as much as I wanted to ask him what was going on with him, I figured I would let him tell me when he was ready.

He got off me and layed on his back, he pulled me to him and soon I heard him snoring. I looked up at his face and there was a tear going down to his ear. I hold on to him a little tighter and lay my head on his chest and doze off.

I woke up early the next morning to attend to a crying Lakhiwe, I sat on the couch in her nursery with my feet on the ottoman and i fed her her bottle. Probably the best part of motherhood in my opinion, feeding your child while they look up at you like the world begins and ends with you. Its magic.

She fell right back to sleep and since it was almost seven o'clock I decided to make breakfast for everyone. I laid the food out on the kitchen counter cause I didnt have the energy to set the table and have to clean up afterwards.

Good thing Maminguni was coming back soon.

Philani came down the stairs wearing his suit, and I thought he was still on leave.

Me: "Goodmorning." He kisses me on the cheek and takes a sausage and puts it in his mouth. "You going somewhere?"

Philani: "I am going to work."

Me: "What happened to your leave?"

Philani: "Unfortunately some things cannot be sorted out from home, I need to be in the office."

Me: "Philani what is going on?" I dish up for him and put the plate

in front of him.

Philani: "Nothing is going on babe."
He avoids looking at me when he says that and I know he is hiding something. I take my plate and sit next to him and eat my food. There is no sound between us except the knives and forks meeting the plates. When he is done he takes his plate and washes it. He picks up his briefcase ready to leave.

Me: "I am not dumb Philani, I know something is going on but if you think I dont deserve to know then it's fine. I won't bother you with this again." I get off the

highchair and walk towards the stairs. I feel him take a sigh.

Philani: "Lando it's nothing for you to worry about I promise." I turn around and look at him.

Me: "I said it's fine Philani, you dont need to explain." He takes a deep breath and puts his briefcase on the counter and he sits on the highchair. He holds out his hand to me and I know he is about to tell me everything.

Yeah a little emotional blackmail works most of the time. I sit down.

Philani: "Someone is after us. And the person has connections

everywhere. The only way we can beat him is to ask my dad to intervene."

Me: "Who is after you and why?"

Philani: "It's one of the big bosses who is responsible for your kidnapping. As much as Ayanda thought she was the mastermind behind it all she was nothing more than a pawn. There are people high up who are pulling the strings and one of them has our stuff. He says to get it back we need to handover you and Taki because they paid a lot of money for you."

My heart dropped to my stomach. I shouldn't have asked him what was wrong. I should have just let him sort it out. When will we ever have peace in this family. It's like everyday something new pops up. I know they say nothing ever lasts but why does our happiness always have to be shortlived.

Me: "So what are you going to do about this whole thing?" I can't believe I am being calm about this right now.

Philani: "Well I need to ask my dad for help. He's the only person who can put an end to this."

Me: "Your dad is not into your

world so how will he fix this?" He chuckles.

Philani: "My dad is one of the biggest gangsters I know. Dont be fooled by the suits."

Me: "Okay so why are you so reluctant to ask him for help?"

Philani: "Because it's my job to protect you. I am your husband. He did his job and protected my mother so why cant I do the same for you? Ever since we got married its been one problem after the other. I feel like I keep putting you in harm's way. You almost died because I failed to realize I had a snitch in my

circle, my sister died because of that. I am failing you and now we have two kids, how will I protect them?" I can see the tears threatening to make their way out but he keeps blinking them away.

I get up from the high chair and stand between his thighs. I put my hands on the side of his face and make him face me.

Me: "Listen to me and listen carefully. Dont ever question your worth, not to me. I know our marriage wasnt conventional but you have been amazing. You have done everything in your power to

protect us and I know you will keep doing that. I love you and I trust you. I know you won't let anything happen to us. So stop worrying and find a solution to this, and if your father is the answer then you do what you have to do for this family. Okay?" He nods his head as tears stream down his face. I wipe the tears on his face.

I stand on tippy toes and kiss him. He lifts me up and places me on the counter. He unties my gown and pulls my underwear to the side and enters me. I make a

mental note to get my shots before he knocks me up again.



PHILANI

After my talk with Lando I decided to go straight to my dad. As much as what Lando said makes sense I still cant help feeling like I have failed her, what kind of husband does it make me if I cant protect my own family.

I found my dad in his study with files on his desk doing God knows what. For someone who claims to be retired he works a lot.

Me: "Mgazi." I say walking into the study. He looks up with his reading glasses on the tip of his nose.

Baba: "Son, have a seat." I sit down while he closes the file in front of him and takes off his glasses. "I hope you brought my grandbabies."

Me: "No. They are home. I need your help."

Baba: "Okay, what can I do for you son?"

I tell him everything. By the time I am done he looks like he is deep in thought.

Baba: "I'll sort it out."

Me: "Ok. Let me go to the office."

I leave him there. I figured asking him what he would do would be a waste of time. I know he wouldn't have told me. I guess now I can tick that off my worry list.



NARRATED

After Philani left his father's house, Mr Biyela made a phonecall.

Mr Biyela: "Get the jet ready, we are going to Thailand." He hangs up.

He packed up his files and walked out to his car. He drove to the Hawks offices in Pretoria. He walks past the security and heads straight to Ngwenyama's office. He finds him in a meeting.

Mr B: "We need to talk."

Ngwenyama: "Please wait outside I am in the middle of a very important meeting." Mr Biyela doesn't move.

Mr B: "And I have places to be so we can talk about this right now with your audience or you can ask them to leave and we can talk."

Ngwenyama tells the guys to leave. They get up and walk out.

Ngwenyama: "If you are here to plead on your sons behalf, you can tell him to give me what I need and he can have what he needs. It's a win win situation."

Mr B: "You expect him to trade his wife for drugs? Is everything okay with you?"

Ngwenyama: "I am perfectly fine Biyela, I just want what belongs to me. I have clients who paid a whole shitload of money for those girls. Now thanks to your son they didnt get their merchandise. And to top it all of he had to go and kill the people I worked with. He needs to pay. And I will make sure

I get what's due to me."

Mr B: "I have watched you for years do this shit and hide behind your political alliances. This time however you are playing with fire. This is my family."

Ngwenyama: "Your problem Biyela you think I am afraid of you. I am not. If you care about your family as much as you do you will give me what I want."

Mr B: "How much?"

Ngwenyama: "Excuse me?"

Mr B: "How much money do you want? We both know this is about money so how much do you want?"

Ngwenyama chuckles.

Ngwenyama: "Money doesn't solve everything."

Mr B: "Leave my family alone Ngwenyama. I won't ask you again." He turns and leaves.

He gets to his car and drives straight to the airport.

INSERT 65

NARRATED

After an eleven hour flight Mr Biyela finally landed at Phuket international airport in Thailand. There was a car already waiting for him. He got into the car and he was driven to Bang Tao. He

drove into a mansion. He parked outside and a man was already waiting for him at the entrance.

Man: "Mr Biyela. It's nice to see you again. Mr Chakrii is expecting you." He shakes his hand and leads him into the house. He leads him to the patio where Mr Chakrii is standing watching the city.

Man: "Mr Chakrii, Mr Biyela is here for you." He leaves. Chakrii turns around to look at Mr Biyela. Chakrii: "My old friend." They hug. "I am sorry about your daughter. I know your pain. A drink?" He asks soon as he pulls away from him.

Mr B: "Thank you. You know I'd never say no to a good scotch."

Chakrii pours the drink and hands it to Mr Biyela.

Chakrii: "So my friend, last I heard you retired and you got grandkids now." Mr Biyela chuckles.

Mr B: "The Joy's of getting old."

Chakrii: "Or maybe its ensuring your legacy lives on."

Mr B: "That too. As much as this catch up is long overdue I have more pressing matters at hand."

Chakrii: "Anything I can help with?"

Mr B: "Yes, I know how hard

you've worked with your anti trafficking organization, you've even won awards for it."

Chakrii: "Busani I am sure you didnt come to tell me what I already know."

Mr B: "Right, your son Chai, he's about to bring everything you have worked hard for down and he will drag your name down with him."

Chakrii: "I dont understand."

Mr B: "At the beginning of this year my daughter in law was kidnapped and almost trafficked, she and two other girls she was with were able to escape. Your

son was involved. Now his associates want my daughter in law and the other girls cause apparently they refuse to lose out on an investment." Mr Chakrii takes a seat on the patio chair and Mr Biyela follows suit.

Chakrii: "Who are these associates?"

Mr B: "One of them is the head of the Hawks."

Chakrii: "Let me guess, the hawks is just a front for him?"

Mr B: "Yes. And as much as he has a whole lot of political alliances he also has a lot of enemies. I have spoken to a

couple of them who are willing to help."

Chakrii: "Tell you what, you deal with the associate and I will deal with my son."

Mr B: "Of course, and I will ensure nothing leads back to you."

Chakrii: "No, whatever you do I want you to incriminate my son too, I love him and God knows I would do anything for him but I cannot turn a blind eye to this. He needs to pay. Make sure he is incriminated, and if I get on the firing line then so be it, I will take care of my son once all the information is out there."

Mr B: "Are you sure about this my friend? This could put your entire legacy and reputation at risk."

Chakrii: "If theres one thing I hate is someone thinking they have ownership over another human being, my wife was a victim of it and I swore I would fight this until I take my last breath. My son's actions is not only dishonoring all my hard work but he is dishonoring his mother's pain. And if jail is what he needs to think about his actions then so be it."

Mr B: "I am glad to hear that."

Chakrii: "Join me for dinner. My

wife will be happy to see you."

Mr B: "Gladly." They walk into the house.



LANDO

I drove into the hospital parking lot early in the morning. I need to get my shots before we go down to Mandawe for Lakhiwe's ceremony. I got to Dr Khuzwayo's office and she was already waiting for me.

Me: "I'm sorry I am late." She laughs.

Dr K: "Its okay, two kids all under two can be hectic for anyone. So I

understand." I sat up on the bed while she got her stuff ready.

"We need to make sure you aren't pregnant again before I can give you the shot."

She hands me a tiny cup to pee on. I go into the bathroom and pee then hand the cup back to her. She does what she needs to do and I was holding my breath throughout.

Dr K: "Okay, all is clear, you are not pregnant. Now for the shot."

I let out the breath I was holding in and she gives me the shot.

When she's done I leave and head to the mall to buy a few things for the trip to KZN. I get back to the house and Philani being the kind that keeps time is already waiting for me. We are meeting the others at the airport.

Philani: "You are late." He says soon as I walk through the door. He has Laksiwe in his arms and Theo is already strapped in his car seat. My poor baby must have been causing havoc, he started walking and chaos began.

Me: "I know baby, let me just change then we can go." I quickly rush upstairs and change into a

long yellow maxi dress and a mid length denim jacket. I put on my sneakers and rush downstairs. I get to the lounge and its empty. I walk out and the kids are already in the car and Philani is pacing up and down next to the car. I get into the car and he joins me.

Me: "Did you take out the things in the boot?"

Philani: "Yep. It's all there." He drives out.

Me: "Thanks. Is your dad back?"

Philani: "Yep. He said we'll meet him at home."

Me: "Do you think your issue has

been taken care off?"

Philani: "Dad always says slow and steady wins the race. I am pretty sure whatever he is planning, he will make sure its clean."

Me: "I still have my doubts though. Your dad is one of the kindest people I know. So I dont know how he will be able to deal with someone like Ngwenyama." He chuckles.

Philani: "My dad is a man of few words and more action.

Ngwenyama might hide behind his high profile friends but he doesn't

know my dad."

Me: "If you say so."

We drive to the airport and the gang is already here waiting.

Faith and Mbusi are even bringing the kids. We greet and board the flight. We strap the babies in and we take off. We get to Durban and drive off to Mandawe.

The ceremony happened early in the morning and by mid afternoon we were sitting on the veranda drinking "tea" while gogo babysat the babies. Her wishes not ours. Luckily aunt Sphelele was there

to help. The guys were helping with heaven only knows what.

I got a text from Philani to meet him at the house. I left the girls and went to the house. I found him in the lounge watching TV. I sat on top of him with my boobs in his face. He laughed.

Philani: "What happened to not having sex in my father's house." He asked as I kissed his neck.

Me: "I dont see your father anywhere." He laughed. He got up with me in his arms and headed to the bedroom. Soon as we were inside he closed the door and locked it before pinning me

against the wall. We had our quickie before he took me for a walk.

We walked for a while and I didnt understand where we were going.

Me: "Philani, where are we going?"

Philani: "You'll see."

We kept walking on the road till we got to a little pathway that led into a bush. We walked in and when we got to the other side I realized we were in a graveyard.

Philani: "I figured since you didnt make it to the funeral I might as well show you where Kazi was buried." I took a deep breath as

he led me into the cemetery. I saw her grave before we even got to it. Just like she was, the tombstone stood out from far away.

I walked to it and Philani stood back. I looked at it for a while before I got on my knees.

Me: "Hey, this isn't how we should be doing this. You should be planning my wedding not laying here." I wiped a tear that fell from my eye. "This is not fair. I never got to say goodbye, Theo never got to say goodbye and you didnt even get to meet your niece. She's perfect. I know you would

have loved her. And you would have spoiled her rotten. I miss you Kazi. I really wish you were here." I wiped my tears and got up. I walked back to Philani and he hugged me. We stood there for a while just looking at her tombstone.

Philani: "Are you good?"

Me: "I'll live. Did you see her?"

Philani: "Who?"

Me: "Kazi. Did you see her, how did she look, was she peaceful?"

Philani: "I don't know actually.

Dad wouldn't allow an open casket.

The last time I saw her was when we took her out of the car.

Dad did everything else after that. I guess we were all in so much shock we couldn't see straight."

Me: "Maybe that's a good thing."

Philani: "Yeah. Ready to go back?"

Me: "Yeah."

We went back home and it was already getting dark. By the time we got there most people were already inside the houses. We got to our house and I took a shower while Philani decided to watch the news. Soon as I was done I put on my pajamas and gown. I went to the nursery to check on the kids and they were both sound

asleep. I was ready to go and sleep when I heard voices from the lounge. I got closer to hear what was being said.

Philani: "So you won't tell me what you did?"

Mr B: "I would much rather you didn't know."

Philani: "The news said Ngwenyama has been suspended from the hawks pending an investigation. Apparently an anonymous source tipped off the powers that be about him dealing drugs."

Mr B: "I heard."

Philani: "So you know nothing

about this?"

Mr B: "Son you asked me to help you with Ngwenyama and I am. All you need to do is take care of your wife and kids. I will do the rest."

Philani: "Okay." There's silence. I turn around and go back to the bedroom. I take off my gown and get into bed. Maybe Philani was right, maybe his father is really a gangster.

I decided to go through my social media to see if there was anything on Ngwenyama. I gasped when I saw the hashtags on Twitter. The man

was arrested after drugs were found in his house. A whole head of hawks who is supposed to be the one arresting people is now on the receiving end. I just hope this ends soon. I cant live my life on the edge all the time.



NARRATED

At a mansion in Bryanston, Msebenzi Ngwenyama is in his lounge watching the news on repeat when Chai walks in. He switches of the news and leads him to the home office.

Chai: "What in the fuck is going on? Your name is all over the news."

Ngwenyama: "You dont think I know that. My job is on the line."

Chai: "How did drugs make it to your house? How could you be so careless?"

Ngwenyama: "Do you know me to be careless Chai? When have I ever made a mistake. You and I both know I have never made a mistake before."

Chai: "Then how do you explain this? Your own organization is investigating you. Do you know the mess this will create should

they end up anywhere near the company."

Ngwenyama: "For heavens sake Chai." He hits the desk with his fist. "I know all that shit, you dont need to tell me."

Chai: "Fine. Have you found the girls? Gareth refuses to take any of the other girls we have. He insists on the ones he paid for."

At that moment a lightbulb went off in Ngwenyama's head.

Ngwenyama: "That's it."

Chai: "What?"

Ngwenyama: "The girls, one of them happens to be Busani Biyela's daughter in law."

Chai: "Busani Biyela of Biyela Holdings?"

Ngwenyama: "Yes him, I took his sons drug supply in exchange he was meant to give me the girls. What if he had something to do with the drugs in my house?"

Chai: "Let me get this straight. You took drugs from Biyela's son and you are dumb enough to believe he would hand over his son's wife for drugs?"

Ngwenyama: "Why not? All I wanted was atleast one of the girls. He could have kept his wife and handed the other two over."

Chai: "Wow, I am screwed."

Ngwenyama: "For God's sake calm down. It's just drugs, it will be easy to prove they were planted and then I go back to work and we proceed as normal." Chai laughs.

Chai: "Do you really think Biyela is some mousey little business man?"

Ngwenyama: "Isnt he?"

Chai: "You have political alliances and that man has that and more. He knows people in places you will never ever even think of walking into. He is good friends with the Russian president."

Ngwenyama: "Are you for real?"

Chai: "Did he come and warn you

to stay away from his family?"

Ngwenyama: "A few days ago."

Chai: "That's his MO. He warns you once and that's it. If you can't do what he says all hell will break loose."

Ngwenyama: "And planting drugs in my house is the best he can do? Please." He pours himself a drink and pours one for Chai and hands it to him.

Chai: "This is just the beginning. By the time he is done with you, you will curse the day you ever laid eyes on that man." He gulps down the drink in his hand and puts the glass on the desk. "I am not

about to get myself on the bad side of that man. So I am sorry my friend but you are on your own now." He leaves.

Ngwenyama: "STOP BEING A COWARD CHAI!" He shouts but Chai keeps going. Ngwenyama takes the whiskey decanter and throws it across the room and it hits the wall and breaks, splattering glass and whiskey everywhere. "You will regret this Biyela. I swear to God you will."

INSERT 66

The past couple of months have been eye opening to say the least. Msebenzi Ngwenyama was arrested for drug trafficking, human trafficking, diamond smuggling, murder, corruption, the list goes on. And not only that he took almost half of parliament down with him, including ministers and big wigs in the political circles. Of course many of them were charged with corruption and defeating the ends of justice for protecting him. He carried the bulk of the charges hence even his friends sang like canaries when questioned, at the end they were

given at least ten years behind bars, suspended sentences and probations while he was sentenced to life behind bars. The fact that Interpol was involved in the case meant our justice system finally worked to its full potential, with the world watching there had to be no mistakes.

I remember the day of Msebenzi's sentencing, we all showed up to the court, Taki, Kele and I were called as witnesses so we went to hear the verdict although a guilty verdict was already expected, with all the evidence presented, the judge had

no choice. And he didnt even need a different day to pass the sentence.

The surprising part though was the smug look on Mr Biyela's face when the sentence was issued. I saw Msebenzi look at him with eyes that were pleading for mercy. Philani had told me his father was a gangster in a suit but this, I did not expect. The investigation didnt take long because he had done the bulk of the work. God alone knows how long he had spent gathering the evidence.

After the sentencing he invited us over to his place to celebrate. Philani and I went past our house to get the kids since he insisted he wanted to see his grandbabies. And get this, he bought Theo a piece of land for his first birthday. As elaborate a gift as that is I am not complaining, its land after all.

We got to his house and the gang was already there, drinks in hand and laughter galore. He quickly took the kids and sat down with them on his laps. Eventually Theo got bored and wanted to run around. Lakiwe fell asleep in his

arms and I saw him walk upstairs to put her down. I decided to follow him. I found him in the nursery shooshing her, yes they have their own room in their grandfather's house. Talk about being spoilt.

Me: "I guess I owe you a thank you." He turned around and looked at me with a smile on his face.

Mr B: "I should be thanking you for my grandbabies."

Me: "Dont change the subject." He laughed and sat on the couch.

Mr B: "Okay then so what are you thanking me for?" I walked in and stood by the crib looking at him.

Me: "Thank you for what you did. I know Philani was reluctant to ask you for help but you came through, so thank you."

Mr B: "My son is stubborn, he forgets that family sticks together no matter what."

Me: "Or maybe he just wants to prove to you that he can take care of himself and his family."

Mr B: "I know he can. But asking for help doesn't make him incapable."

Me: "Try telling him that." He chuckles.

Mr B: "Philani reminds me of myself when I was younger, I

was just as stubborn if not more, I wanted to do things myself without anyone's help. But I learned that no human being is an island. We need each other."

Me: "True that."

Mr B: "So when are you going back to work?" Okay that was a quick change of subject.

Me: "I don't know yet. I'm kinda liking this stay at home mom phase." He chuckles and gets up from the couch.

Mr B: "Knowing you it won't last that long." We walk out and go back downstairs.

We sit down at the table and have our lunch. As peaceful and joyous as this moment is I can't help wondering when it will end. How long it will take before something else will come and disturb our peace.

Can we go back to just over a year ago, when I was just a normal Chartered Accountant whose concern was about making sure the company accounts are on the straight and narrow, when I was miss ambitious aiming for the sky, when I was single and actually enjoying it. When my face

wasn't plastered all over social media. Okay maybe I am just exaggerating but I really wish my face wasn't all over social media right.

It's barely been twenty four hours since he was sentenced but now everyone wants to talk about the victims of his human trafficking circle. As much as I am glad he is behind bars I didn't want to be the poster child for human trafficking. I mean there are more victims, some with more horrific stories than mine, but I guess being a Biyela means the media will focus on that and not

the actual issue. I put my phone back on the side table.

I turn over and Philani is still fast asleep. I watch him sleep for a while before I decide to take a shower. Once i am done i walk back to the bedroom with a towel around me and sit on the bed. I check the baby monitor and both babies are up. They are making baby sounds, almost like they are having a conversation. I lotion while watching them on the iPad. I see Theo trying to get himself out of the crib so I rush to the nursery. By the time I get there he has his head stuck

between the wooden bars. How he got in there is a mystery to me. He sees me walk in and he tries to pull himself back but he can't and that's when he starts crying. I try to help him out but I also can't get him out. I start to panic and shout for Philani. He comes running, in panic mode. He laughs soon as he sees him stuck there. He runs back to our bedroom and comes back with his phone on record. He is laughing through this while I try to get my baby out. I swear men are trash for real.

Me: "Really Philani? Help me!" He keeps laughing and recording.

Philani: "I will baby but I will need this to remind him of this moment when he's a teenager and he thinks he is cute."

Me: "Philani, I swear to God if you dont get my son out of this I will kill you myself." He stops laughing and looks at me.

Philani: "Okay Okay." He puts his phone away and helps me get him out. His screams and wailing has passed on to Lakiwe who is now crying too. Once he is out I pick him up and try to comfort him while Philani gives his attention

to Lakhiwe. And Philani wants me to go through this six more times, yhu Hha ah andizi shem.



NARRATED

Inside the Leeuwkop Maximum Security prison, Mr Biyela is sitting in the warden's office when the door opens and a prison official brings in Ngwenyama. He unlocks the cuffs on his feet and the ones on his hands and walks out and closes the door behind him. Ngwenyama moves to the other side of the room before turning to look at Biyela who is

still sitting on the chair with his legs crossed.

Ngwenyama: "I am pretty sure you didnt come all the way here to look at me. Say what you want and get the fuck out."

Mr B: "How long do you think it will take before all the people you put behind bars come for you? I mean you are in jail now, they are in jail too and we both know a lot of shit happens behind bars."

Ngwenyama: "What do you want Biyela?" He crosses his arms across his chest.

Mr B: "I thought I should let you know, remember Warren Marsala,

the businessman you framed and put behind bars to protect Minister Cele, well he is being moved this side, and I hear he has unfinished business with you." Ngwenyama uncrosses his arms and comes close to Biyela who doesn't budge.

Ngwenyama: "You lousy son of a bitch. I am in jail for heavens sake, you got your revenge now leave me the fuck alone."

Mr B: "You are right. I am almost done with you. I just need to see how you and Warren will get along being under the same roof."

Ngwenyama: "Why dont you just

kill me and get it over with? I know that's what you want."

Mr B: "I am not a murderer Ngwenyama, although people like you push one to the edge death just seems like an easy way out. And if you think being stripped off of everything you hold dear to you is torture, then you are about to experience a new and upgraded version of pain. Warren is eager to see you."

Ngwenyama: "One day, Biyela, one day...."

Mr B: "One day what? You will get me? In case you haven't noticed, your squad turned on you

in a blink of an eye. At this point you are alone. But I do admire your determination. Your friend Chai has also been sentenced, and lucky for you, you don't get to serve your sentence in Thailand cause trust me, this will be fun for you."

Ngwenyama goes to the door and bangs on it twice. The warden walks in.

Warden: "What's going on?"

Ngwenyama: "I would like to go back to my cell please." The warden looks at Mr Biyela.

Warden: "Are you done with him?"
Mr Biyela nods his head and the

warden calls one of the guards who comes in and takes Ngwenyama away.

Mr B: "I should also get going." He gets up and shakes the warden's hand. "Thank you sir."

Warden: "Anytime Ntshangase." He leaves.



PHILANI

I am meeting the guys at the lounge in a few minutes. And now that the trial is over and that jackass is behind bars I can breathe a little. I must admit the guys were right, getting my dad involved was the best

decision. I know if I had taken care of it there would have been a whole lot of bloodshed, but my dad being the smart gangster that he is, went the legal and obviously smarter route.

I got to the lounge and went straight to the VIP section. I don't know why these guys chose to be within the people instead of being in the office. I got to them, greeted and sat down. I poured myself a drink. Everyone is quiet and just focusing on their drinks. I wonder what's going on.

Me: "Who died? Why are y'all so somber and sad?"

Nate: "Blame him." He says pointing to Lindani with his beer bottle. "He's been sulking since he got here." I turn to Lindani.

Me: "Bra, what's wrong?" He sighs.

Lindani: "I am worried about Taki, if it were up to her she wouldn't be going home tomorrow."

Sizwe: "Dude you cant blame the girl, I would be reluctant to go home too if I had been treated like trash by the people meant to love and protect me, and now they are about to pocket her lobola.

Mxm."

Lindani: "Unfortunately it has to be done. But I am more worried about how they will treat her."

Me: "Worry not, I am sure if anything goes left Buli will be there to kick their asses." They all laugh.

Nate: "Dude that's my wife you're talking about."

Me: "I know, and you know too that she can throw hands, so trust and believe Taki will be in good hands."

Lindani: "Man I hope so."

Just then a girl comes over followed by three of her friends. She sashays over to Lindani and

sits on his lap with her one arm over his shoulder and the other girls squeeze themselves between us.

Girl: "Hey, I haven't seen you in a while." She says to Lindani while we sit there trying to ignore these girls next to us.

Lindani: "I've been busy. What do you want?" She laughs and tries to kiss him but he moves his face.

Girl: "You know what I want."

She says with her hand buried in his crotch. "Arent you going to buy us a drink?"

Lindani: "No." He moves her hand from his crotch. "You can take

your girls and leave, please." She seems shocked by his reaction.

Girl: "Excuse me?"

Lindani: "I said take your girls and leave. If you want alcohol you can buy it yourself and if you cant afford it, stay home." He pushes her of his lap. She clicks her tongue, turns and leaves and her minions follow suit. We burst out laughing soon as they leave.

Nate: "And now, who are they?"

Lindani: "Let's just say I have been around."

Sizwe: "Loosely translated to 'I have no idea who she is but I've

definitely hit that'." We laugh.

Lindani: "Man fuck off."

We all laughed at him and continued having our drinks. As much as the past couple of months have been draining, but being here with my friends and knowing we have each other's backs will always make me happy. And now Lindani has not only given up his player card but he set it on fire, he is about to get married. I tell you wonders never cease.

INSERT 67

TAKI

Yho, I swear Limpopo is neighbors with hell, the way this place is so hot, tjerr. Buli and I drove here earlier today, we've been here for two hours and I already want to go back to Joburg to be with my man. And my pretentious aunt is not helping. She keeps trying to be nice, together with her evil kids. We've been sitting on this couch and she has layed out the table you would swear Queen Elizabeth was here. Buli and I keep passing glances at each other as my aunt goes on and on about God knows what.

My phone rings and its Lindani. I decide to go outside to pick up the call.

Me: "Gatsheni." He laughs, that's his way of trying not to blush.

Lindani: "Soon you too will be Gatsheni." Now it's my turn to blush.

Me: "And I cant wait for that."

Lindani: "Me too. So how was your trip?"

Me: "Good, although my aunt is being way too nice for my liking."

Lindani: "Its just for a few days Sthandwa Sam and then you'll be out of there."

Me: "I know. I just wish I was

there with you."

Lindani: "Just say the word and I'll be there to get you." sigh.

Me: "No it's okay, I will suck it up."

Lindani: "Are you sure?"

Me: "Yes. We need to do this right."

Lindani: "Okay, I have to be in court right now but I'll call you later okay."

Me: "Okay."

Lindani: "I love you."

Me: "I love you too." I hung up.

I turned around to go back to the house and came face to face with my cousin Nkateko.

Nkateko: "So cuz, you are getting married huh."

Me: "I am."

Nkateko: "Your fiancee must be loaded if he can afford a car like this." She says looking at the car. I chuckle and walk away from her and go back to the house.

I sat back down next to an annoyed Buli. And just then one of my cousins, Musa walks in walking in reverse.

Musa: "Eh mama, whose driving that beast outside. Yerr people have money yong." He says still standing by the door and admiring the car. Its Lindani's Mercedes

Benz G63.

Aunt: "Its Taki." He turns around quick when he hears my name.

Musa: "Eh Cuz, how are you? It's been a long time." Its not been long enough if you ask me. I fake a smile.

Me: "Yeah its been way too long." He sits on the arm rest, and extends his hand to Buli who takes it reluctantly. The way everyone is being nice you would think I had made up all those years of torture and hurt they put me through.

I remember soon as mum died, literally my aunt changed from

that day. To her I was no longer her sister's baby but an extra mouth to feed that she didn't budget for. She reminded me every chance she got and her kids, all four of them Musa the oldest, Precious, Nkateko who is the same age as me and Sana, were always there ready to back her up. If she wasn't there to remind me then they were ready to.

From the time I was nine years old I became their chef, washing machine, babysitter and vacuum cleaner, basically their maid. I lived through nights when I would be locked out of the house

if I came back from school even five seconds after the stipulated time, which was two thirty every day. And I went to a school that was forty minutes away on foot. If school knocked off at two i had to run like something was chasing me. And if there were any extra classes i wouldn't attend. How I made it through as one of the best performing students is still beyond me.

After matric I was offered a scholarship to study at Wits for a degree in medicine, yep my results were that good. I always assumed I hadn't got the

scholarship cause I never heard from Wits for months after matric until one night when I was cleaning out my aunts room and I found the letter crumbled up in the back of her closet. I cried so much that day and my hatred for her reached a whole new level I didnt think existed. I tried to contact the scholarship board and explained what happened. I was told that since I had declined the scholarship it had been passed on to another person. I tried applying again but I didnt get through. I even tried NSFAS but since my aunt had my

mum's death certificate, that too was a bust.

I packed my bags the day my cousin tried to rape me. I was alone in the house, everyone had gone out since it was month end and my aunt took her kids out for some junk food, and like all the other months I was left alone, to be honest though, I enjoyed those moments of peace alone. I was sitting on the couch watching TV when Musa walked in. He had gone out with his friends earlier in the day so he didn't get to go with the rest of the family to their dinner.

He came over and sat next to me on the couch, which was way too close for comfort. I shifted a bit hoping he would notice that I was uncomfortable, but the further I moved the closer he got. Next thing i know i was on the corner of the couch. I tried to get up and move away but he wrapped his hand around my wrist and pulled me back down on the couch and laid me on it. He tightened my knees between his making it hard for me to fight him. I tried to free my hands from his hold but he was stronger than me.

I tried screaming but he slapped me and told me this is pay back for all the times his mother had fed me and clothed me, taking food and clothes away from them. I don't know what he meant by that because the only clothes I ever got from her were hand me downs from Precious and Nkateko, that's if they were in a good mood. Sometimes instead of giving me the clothes they would rather burn them with me watching. They said it ensured I wouldn't steal them and wear them. Anyways while Musa pinned me down and put his hand inside my

tshirt touching my boobs I heard the door open. He quickly jumped up but his mother had seen what was happening.

Aunt: "What's going on?" She asked looking from me to him and back to me. I wiped the tears and opened my mouth to speak but Musa beat me to it.

Musa: "Mama, Taki was trying to seduce me, she said she would sleep with me in exchange for money." He answered while his sisters stood behind their mother looking at me with disgust in their faces.

Aunt: "I knew it, you are a hoe,

now you want my son to sleep with you? Have you no shame?" She pulled out the belt from the Jean's she was wearing and whipped me with it. After she was done she told me to go to my room.

I got up from the couch to go to the room I shared with Sana, well more like squatted in cause as big as the room was I slept on the floor while Sana slept in the double bed. I got there and laid down the sponge, I took my blanket and covered myself and cried myself to sleep.

When i woke up i looked at the bed and Sana was there sleeping.

Since she was a deep sleeper I knew she wouldn't hear anything so I got up and packed what little I had in a big plastic bag from Pep. I snuck out and placed the clothes inside the shack at the back of the house.

The next morning I woke up early to prepare breakfast and make sure my aunts work uniform was ironed and cleaned, she worked in a bank so she took her appearance very seriously. I also ironed Sana's school uniform and prepared lunch for everyone. Nkateko and

Precious were studying at the university of Limpopo and since it was close by they stayed at home. Musa on the other hand was doing his teaching practicals at my former high school. They took their bags and lunches and walked out. And as always I walked out of the house and my aunt locked her doors and went to work. I sat in the verandah and watched them leave. I waited for an hour before leaving since my aunt had a habit of dropping her children off wherever and then coming back to make sure I wasn't

sneaking into the house through the windows to steal her food.

I saw her car drive in as I sat in the verandah, she walked in and walked around the house before closing all windows and getting back into her car. Soon as she left I took my clothes and hitchhiked all the way to Joburg. I got there and stayed with a friend, and luckily for me I got a job at a restaurant. I worked there for about a week and my friend helped me with a deposit for a room in a flat in Hillbrow, it wasn't the best of places but it was

better than the hell I was at before.

I worked until I was able to afford my own place. It was a one bedroom apartment and I loved it. It was mine, all mine. That was my proudest moment, for most people that would seem like setting the bar low but for me it was an achievement. I registered at a college in the city and studied for a certificate in Secretarial studies which helped me get a job at a small travel agency in Fourways. If there's one thing I can say, I got myself here, through sheer hard work and

determination I did the best I could.

Meeting Lando in that warehouse will probably be one of my biggest blessings. I understood then what they meant when they said every cloud has a silver lining. And my silver lining was Lindani.

Although at first I was reluctant to give him a chance cause we all know men are a whole different breed of trash sometimes, but he proved me wrong. Even though I didn't think he deserved a girl like me in his life he thought different. And the fact that he never tried to

pressure me into having sex with him was also quite charming for me. And now we are here, about to get married.

The sounds of a car hooting outside brought me back to the present. My aunt got up and went outside. She came back a few minutes later with my three uncles.

Aunt: "Taki baby, your uncles are here." We greeted them and they sat down.

Uncle Paul: "Takalani, where have you been? Popping up out of the blue and expecting us to do this for....."

Aunt: "No no my brother, it doesn't matter. The important thing is that the child is back home where she belongs."

Aunt: "No Roselina we deserve answers. She disappeared without a trace and now....."

Aunt: "Hhay man, let her be. Let's just leave the past where it belongs, in the past. This is a joyous occasion. My sister would be so happy right now."

I swear if anyone would walk in here right now would think my aunt was the kindest person to ever walk planet earth. Me, I know better though, so this little

facade she is putting on for everyone doesn't fool me even one bit.



LANDO

wedding season is probably the best season. A celebration of love and union of two people. We drove here last night and booked into a hotel. Faith and I woke up very early to go to Taki's place. We got there and her aunt was super nice and welcoming. Weird cause everything Taki told us was the opposite of what is happening right now. I decided not to pay much attention to her cause Buli

had already filled us in about the drama already happening. We walked in and went straight to the bedroom where Taki was. Moghel was still in bed wearing pyjamas. We got in too.

Me: "For someone who is about to get married you sure dont look nervous."

Taki: "I am more anxious than nervous. I just want this day to be over and done with so I can get out of this hellhole. The pretending everyone has been doing is driving me nuts."

Faith: "Dont worry too much love. It will be over soon and you will be

back in the arms of your love."

She blushes.

Taki: "That one hasn't stopped calling since I got here. I think he is obsessed." We laugh.

Faith: "Of course."

Me: "And to think you haven't given him the cookie and yet he's still crazy about you." She blushes some more. And just then Buli walks in huffing and bangs the door behind her. She paces up and down.

Taki: "What's wrong?"

Buli: "That aunt of yours might pretend to be a saint but she is the devil in disguise."

Me: "What has she done?"

Buli: "I just overheard her telling her stupid daughter that she needs to seduce Lindani and make sure you two break up. And they are planning on taking the Lobola money and sending Sana to do her post graduate degree in the USA." To say we were shocked would be an understatement. This woman's liver has a bone in it cause no sane human being would even think of such cruelty.

Faith: "Buli are you sure you heard right?"

Taki: "I dont doubt it for one second. I always knew her being

nice to me was just an act."

Me: "So what are we going to do about this?"

Faith: "We could just tell Lindani everything."

Taki: "She might not be my favourite person but I don't want her dead."

Buli: "I can't do much about the seduction part but as for the money I have a plan."

Taki: "As long as no one ends up dead."

Me: "With Buli you never know."

We laugh.

We heard the shouting from outside and we knew they were

here. It took a while but eventually they let them in. The lobola went well, Philani was busy texting me telling me all that was happening. He even told me how excited Taki's aunt got when she saw the money. Apparently they put it in a briefcase and when the uncles said how much they wanted, the briefcase with probably triple what they wanted was placed on the table and opened, I swear these men think this is some drug deal. Anyways now that it's over we hope and pray Buli will come up with a plan about the money.

After all the necessary celebrations were done we helped these two pack up and we went back to the hotel. Lindani's uncles decided to drive back to KZN while we decided to have a mini celebration of our own.

After showering we all met up in the restaurant downstairs for dinner. The happy couple joined us and we sang and ululated when they walked in. We even got up and sang while they made their grand entrance with their mini step. I'm sure all the white people here think we have gone mad. We sat down and ordered our

food since drinks were already popping, champagne was plenty for us and whiskey for them.

Me: "Where are Sbu and Razor, I thought they'd be here."

Philani: "They decided to go back to Joburg. Apparently they can't handle being the extra couple here, they said it will give people the wrong idea." I laughed.

Buli: "So I have a surprise for the new bride." We all turned to look at her in anticipation. She reached down under the table and pulled out a Luis Vuitton bag and placed it in front of Taki. She opened it and the shock on her

face made all of us curious. We all got up to look inside the bag and there was money inside.

Nate: "Buli why do you have so much money lying around?"

Buli: "That's not mine. Its Takis."

Lindani: "And why do you have this money lying around?" He asks looking at Taki.

Taki: "I dont know either." We all turn to look at Buli for an explanation, although it has now registered to me that this might be the lobola money.

Buli: "Well I wasnt about to let that twin of satan have all this

money to help her children. The only person deserving of that money is lying six feet under in a grave."

Sizwe: "You do know the cultural implications of what you did?"

Buli: "I know. That's why I didn't take all of it. I did leave something for the underground gang." We all burst out laughing. I'm not sure if it was because of the skrr skrr vibes or the craziness of it all.

Philani: "Nate, I told you your wife was a gangster." We laughed.

As crazy as this moment is, I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world. In this circle the highs are always high and the lows are really low. But for now we will celebrate the high that we are in right at this moment.

INSERT 68

If 'Mshove' was a person Lindani would be it. After the lobola and mini celebration we had we were driven straight to the airport where the jet was waiting. Even Mbusi was there waiting. We flew for hours and the guys wouldn't

even tell us where we were going. We fell asleep and woke up still in the plane. After what seemed like forever we landed in Dubai.

We were driven to the Taj Dubai hotel. We got there late and just went straight to our penthouse suite. It has four bedrooms, a huge ass lounge and a chef's kitchen with an adjoined dining area. Its really beautiful. We chose our rooms and went straight there and fell asleep. I was woken up by the sounds of people moaning, and then I remembered, Lindani and Taki are in the room next to ours. It took

a while but I fell asleep after they had finished. But now I am being woken up by them again. He's probably trying to make up for the times he wasn't getting any.

I decided to go downstairs and order breakfast for everyone. And also call home to check on my babies. I get downstairs and find the table already decked out in literally everything, from fruits to bacon, sausages and even cereals. I take a piece of bacon and throw it in my mouth before I pour myself a cup of coffee. I walk to the balcony and find Faith sitting

on a chair, sipping on some hot chocolate.

Me: "Moghel." She turns to look at me and smiles.

Faith: "Hey, I didnt hear you there. Why are you up?" I pull out a chair and sit next to her.

Me: "I should be asking you that, you've even had breakfast ordered and delivered. Why arent you cuddling with your husband?"

Faith: " I have a lot on my mind."

Me: "Like what?" She sighs.

Faith: "Mbusi's dad wants to step down."

Me: "Why? What's wrong with him?"

Faith: "He says nothing's wrong."

Me: "So why are you worried?"

Faith: "If Mbusi takes over the throne it means....."

Me: "You'll be Queen!"

Faith: "Yeah, and I don't know if I am ready for that."

Me: "Faith, you are a princess, aren't yall raised to be queens?"

She laughs. Check!

Faith: "Bitch please, we dont live in fairytales. Besides, I'd have to move to KZN and I dont know if i want to."

Me: "Babe, you knew all of this before you married Mbusi. You knew one day he'd have to take

over from his dad so what's the problem."

Faith: "Yeah, I knew, but I thought we'd have to wait until his father dies before that happens, but now he is still alive and he just decides to step down. I mean how selfish can he be?"

Me: "Arent we being a bit dramatic?" She puts her head on the table. "Look theres no need to be scared, the people love you, you will be fine. And besides you still have elders in the family who will guide you. You really dont need to be afraid." She comes back up.

Faith: "I know. I'm just anxious

about it."

Me: "I know baby." Just then Taki walks out wearing a gown like us and followed by Buli who is also wearing a gown. They sit down with their coffees and right now we look like we should be on the cover of a travel magazine.

Me: "Yeah alarm clock." I say looking at Taki. She sips her coffee and looks at me confused. Taki: "Alarm clock? What's that about?"

Me: "Your moaning and screaming woke me up." Buli and Faith burst out laughing and Taki closes her mouth in shock.

Taki: "You heard that?"

Me: "Dude, our rooms are right next to each other, obviously I heard you."

Taki: "I'm sorry I just....."

Buli: "Had the pipes laid!!!!!"

Faith: "Its about bloody time yoh, I'm sure Lindani had blue balls."

We laugh.

Taki: "Guys!" She covers her face and chuckles.

Me: "Dont be embarrassed, we are just happy you got laid, but you didnt have to wake me up to witness it though." We laugh.

Taki: "Speaking of witnesses. We might be witnesses maybe even

accessories to a robbery."

Me: "What robbery."

Taki: "I got a message from my cousin. Apparently someone took the whole lobola money and left five hundred rands." We laugh.

Buli: "Atleast the thief left something behind." Buli is certifiably nuts.

Taki: "My aunt is furious apparently. She even reported the matter to the cops."

Me: "That's not good."

Taki: "Relax, Lindani said he'll take care of it so we are good."

Faith: "You never really told us how you did it Buli."

Buli: "Let's just say a girl has skills, and she puts them to good use when necessary." She lifts the cup of tea in salute.

The guys finally join us and we have breakfast together. After breakfast we went upstairs to take a shower so we can go to do some shopping. We meet downstairs and head out to the mall. We go into almost all the shops and by the time we are done the guys probably regret bringing us here. We decide to head back to the hotel and the guys do a little victory dance.

I go to the bedroom take a quick shower and put on a red lacy number that I got at the mall. I text Philani to come help me with something. Once the text is sent I get on the bed and do my sexiest pose and wait. And wait and wait some more and fifteen minutes later there's still no sign of Philani.

I put on a dress and head downstairs to see what's the hold up. I get there and he is in the lounge with none other than Uche. I swear this woman will drive me nuts. I don't even know what she

is doing here, and how did she even know we are here.

I clear my throat as I stand behind the couch they are sitting on. They both turn to look at me.

Philani: "Oh hey babe."

Me: "Didn't you get my text?"

Philani: "I did, I was on my way up actually....."

Uche: "Honestly it's all my fault, I saw you guys at the mall so I decided to follow you here just to say hi."

Me: "You don't have a phone to call and say hi?"

Uche: "I do but greetings feel so much better in person." I swear

the devil is testing me right now and if I am not careful I will lose this test. I turn to look at Philani.

Me: "Where are the others?"

Philani: "They went to buy food."

Me: "We are in a five star hotel, what's wrong with the food here?" A part of me is hoping he will realize why they left. So we can be alone and for me to make it up to him for last night since it was the last day of my period and we couldn't have sex. And now that all us clear he decides to spend time with Uche of all people. Kill me now.

Philani: "I don't know." I turn back to Uche.

Me: "I think it's time for you to leave." She smiles as she gets up and tries but fails to pull down her very tight short dress.

Uche: "I am sorry I didnt mean to cause any trouble. I will see you guys around. Have fun, Dubai is amazing." She walks out shaking her fake ass.

As soon as she leaves I head to the kitchen and pour myself a glass of water and gulp it down. I turn around and Philani is standing by the counter with his hands in his pockets.

Philani: "What's wrong?" I chuckle. Men are probably the dumbest species to ever walk planet earth. And right now I am so angry I might just end up saying something I will regret later so I go past him and head back upstairs and he follows me.

"Lando I am talking to you."

Me: "Please leave me alone."

Philani: "I didnt invite her here so why are you mad at me?" Clueless. That's what men are. A whole lot of Clueless idiots.

I ignore him and continue packing my shopping away.

Theres a knock on the door and Nate pops his head in.

Nate: "I think we have given you guys enough time alone. The food is here let's go eat." He closes the door and leaves.

Philani: "So that's why they went out." He says as a lightbulb goes off in his head. "Babe I am sorry."

Me: "I am hungry I am going to eat." I leave him and go downstairs. Remind me never to plan a surprise for him again.



NARRATED

In Moscow, Mr Biyela has just landed at the airport. He gets into a car that's waiting for him and drives off to an apartment building in the middle of town. The car parks in the underground parking and he takes the elevator up to the eighth floor. He knocks and the door opens wide. He smiles.

Mr B: "Hi babygirl."

Kazi: "Hi daddy." They hug. He walks in and she closes the door behind him.

Mr B: "How are you?" He sits down on the couch and Kazi joins him.

Kazi: "I am good. Just bored. I want to go home dad."

Mr B: "I know baby, but you know why you cant go back just yet."

She looks down and plays with her fingers.

Kazi: "I know. I just miss everyone. I should be planning Lando and Philani's wedding right now. I promised Lando I would do it. And I missed my nieces birth. I miss my boyfriend. How is he anyway?"

Mr B: "He's good. Taking each day as it comes. He misses you a lot." He wipes the tear that just fell from his daughter's eye.

Kazi: "When will this whole thing be over Baba? I want to go home."

Mr B: "It will be over soon.

There's just a few more things I need to do to ensure that the Rodriguez empire is dismantled. By the time I am done with it, it will be nothing but ashes."

Kazi: "Okay so what's the hold up?"

Mr B: "Right now I have someone emptying Rodriguez's offshore accounts and making sure they are untraceable, and I need to sell off the last of his companies."

Kazi: "I thought you'd keep the

companies."

Mr B: "I decided to sell them off bit by bit until theres nothing left of it."

Kazi: "You do know he's dead right? It's not like he can see any of this happening. So why go to so much hardwork to destroy it, he is dead, gone and buried."

Mr B: "He is not actually."

Kazi: "Okay, whoa whoa whoa. Rodriguez is not dead? How? It was all over the news, he was shot by a sniper?" She asks standing up from the couch and looking at her dad.

Mr B: "I know. And the sniper

was Sizwe. I found out he was planning on offing Rodriguez just to get Rafael to back off from you."

Kazi: "Sizwe was the sniper?"

Mr B: "Yep, clearly that boy loved you even before you two got together. Anyways I got to him before he could kill the man and instead of real bullets he used rubber bullets. He didnt die so his guards took him to the hospital. When he came to he convinced his doctor to pronounce him dead, went into hiding cause he was convinced someone was after him. Which helped me cause that

meant I could go after his empire without him there to watch over it."

Kazi: "So Sizwe did all that for me?" Mr Biyela looks at Kazi who seems to be daydreaming.

Mr B: "You didnt hear a word I just said right?" She smiles.

"KAZI!" She startles and looks at her dad.

Kazi: "What?"

Mr B: "Mxm, whatever. Do you have food in this house?" He says getting up and going into the kitchen. He comes back a few minutes later with a sandwich and a glass of juice.

Kazi: "Why are you doing all of this? I thought you and Mr Rodriguez were good friends."

Mr B: "We used to be until he allowed his imbecile of a son hurt you. I know if any of your brothers would ever put their hands on a woman I would kill them myself."

Kazi: "You do know Philani is probably responsible for Ayanda's death right?"

Mr B: "I know. But she deserved it."

Kazi: "That's being a bit hypocritical dont you think."

Mr B: "Maybe. But I would have

done the same if anyone had tried to auction my wife off to the highest bidder."

Kazi: "Yeah yeah I know." She takes the sandwich from her dad and eats it. "Wanna watch a movie?"

Mr B: "You are an idiot." He says taking the remote and switching on the TV.

Kazi: "I know. And you love me anyway." She puts her head on his shoulder.

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Lando is mad at me. And now that I think about it her anger is justified. I shouldn't have even allowed Uche to come in here, but I can't go back and change things so I have to make it up to her somehow. Problem though, she's been ignoring me the whole day. And knowing Lando Rose's and diamonds won't cut it.

We decided after dinner to go to a club downtown. Cool. Everyone got ready and like always we ended up having to wait for the girls. When they did finally decide to come down I couldn't take my eyes off of her. She had on a short, gold

long sleeve dress that sparkled in the light. It had a round neck. She turned around to get her phone from the table behind her and the dress was open all the way down to almost her butt crack with just two tiny strings she tied around her neck and under her arms, I guess to hold the dress in place. I swear all the blood in my body took a u-turn and flowed straight to my dick. And if this was her way of punishing me it was working.

She walked past me and I put my hand around her waist and pulled her to me. She tried to pull away

but I wouldn't let go and I know if we were alone she would have caused a scene.

Me: "You look great." I whispered in her ear as we walked out. To be honest though the dress was too short for my liking but the way she's angry at me right now telling her that would just add fuel to the fire so I had to keep my mouth shut. My dad always says when it comes to women you have to choose your battles, and this is a battle I am not willing to fight.

Lando: "Thanks." One word

answers have been the order of the day.

We get into the party bus and drive off to the club. There are drinks in the bus so we decide to start the party early. We get to the club and there is a long line. We look at Lindani who suggested this whole thing. I hope for his sake he made a reservation cause I am not standing in that long ass queue. He sends someone a text and then we wait.

A few minutes later a guy walks out and walks straight to us. As he gets closer I realize who it is.

Ryan Samuel's, Nate's little brother.

Ryan: "Brothers." He gives us hugs before moving to the girls. "Wifey." He says as he hugs Buli.

Nate: "What are you doing here Ryan?"

Ryan: "I co-own the place."

Me: "Since when?"

Ryan: "Its been a few months now."

Nate: "So why didnt you tell me, and why the fuck is your hand still on my wife's waist?"

Ryan: "Your wife my wife!" We laugh. If theres one thing Ryan can do and do very well it's to

aggravate Nate.

Nate: "Mxm fuck off." He says pushing him away from Buli.

He leads us into the club much to the annoyance of all the people who've probably been waiting for hours to get in. He leads us to the VIP section. He calls over a waitress and makes an order. I wonder how he knows what we want. The waitress comes back a few minutes later with cocktails, four bottles of expensive champagne and four bottles of whiskey and to top it all she has at least eight bottles of wine. I am just sitting here wondering

who is gonna drink all that and most importantly who is going to pay for it.

Lindani: "So what's with all the alcohol. Are you trying to kill us?"

Nate: "I just hope it comes with a family discount."

Ryan: "Stop being stingy. You can afford it." Lando takes a cocktail and sips it.

Lando: "This is nice. What is it called?"

Ryan: "That my lady is our signature cocktail, made with our secret recipe, you won't find that anywhere else." The girls grab their cocktails and drink.

We figure the alcohol isn't going anywhere so we might as well drink. We pour ourselves drinks and the night finally begins. I must admit, Ryan did great with this club. It's super expensive though, but I guess you can't expect anything less in Dubai. Just after midnight DJ Black Coffee gets on the DJ booth and we all get on the dance floor. Although I am not very gifted when it comes to dancing I have a couple of moves that work for me all the time. Despite Lando ignoring me it's nice to see her have fun. She is

dancing and laughing so that makes me happy. We decide to leave them on the dancefloor and head back to our table. We watch them dance.

Lindani: "Why is Lando ignoring you?"

Me: "What?"

Nate: "She's been ignoring you since this afternoon. What happened when we left you guys to get food?"

Mbusi: "Uche happened." We all turn to look at him. Dont get me wrong Mbusi is cool and all but how does he even know about Uche. "Why are you looking at me

like that? Your wife and my wife happen to be best friends. They tell each other everything."

Me: "And then she tells you?"

Mbusi: "Obviously. Couples gossip is probably the best kind of gossip there is."

Lindani: "Dude that's weird."

Mbusi: "You should try it sometime."

Nate: "So what happened with Uche?"

Me: "She came over to the hotel earlier. Apparently she saw us at the mall, so she followed us to the hotel, just to say hi."

Lindani: "Phones were built for

that."

Me: "That's what Lando said."

Nate: "She's right. Dude you need to put an end to this Uche business otherwise you are going to lose the best thing that's ever happened to you over some obsessed ex."

I know Nate is right. But For me putting an end to this will mean killing Uche and I dont know if I can do that. So I need to find a way to permanently get her out of my life without actually ending her life.

I see Lando move from the dancefloor and walk towards the

toilets. Luckily for us the VIP's have their own bathroom which is not crowded like the other one. I decide to follow her.

She gets into the toilet and just as she closes the door I put my foot in the door to stop it from closing. I walk in and just as she is about to walk into the stall she sees me. She stops and looks at me.

Lando: "You are being creepy right now." She says with her hands folded on her chest.

Me: "Well I figured since you wouldn't talk to me at the hotel, or the car and not even in the club

maybe I could try talking to you here. It's a bit more private." I say walking over to her with my hands in my pockets. She crosses her legs and I know what that means. I hear the sounds of people talking outside and I remember this is the ladies bathroom and I cannot be caught in here. "Are you going to go inside?"

Lando: "Nope. Not until you leave."

Me: "I cant leave. There are people outside and them finding me here will not be good."

Lando: "You should have thought about that before you came in

here." She is enjoying this way too much. The voices get closer and I can see her trying to keep herself from laughing. Clearly she won't help me so I need to do this myself.

I walk over to her and push her into the stall and close the door and lock it. Luckily the door goes all the way down so no one will see my shoes.

Lando: "I need to pee."

Me: "Then pee." I whisper to her as these random girls walk into the toilet. She lifts her dress up, not that she needs to considering how short it is and sits down.

Once she is done she wipes and gets up then pulls down her dress. And then it hit me that I didnt see her take her underwear off. I really hope she is wearing some cause the thought of my wife walking around without any underwear on does not sit right with me.

Eventually the girls leave and I breathe a sigh of relief.

Me: "Are you wearing any underwear? I didn't see you take it off when you peed." She looks at me and smirks.

Lando: "I dont remember. Wanna check?" Okay. She takes my hand

and puts it under her dress and straight to her cookie jar. And my dick gets hard soon as I find her lacy underwear. "Happy?" Oh I am happy alright.

I lift her up and pin her against the wall as her legs go around my waist. I pull her face close to mine and kiss her. I feel her hands go inside my shirt and rub up on me. I move my hand from her neck and go down her backless backside and her ass feels good in my hand. I move my other hand to the front and move the lacy underwear aside. Good thing she has already unzipped my pants

and let my dick out. I enter her slowly and she moans.

Lando: "Yesss baby, yesss." I pound into her until I feel her about to cum. I pull out and put her down, turn her around and bend her over the toilet seat and enter her from behind. I move into her slowly which is frustrating for her, she hates it when I do that.

Me: "Are you still mad at me?"

Lando: "Yesssss." She screams between moans.

Me: "I'm sorry."

Lando: "Whatever. Just go faster please." She says and as per

command, I do what she says and soon she cums all over my dick. I keep going till I release too.

I roll out a tissue and clean her up and then clean myself up. She fixes herself up and tries to walk out.

Me: "Baby please talk to me."

Lando: "What do you want me to say?"

Me: "I dont know, yell, scream whatever just dont shut me out."

Lando: "How long are we going to fight about Uche. Everytime she shows up somehow you and I end up here, fighting."

Me: "I'm sorry."

Lando: "Stop saying you are sorry and put an end to this."

Me: "I will!"

Lando: "That's what you said last time. But she's still here. Still causing trouble. And you still apologizing for her."

Me: "Okay can we go back to the hotel and talk about this." For some strange reason she nodded her head.

We walked out of the stall and found two girls touching up their make up. They turn to look at us as we walk out hand in hand. We walk out the club and I call an uber to come pick us up. I text

the guys and tell them we have left.

We get to the hotel and make love some more. When we are done she falls asleep and I walk to the window and text Sbu. He calls back.

Me: "Sbu."

Sbu: "Brother man."

Me: "I need you to find all the dirt you can find on Uche."

Sbu: "Sure thing. When do you need it?"

Me: "ASAP man."

Sbu: "Ok. I'm on it."

I hang up and go back to bed.



SIZWE

Flying is not my favorite thing but in this day and age, living in a global society that connects us all we have no choice but to fly. And right now I am on a flight to Russia cause Mr Biyela needs me to do something for him. He wouldn't tell me what but I figured since my friends are on baecation I might as well keep myself busy. Honestly though its moments like these when i miss Kazi. I am pretty sure if she was here we would be in Dubai too. But ke life had to happen.

I land in Moscow and drive off to the address he sent me. I get off and it's snowing. Seriously I will never be able to understand how people live in these places. It's so bloody cold.

I get into the lift and go up to the eighth floor. I get off and look for the room number, luckily for me it's close to the lift so it's easy to find. I knock and then wait. He opens the door and let's me in.

Me: "Baba." We shake hands.

Mr B: "Sizwe, you made it."

Me: "Well you said it was important so here I am." He

leads me towards the lounge and I notice there's a picture of him and Kazi sitting on a side table. And next to it are pictures of Theo and Lakhiwe. I guess this must be one of his places. I decide not to pay much attention to the photos and sit down on the couch. He hands me a glass of whiskey. He sits down with his own glass across from me.

Mr B: "I know you are probably wondering why I called you here."
Well yeah.

Me: "Yes, I am."

Mr B: "Ok. So remember when I asked you not to kill Rodriguez?"

I nod my head. "Well since he had himself pronounced dead, his will was read and he left all his fortune to Theo and Kazi." That's a surprise to me. I did not know that. I decide not to interrupt him. "Well the cartel found out and as far as they are concerned, they couldn't allow her to have everything which is why they did all they could to make sure she gets nothing, starting by fueling Rafael's anger. Hence he killed his brother."

Me: "But Marco was the one who warned Philani about Rafael coming after Theo and Kazi."

Mr B: "He did, but that was part of the plan to get Rafael to do the work for them. He was never concerned about either Theo or Kazi. See with Kazi and Theo out of the way, the Rodriguez fortune automatically reverts back to a trust that the cartel is in charge of. And that gives them easy access to the money and everything Rodriguez 'left' behind." I take a sip of my whiskey.

Me: "Okay, but only Kazi is gone and Theo is still here, so their plan didn't really work."

Mr B: "True, but Theo can only

have access to all that when he turns twenty one. And that's a long way off and still plenty of time for them to plan a proper execution." I'll never be able to understand how people can actually kill a child and actually fall asleep at night.

Me: "Okay so we go after them now?"

Mr B: "Plans for that are already underway. And in order to make sure they stay distracted I had to make one hard decision. I hope you can forgive me for it."

Me: "I dont understand." He takes a sip of his whiskey, rubs

his hands together and leans on his knees with his elbows.

Mr B: "I... uh...." Just then the door opens and someone walks in. She has on a big jacket with the hoodie on. She's carrying a bag of groceries. She takes the bags to the kitchen and all I can see is her back. She takes the hoodie off and frees her weave.

Girl: "Dad, what do you want for dinner. I think I want spaghetti." I know that voice. You could wake me from a coma and I would know it.

Mr B: "Anything is fine by me. But maybe our guest can choose." She

turns around and her smile fades when she sees me. This can't be happening. I get up and walk towards her. This has to be one weird dream. And if this is some sort of a prank then it's a tasteless one.

She takes off her jacket and walks towards me. This has to be the worst joke of the year. If it is one.

Kazi: "Hi!" She says standing in front of me.

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This cannot be happening right now. I am sure this is a dream and I will wake up soon. Yeah. That's it, that's what it is.

Kazi: "Babe please say something."

Me: "You are alive."

Kazi: "Yeah."

I took a step back from her once my mind had fully registered that she really was here. She was alive, she is alive. All the time I spent mourning her, thinking I would never see her again, and it was all a lie. All the times I cussed out God and told him how I hated him for ripping my heart

out, it was just, just a whole lot of bullshit. I skinned a man alive thinking that would somehow make me feel better but that didn't work, and this whole time, the one person who could make it better was right here, just a plane ride away. She's always been here but no one bothered to even let me know. Was I that unimportant to her that she couldn't even give me a clue, something to ease the pain. Not even a letter, or a phonecall or a message in a bottle, just to give me a bit of hope. Nothing.

Kazi: "Sizwe!" Her voice brings me back to the present. The shock has seemingly worn off. And right now all I am consumed by is anger. And knowing me and my anger management, or lack thereof, I grab my coat from the chair and walk out. I hear her call my name but I dare not turn back. Not right now. Not when I am feeling like this. I press the elevator button and wait for it to come up. I hear her footsteps behind me as the elevator door opens. I walk in and turn around. I press the G button and watch her as the doors make their way

to each other. I see the disappointment in her face. And the tears running down.

The doors finally close and the lift makes it's way down. I get into the car and drive off to the airport. I cant be here. I cant be here feeling like this. There is so much going on in my head. I get to the airport and the next plane going home is in a couple of days due to bad weather. I swear the universe is conspiring against me. I go to a restaurant inside the airport and order a cup of coffee. After two sips it doesn't do what

I need it to do. I need something stronger.

I leave the airport and book myself into a hotel. Soon as I put my bags in the room I raid the mini bar. In five minutes flat I have finished all the little bottles of alcohol they had, and I still need more. I put on my jacket and head to the bar. I order a whole bottle of vodka, and being in Russia means I get the best kind. I pour myself a glass and down it in one go. I pour another and before I know it the bottle is empty.

After the second bottle I can feel my senses slowly leaving me. I figure it's time to go and sleep. I look at the time and it's almost three in the morning. Yep it's definitely time to sleep. I head towards the lift and somewhere between the bar and lift I make a detour and head to the main door. The valet brings my rental car, it's snowing but I drive out anyway.

God alone knows how I made it to this apartment but here I am. It's almost morning but it's still dark outside. I get to the eighth floor and stumble out of the lift

and zig zag to the apartment. I bang on the door so loud I am sure I woke the neighbors up. Finally after sometime she opens the door. She is in a gown and her eyes look puffy, like she's been crying.

Kazi: "Sizwe, you came back." I walk inside and throw myself on the couch. "You are drunk."

Me: "One out of one. I have more questions though so we'll see how well you do." She sits down next to me.

Kazi: "Look I know....."

Me: "Nope, you dont get to tell me you understand. You dont get to

tell me you know how confusing this is, you dont get to tell me anything except answer the questions I have."

Kazi: "Okay." I burp. I feel like i am going to throw up. Stupid Russina vodka.

Me: "First question, why are you not dead?" She looks at me, shock written on her face.

Kazi: "I uh..... I" She clears her throat. "I wasnt expecting that question."

Me: "I wasnt expecting you to be alive either but here we are."

Kazi: "Okay, my father faked my death."

Me: "Why?"

Kazi: "To save me from the cartel. They wanted to kill me so they can get their hands on the inheritance Rodriguez left for Theo."

Me: "And when did you find out about this?" I burp again and I can feel the alcohol coming up my throat. I grab a vase, take out the flowers and throw up inside. Good thing it's not transparent cause I wouldn't want to see what's inside there. Kazi gets up and brings me a bottle of water.

Kazi: "Are you okay?"

Me: "I am fine. You still haven't

answered my question."

Kazi: "I knew about my dad's plan two weeks before Rafael showed up."

Me: "So you and your dad planned this whole thing down to the tee? So how did you know Rafael would do what he did?"

Kazi: "Sizwe it's complicated."

Me: "Uncomplicate it for me. Make me understand, cause right now I am clueless." She takes a deep breath.

Kazi: "Well I knew Rafael and the cartel wanted Theo dead. And knowing Rafael we were hoping he would get to me first before he

goes after Theo, and Rafael being
Rafael turned the whole thing
around

and followed us to Limpopo. I had
to distract him and give Lando a
chance to get away. When he hit
me over the head with the gun
he had no intention to kill me
then. I am sure he was hoping to
come back and gloat about killing
Theo and Lando before killing me
too. But you showed up when you
did and kinda ruined that plan for
him. We knew he would come after
me last just to gloat and make
me suffer."

Me: "So how did you get out of

the hospital cause I saw you when they said you died. I saw your corpse and it was cold."

Kazi: "They injected me with some medication that lowered my heartbeat....." I can hear her explaining but I feel my eyes getting heavier and heavier by the second and before I know it its lights out.



KAZI

I knew this whole thing wouldn't go well but I guess I was hoping for a different outcome. I guess it's a case of hoping for the best but expecting the worst.

He's been sleeping on that couch for hours now. It's almost lunchtime and he still hasn't woken up. I just hope he is comfortable cause carrying him up the stairs would have been impossible.

I decide to cook lunch, hopefully by the time I am done he will be up. I decide on creamy chicken pasta with some green salad.

I hear him groan and moan just as I finish up the salad. He sits up and stretches. I can hear his neck crackling all the way from the kitchen. I take the pain medication from the counter and take a bottle of water from the

fridge. I walk over to the lounge and he has his head in his hands. I hand him the pills and water.

Sizwe: "So it wasn't a dream?" I sit down next to him.

Me: "No, it wasn't." He drinks the pills. "Lunch is almost ready. You can take a shower upstairs while I finish up here."

Sizwe: "Thanks." He gets up and I watch him as he goes up the stairs. I go back to the kitchen soon as he disappears.

I dish up and wait for him. He comes down a while later in a gown. He sits down on the highchair and eats his food. We

sit there in silence with just the forks and plates making noise. I sit there hoping he says something but he doesn't. I guess it's up to me to break the tension.

Me: "Look I know you are angry at me, rightly so but....."

Sizwe: "I am not angry at you Kazi, disappointed maybe, but not angry."

Me: "You seemed angry yesterday."

Sizwe: "I was more shocked than angry. But you cant blame me though, twenty four hours ago I thought I'd never see you again. And now you are here, alive and

well."

Me: "Isn't that a good thing?"

Sizwe: "It is I guess."

Me: "So now you aren't mad at me?" He chuckles. I missed hearing him laugh.

Sizwe: "I am not mad at you Kazi, I am happy you are alive and that I can still hold you in my arms again." I get up and throw myself at him. I kiss him and he responds. He picks me up and places me on the countertop.

Things get hot and heavy. Don't judge it's been months and I am sure the salt is almost full.

Dad: "This is still my house you know." I pull away from Sizwe as fast as I can and we both turn around to look at my dad.

Me: "Dad what are you doing here?"

Dad: "My house." He turns and walks to the lounge. He switches on the TV. Sizwe rushes upstairs while I go sit with my dad.

Dad: "I see theres peace."

Me: "I guess. I thought you left."

Dad: "Bad weather. All flights were cancelled."

Me: "Why didnt you come back here?"

Dad: "Well I decided to go see

Hugo about business and ended up sleeping over there."

Me: "Okay."

Sizwe comes downstairs now wearing his clothes. He sits next to me.

Dad: "I am glad you came back."

Sizwe: "I needed answers."

Dad: "You got them?"

Sizwe: "Yes."

Dad: "Good." He looks back at the TV. "You do know you can't tell anyone about this right? Not even Philani." Sizwe takes a deep breath and runs his hands together.

Sizwe: "I know."

Dad: "Good. I am hungry, is there food in this house?" He gets up and heads to the kitchen and all we hear are pots opening and closing.

I guess that's one thing about my dad I've always liked, he likes doing things himself. That's why he can cook a three course meal without a problem. And he happens to be one of the best cooks i know. But right now I am one step closer to reclaiming my life back. All thanks to him.



PHILANI

As amazing as this trip has been it's about time we go back home. The next time I plan a baecation, I am not taking anyone else along except Lando, because when they are together they do nothing but shop all day. Not that I am complaining though, seeing her happy made this trip worth it, but next time I want her all to myself.

I come out the shower and find her laying on the bed with her iPad in front of her. She's on a video call with the kids so I decide to join her. We talk to them while they sit on aunt Kholiwe's

lap and I notice a whole lot of people moving around in the background. I swear the whole of Mandawe is at my house. Oh well, you can choose friends but you can't choose family.

We say our goodbyes when the kids start getting restless. I get dressed while Lando watches, or maybe drools, it's hard to say.

Me: "You know looking at me like that is the main reason you got pregnant the first time." She laughs.

Lando: "Whatever. Where are you going?"

Me: "To take care of a problem."

Lando: "I hope that problem starts with a U and ends with an E." I smile, kiss her and walk out. I get into our rental car and drive off to Uche's hotel. I get there and the place is crawling with police. I park on the side of the road and head inside. As I head to the reception the lift opens up and the Paramedics walk out with a dead body on a stretcher. I wonder what happened.

I keep going and head to the reception.

Me: "Hi."

Receptionist: "Hello sir, what can

I do for you?" She seems in shock. I guess a dead body can shock anyone.

Me: "I am looking for someone, Uche Adebayor, she's a guest here." She looks up soon as I say Uche's name and her mouth is open. She calls someone over and whispers something in his ear. He looks at me and fakes a smile.

Man: "Hello sir."

Me: "Hi!" This is getting a bit weird now.

Man: "I hear you are looking for Mrs Uche Adebayor?"

Me: "Yes I am. Can you show me to her room please."

Man: "Sir how do you know Mrs Adebayor?"

Me: "She is a family friend. Where is she?"

Man: "I am sorry sir but Mrs Adebayor was found dead earlier this morning. We suspect a heart attack but the coroner will have to do his job and either confirm that or tell us what happened."

I honestly dont think I heard anything he said after 'dead'. I know I didnt like her much but I dont think I wanted her dead. I definitely didnt want her dead.

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I drove back to the hotel feeling some type of way. As much as I wanted Uche out of my life i didnt want her dead. Although this makes things a whole lot easier for me i cant help wondering what happened to her. Although the police suspect a heart attack, I cant help feeling like its more than that. Something about this doesn't seem right.

I get to the hotel and go straight up to our room. Lando is fast asleep. I take off my clothes and get into bed.

I toss and turn the whole night.
And before I know it its morning.
I lay on the bed looking up at the
ceiling trying to figure out what
could have happened. I feel Lando
stir next to me and throw her
hand over my chest.

Lando: "Morning."

Me: "Hey!"

Lando: "What's wrong?"

Me: "What makes you think
anything is wrong?"

Lando: "Because you didnt sleep,
you've been tossing and turning
the whole night."

Me: "Uche is dead!" She sits up
and looks at me.

Lando: "I know I said get her out of our lives but I didn't mean kill her." I take a deep breath and sit up and lean on the headboard."

Me: "I didnt kill her. When I got to the hotel they were wheeling her out. Apparently she died of a heart attack."

Lando: "Oh."

Me: "Yeah."

Lando: "So why didnt you sleep?"

Me: "What?"

Lando: "You couldn't sleep last night? Why?"

Me: "Someone just died, you do know what that means right?"

Lando: "Not someone, Uche, the ex

love of your life." Its way too early in the morning for this to be honest.

Me: "Can we not do this right now, please!"

Lando: "Why? You need time to mourn your ex?" Lord take me now. "When Ayanda died you didnt lose sleep over it. And mind you, you killed her. Uche dies, of natural

causes and you cant sleep. How does that work really?" I swear women are naturally wired to start shit even when it's unnecessary. I figure to put an end to this I can either sit here

and keep quiet, but that would make her angry even more, or I could just walk away. Yeah walking away seems like a great idea.

I get up and head to the bathroom to take a shower. I take longer than I should cause a part of me is hoping by the time I get out of here, Lando will be over this.

I get out the shower and head back to the bedroom. I find her standing by the window looking outside in her underwear. I walk over to her and wrap my arms around her waist.

Me: "I hate it when you are mad at me." She keeps quiet. "Baby please talk to me."

Lando: "Were you still in love with her?"

Me: "No!"

Lando: "Then why are you so cut up about her dying? You had nothing to do with her death so what's happening really?" I kiss her shoulder.

Me: "Truth is a part of me feels like theres more to this. My gut is telling me she didnt die of natural causes."

Lando: "Even if she didnt die of natural causes, how does that

affect you? Its none of your business so why are you involving yourself?" I close my eyes and take a deep breath. As much as my gut is telling me something maybe I really shouldn't involve myself in this. Even though my gut has never failed me before, well most of the time, my family comes first so.....

Me: "If you dont want me involved in this then I will let it go." She turns around to look at me.

Lando: "Really?" I smile.

Me: "Yes really. I want you to be happy and if letting this go

makes you happy then so be it."

She frowns and looks back outside.

Lando: "I want you to let it go because you want to not because I forced you."

Me: "I am letting it go because I want to, making you happy just makes it more worth it." She looks back at me again.

Lando: "Thank you."

Me: "No need to thank me, making you happy is my job. I love you okay."

Lando: "I love you too."

She stands on her tippy toes and places a kiss on my lips. I lift her up and she wraps her legs around

my waist. I move my hands to her boobs and play with them. She moans in my mouth. I move one hand down to her cookie jar and I can feel her wetness. I move her underwear aside and rub her clit. She pulls out from the kiss and moans. I carry her to the bed and lay her down. I pull down her panties and get on top of her. And just as I make my way into her warm haven I hear a bang on the door.

I try to ignore whoever that is but they keep on banging. No pun intended.

Me: "WHAT!"

Lindani: "Dude we have to go, the girls want to see the desert. Let's go." He walks away.

I turn to look at Lando and she is biting her lip. My cue. Five minutes later we were both laying on the bed panting. After catching our breath we went to the bathroom and took a shower together. With another quickie in between. We got out, got dressed and headed downstairs. We found the others already waiting and ready to go, which meant no breakfast for us. I grab a couple

of bananas and apples and off we went to the desert.



NARRATED

In Mexico, Marco, Rodriguez and the cartel are in a boardroom having a meeting.

Marco: "Time is running out gentlemen, we need to start the meeting."

Rodriguez: "Not until Biyela gets here."

Marco: "I will never be able to understand why you have so much trust in that man."

Christopher: "Marco is right."

Biyela knew about this meeting a few days ago and yet he is still not here. We have businesses to run."

Just then Mr Biyela walks in followed by Sizwe and six other guys who walk in and stand behind each of the cartel members.

Mr B: "Don't cry too much Chris I am here now."

Marco: "Finally! But what's with the bodyguards. You know we don't allow anyone else into these meetings."

Mr B: "Don't worry you will find out soon Marco. Let's start the meeting."

Rodriguez: "Good then, now that we are all here, first item on the agenda, my comeback. I have decided to come out of hiding and resume my place as head of this cartel."

Mr B: "So what happens to Marco? He is the head of the cartel now since you are technically dead."

Rodriguez: "That is just a technicality that can easily be solved. Do you have any objections Marco?" Marco fakes a smile.

Marco: "Of course not."

Chris: "Theres one problem with your plan Rodriguez, for you to

get back as head of the cartel you need to put down two million dollars as a buy in, and we know you have already given away all your fortune to Biyela's daughter and your grandson. So how will you afford it?"

Rodriguez: "That's a minor issue Chris, since Kazi passed away, may her precious soul rest in peace, my fortune reverts back to me."

Mr B: "Actually according to your will, you left your fortune to Theo, Kazi was just meant to keep it till Theo comes off age. And with Kazi dead it reverts to the

cartel."

Rodriguez: "Well Theo has not come of age yet so...."

Mr B: "Okay then, transfer the two million now so we can put an end to this. I have places to be."

Rodriguez: "Right." He takes out his laptop and logs onto his bank app. "Something must be wrong because it seems my bank accounts are empty."

Chris: "Let me try mine." He also opens his iPad and goes through his accounts before cussing out.

"They're are empty." The rest of the cartel members do the same and check their accounts only to

find them empty." They all look at each other before noticing Mr Biyela sitting comfortably and sipping on his whiskey.

Rodriguez: "Biyela!"

Mr B: "Yes!"

Rodriguez: "Our accounts are empty."

Mr B: "Oh I know. It wasn't easy emptying them but thank God it happened."

Rodriguez: "You did this?"

Mr B: "Of course, it took months to plan and even more months to execute my plan."

The cartel members get up and pull out their guns and point them

at Mr Biyela. Sizwe and the guards pull out their own guns and point them at the cartel members.

Chris: "I want my money Biyela, all of it."

Mr B: "Yeah you not getting it."

Marco: "Is this supposed to be a joke?"

Mr B: "Was it a joke when you conspired with Rafael to kill my daughter so you can get your hands on Rodriguez's fortune?"

Was it a joke when my son almost lost his wife because Rafael put bullets in her? WAS IT?" He asks banging the table. "You son's of

bitches thought I wouldn't find out about it. We were supposed to be brothers, watching out for each other but the moment money got involved you became enemies and came after my family." He gives his guys a nod and four gunshots go off and four cartel members fall on the ground, except Chris, Marco and Rodriguez. "Now gentlemen you will put your guns away and we will talk like the adults that we are."

They put their guns on the table and sit down.

Mr B: "Good, now since you Marco and Christopher were the masterminds behind my daughters death I will let Sizwe deal with you the best way he sees fit. You my old friend..." he says looking at Rodriguez. "I am sorry I kind off hijacked your meeting."

Rodriguez: "When did you become this man Biyela? This is not you."

Mr B: "This has always been me my friend you know that. When it comes to my family you know I will go to the ends of the world for them."

Rodriguez: "Okay but I had

nothing to do with this. You know I loved Kazi like my own."

Mr B: "You loved her so much you watched while your son made her life a living hell. She had to give up her son just to protect him from that idiot son of yours.

That's your idea of love?"

Rodriguez: "Look I can make it up to you."

Mr B: "How? Will you bring my daughter back to life? Will you erase the scar on Lando that is a constant reminder that she almost died at the hands of your son? What are you going to do Rodriguez?" He doesn't answer.

"I thought as much." He nods to the guy behind Rodriguez and he takes one shot that goes through Rodriguez's skull and kills him instantly. He turns to look at Marco and Christopher before looking up at Sizwe. He gets up. "Have fun." He walks out leaving the two guys begging for mercy.

INSERT 72

All good things come to an end. Even holidays in picturesque places also have to take a bow. We are packed and ready to go. And as always the girls decided to

do some last minute shopping and we had to wait for them.

We sat in the lounge waiting for them while having some drinks.

Lindani: "How long are we going to wait?"

Me: "As long as theres money in our accounts." They laugh.

Nate: "Maybe I should decrease my daily limit."

Mbuso: "Make sure your funeral policy is up to date before you do that cause Buli will kill you." We laugh.

Me: "He forgets he married a gangster."

Nate: "Mxm."

We hear a knock on the door and we all say a unanimous 'Amen!' I get up and open the door but to my surprise it's not the girls.

Instead it's the police officer I met at the hotel, who told me about Uche's death. I invite him and his partner in.

Officer 1: "Gentlemen." They all greet back.

Me: "So officer, to what do we owe this unexpected visit?"

Officer 1: "Well you said the other day that you and Mrs Adebayor are family friends?"

Me: "Yes!"

Officer: "Good. The coroner has

concluded the autopsy and according to his report Mrs Adebayor had some toxic chemicals in her bloodstream which led to her heart attack."

Me: "Ok, so what does that mean?"

Officer 2: "Well the coroner ruled out any recreational drugs like cocaine and heroine. The chemical in her system is untraceable and lethal and we believe somebody injected her with it."

Lindani: "Get to the point officer."

Officer 1: "In short, she was killed. The case is now a homicide."

Lindani: "Okay so what are you

doing here? Shouldn't you be finding the person who did this?"

Officer 2: "We are planning on finding the person. But we figured since you knew her maybe you could shed a bit of light. If she has any enemies or if you know anyone who would want to hurt her?"

Me: "No! I don't know anyone."

Officer 1: "And you gentlemen?"

He asks looking at the guys.

Nate: "We know nothing."

Officer 1: "Okay then. Thank you for your time gentlemen." I walked them to the door and they left. I went back to the guys and

continued with my drink. I guess my gut was right.



LANDO

We made it to the airport with just a few minutes to spare.

Blame our last minute shopping. Atleast we got all we needed. The flight took off. All I wanted to do was hug my babies. While everyone was sleeping I decided to go use the bathroom. When I came out I found Nate standing outside the toilet.

Me: "Hey, I thought you were asleep."

Nate: "I was. We need to talk, about Uche."

Me: "Okay what's going on?"

Nate: "The police say her death was a homicide."

Me: "Okay."

Nate: "I need to know if you had anything to do with it? If you did we need to know now so we can do some damage control." Okay I know he did not just say that.

Me: "Why would you even ask me that?"

Nate: "I overheard you the other day telling Buli that you wish Uche was dead. A couple of days later she winds up dead. I am

sorry if I am crossing the line but if you did do something I need you to tell me."

Me: "Nate I may have wanted her dead but I promise you I didnt do this? I swear."

Nate: "Okay. Good. I am sorry for....."

Me: "Its fine. I understand where you are coming from."

Nate: "Cool." I left him there and went back to my seat. I guess Philani was right, now I wonder who killed her and why.

I looked over at Philani sleeping next to me and wondered if he also thinks I had something to do

with Uche's death. But then again he would have asked me, right? Oh maybe he won't ask me since I told him to stay out of Uche's death anyway. I decide I will ask him soon as he wakes up.

We landed at midday and drove off to the house. Philani's phone was beeping none stop. I figured maybe its business. I hadn't switched my phone on yet. I looked out the window trying to come up with a way to ask him about all stuff going on in my head.

Philani: "Are you okay?" He asked bringing me back from my thoughts.

Me: "Yeah I am fine. Just tired."

Philani: "Something is bothering you Lando, spit it out." I sigh.

Me: "Okay, what role does Nate play in your group?" He looks at me like I have four extra eyes on my forehead.

Philani: "Where is that coming from?"

Me: "I'm just curious."

Philani: "Well, okay. Nate is the one who makes sure to clean up any messes we might make. He ensures if we do something that

nothing leads back to us." Huh! I guess now it makes sense why he asked me about Uche.

Me: "Okay."

We got home and as refreshing as this trip was it will never beat seeing my kids. And the best part, Theo running to my arms soon as he heard my voice. That in itself made me forget all the stress that comes with Uche and her death. I was happy. I AM happy. This is what's important and will always be.

After playing with the kids for almost two hours their tiny bodies were just tired. I put

them down to take a nap and decided to catch up on work since I will be going back the following week. Since Philani was also taking a nap upstairs I decided to use the study.

I logged on to my emails and went through the most important ones first. I got to an email from the now head of Finance at Biyela Holdings. I went through the email almost three times still not understanding what it means. I decided to print it out and show it to Philani. I went upstairs and he was still sleeping. I shook him and

he stirred a bit. I shook him till he woke up.

Philani: "Waking people up should be considered a crime." He says rubbing his eyes. I give him the email and he goes through it too and I can see the confusion in his eyes.

Me: "Do you know what's going on?"

Philani: "No. But I wouldn't put it past my dad."

Me: "Why would he want a report from the head of Finance?"

Philani: "That's what I would like to know cause as far as I know the head of Finance reports to

you or me." He takes out his phone and makes a call. I can hear one side of this conversation but I can tell from Philani's jaw clenching that he is pissed with whatever is being said by the person on the other side. He hangs up after a while and throws his phone on the wall and it shatters on the floor.

He gets off the bed and starts pacing up and down. As angry as he looks right now I can see him trying to calm himself down. I decide to let him cool down before asking him what's going on. Eventually he takes a seat on the

bed and I swear he is close to tears. I move closer to him.

Me: "What's going on?" He takes a deep breath.

Philani: "I can't believe I fell for this. All the talk about wanting me to take over and continue his legacy, meanwhile he doesn't trust me to do that."

Me: "What do you mean? What's going on?"

Philani: "My dad apparently asked all the head of departments to write a monthly report on each department and he gets to review it."

Me: "I'm confused!"

Philani: "Simply put, my dad is checking up on me. He can't wait for the board meetings to get his reports so he goes over my head and tells my staff to report to him! So what am I?"

Me: "I'm sorry!"

Philani: "It's not your fault. My dad has never trusted me and I thought me taking over from him would be a chance for us to actually have a proper relationship. But I guess I was wrong. He's never going to trust me."

Me: "Maybe if you talk to him, find out why he did that, maybe he

didn't mean anything bad by it."

He chuckles.

Philani: "Really Lando? He tells my staff to discretely report to him about all that happens at work. He wants the minutes from every meeting. If that is him not meaning anything bad by it then I wonder what he does when he really means something bad."

He gets up, grabs his phone and puts on his sneakers before heading out. I can pretty much tell you where he is going. To confront his father.



PHILANI

Sometimes I wonder if I am being punished for all the wrongs I have done. Just when I think things are going well, the way they are supposed to and then something always comes along and derails it.

What my father did hurt. I should be angry but I am not. I am hurt. I get that with my history he might have had his doubts but I didnt force him to put me in charge. Heck he practically begged me to take over. And now he pulls a stunt like this? I feel betrayed honestly. How is my staff supposed to

respect and trust my leadership if my own father goes behind my back doing shit like this.

I have been driving around since I left the house. As tough as I am this hurts. I eventually pull up to my dad's house and his car is parked outside. I go into the house and the first sound I hear is laughter. I know that laugh but a part of me feels like I am just imagining things.

I go into the lounge and stop dead in my tracks soon as I see her. This cannot be happening right now. She sees me first and they all turn around to look at me,

my dad and Sizwe. She runs over to me and throws her arms around my neck. I am so shocked I cant even hug her back. Her arms around my neck confirm that she is real. This isn't a figment of my imagination but it's real. My sister is alive.

After a while she pulls back and looks at me with tears filling her eyes, she tries to blink them back but fails.

Kazi: "Hi!"

Me: "Hi!"

Kazi: "Its nice to see you again."

Me: "Arent you supposed to be dead?" She laughs.

Kazi: "I should be, but I'm not."

Me: "We buried you. There is a grave with your name on it. A death certificate with your name on it. So how are you here?"

Dad: "Son have a seat, I will explain everything."

I slowly follow Kazi to the couch and sit down. My dad starts explaining everything. And now it all makes sense. Kazi dying suddenly, the closed casket, my dad wanting to do everything himself, including the death certificate, him refusing to claim Kazi's life policy. It makes sense now. But now it also occurs to me

that my dad really doesn't trust me.

Me: "I have to go." I get up and walk out. I hear them calling me. I keep walking till I get to my car. I open the door and someone closes it again. I look back and it's my dad.

Dad: "I thought you'd be happy to see your sister."

Me: "I am."

Dad: "Then why are you leaving? Your sister is hurt."

Me: "Baba, do you trust me?"

Dad: "Where is this coming from? What's going on with you?"

Me: "Why did you ask for monthly

reports from my staff?"

Dad: "Excuse me."

Me: "Ungzwile baba (you heard me)."

Dad: "Its not what you think."

Me: "Okay then explain it to me."

Dad: "I was just trying to make sure that.....that....."

Me: "That I dont launder my drug money through your company?"

that I dont steal from you?

Which is it? Or maybe this was a test? So how did I do? Did I pass?"

Dad: "It wasnt a test man

Philani, you cant blame me for

wanting to make sure things are

running smoothly."

Me: "Right! Because your drug dealing incompetent son has to be monitored." He puts his hands in his pockets and looks away. I know he wants to say something, but at this point I really don't care. "Don't worry baba, I will unburden you, I Quit!" He quickly looks back at me.

Dad: "You can't quit, this is your legacy, your children's legacy."

Me: "I will build my children their own legacy, one that is not controlled by you, for all I know you will strike my children even from the grave cause that's how

much you love your precious company. Well now you can have it back."

Dad: "Philani dont make rash decisions. You are angry I get that, take time out and think about this."

Me: "Theres nothing to think about Baba, you trust everyone else except me, your son. Heck you trust my own best friend better than you trust me or even respect me." I get into the car and roll down the window. "Tell Kazi I will call her later." I close the window again and drive off.

Dont get me wrong I am happy my sister is alive. But right now, with how I am feeling, I need to be alone and just figure out what I need to do. But one thing I know for sure, I am done with Biyela Holdings.

INSERT 73

It's been hours since Philani left. Although he sent a text saying he is fine I am still worried about him. I went to bed last night still waiting for him. I woke up and tried calling him again and luckily this time his phone rang. He

answered just as I was about to hang up.

Philani: "Babe!"

Me: "Hey, where are you? Why was your phone off? What's going on?" He chuckles.

Philani: "I can only answer one question at a time babe." He thinks this is funny? Mxm.

Me: "Philani!"

Philani: "Okay okay, I'm sorry. My phone died so I couldn't call. But I am at home in Mandawe."

Me: "Oh okay. You spoke to your dad?"

Philani: "Yeah I did. I'll tell you all about it when i get back. Right

now I need to talk to gogo then I will drive back to Joburg."

Me: "Okay, drive safe."

Philani: "I will. I love you."

Me: "I love you too." We hung up. At least I know he is safe.

I got up and took a bath before bathing the kids. I took them downstairs to feed them so we can go meet the girls at Faith's. I heard the doorbell ring. I went to open and found Philani's dad.

Me: "Baba."

Mr B: "Makoti." I led him to the kitchen where the kids were. He greeted the kids and played with them a bit.

Me: "Can I make you breakfast?"

Mr B: "No thanks I am fine.

Where's Philani?" I thought about telling him but I figured Philani can do that himself.

Me: "He is not here. He left yesterday and he hasn't been back."

Mr B: "He didnt even call?"

Me: "No."

Mr B: "Shit!" I saw the look on his face and for just a split second I regretted not telling him where Philani is, but then I remembered it's his fault he isnt here so....

"Did he tell you what happened?"

Me: "He did tell me about you

spying on him."

Mr B: "Right. I need you to talk to him."

Me: "And say what to him Baba, that you going behind his back and spying on him was a mistake?"

Mr B: "He wasn't supposed to find out."

Me: "The truth always has a way of coming out."

Mr B: "I can see you are upset too."

Me: "Of course I am. You begged Philani to take over from you, heck you even put me up as a condition for the takeover and he

did all that you wanted. He jumped through hoops to show you that he wants to do this, carry your legacy forward but then you turn around and do this to him? Really baba?"

Mr B: "Look, what I did wasn't meant to hurt him. I was just looking out for the company."

Me: "Then you could have been honest and upfront about it and not go behind his back."

Mr B: "I know."

Me: "Do you really have that little faith in him? After you begged him to come home and do what you wanted him to do you couldn't

even give him the benefit of the doubt."

Mr B: "Lando, Philani deals drugs and everything else, all I wanted to do was make sure that he doesn't use my company to do his illegal activities."

Me: "You really think he would put all your hard work at risk for drugs? He has been working so hard to prove himself to you."

Mr B: "I fucked up didnt I?"

Me: "Yeah, you did. And now you could have just pushed him back to the world you tried so hard to get him out of."



PHILANI

Being home feels good. Although I know I should have gone home to be with my wife and kids but I needed to speak to my mother.

I got home late at night but by dawn I was up and I decided to walk to the cemetery. I spoke to her for a while and by the time I was done it felt like a whole load was lifted from my shoulders.

Maybe what dad did was the sign I needed. I have spent my entire life trying to prove myself to him, and when he asked me to take over from him I thought finally

he got to see me for me and what I am capable of, instead I was just fooling myself. He still thinks I am that rebellious teenager he couldn't trust, inspite of everything I have done he still refuses to trust me.

I went back home and took a shower. Lando called me just as I got out of the shower. I could hear the worry in her voice and that's when I decided to go back home. As much as my dad hurt me I cant run away from my little family.

I went to the main house to talk to gogo. I found her sipping tea from her saucer. Old people!

Me: "Gogo wami!"

Gogo: "Boy boy, unjani Mgazi (how are you)" I gave her a hug and sat down next to her.

Me: "Hhay kusaphileka gogo, ninjani nine (I am fine how are you)"

Gogo: "Hhay amathambo nje asagugile kodwa inhliziyo isephile saka. (Only bones get old but the heart is still young). What brings you here so early?"

Me: "I actually got here last night. But you were sleeping then

so I didn't want to wake you up."

Gogo: "Okay, so what's wrong?" I take a deep breath and tell her everything.

Me: "That is why I have decided to quit."

Gogo: "I understand. But that company is your legacy Philani, your kids legacy. Are you really willing to give it all up just because of something like this."

Me: "Gogo, if he doesn't trust me with his company then what's the point? I mean if he had told me before hand that he would do this then it wouldn't hurt this much. But him going behind my

back and approaching my stuff to do this was wrong. How are people supposed to even respect me or listen to me."

Gogo: "I get you. But my advice, speak to your father first. You two have been way closer the past year than you have ever been before, dont throw that away."

I drove out of Mandawe around noon after gogo made sure I had enough fruits and vegetables from her garden to last a lifetime, but Lando will be happy so.

I got to Joburg in the evening. I got to the house and found Lando in the tub. I swear if looks could kill I would be dead right now. I decided to join her. I took off my clothes and got in the tub behind her and she layed her head on my chest.

Lando: "I dont like your disappearing act."

Me: "I know, I am sorry."

Lando: "Hows everyone back home?"

Me: "Good. They miss you though. They cant wait for you to come visit. And gogo gave me her whole garden and orchard to give to

you." She smiles.

Lando: "I miss them too. I should visit soon." Her smile fades and she takes a deep breath. "Your dad was here earlier looking for you."

Me: "That's nice, he didnt send his spies this time."

Lando: "I hope I am not prying but do you think you will ever forgive him." I sigh.

Me: "I dont know. Maybe. As much as I love my dad maybe we are better off when we arent in each others faces all the time. I mean we have never been close but this past year I thought

things would change, we were close, talking a lot, heck i even swallowed my pride and asked him for help, which would not have happened a few years ago."

Lando: " Maybe if you two sit down and talk you can fix this."

Me: "I dont know babe, maybe we are just better off this way.

Besides he has a new son now he doesn't need me."

Lando: "What are you talking about?"

Me: "Sizwe is his new fave. So much so he's the one he told first about Kazi being alive." She turns around and looks at me.

Lando: "What do you mean Kazi being alive?" I guess dad didnt share the good news.

Me: "He didnt tell you? Kazi is alive." She quickly got out of the tub and wrapped a towel around her and starts pacing up and down the bathroom.

Lando: "I'm sorry I dont understand. How is she alive? Theres a grave with her name on it, there was a funeral, people mourned for her, so it was all a lie?"

Me: "Yep. While we were crying and filled with guilt Kazi was holed up in Russia."

Lando: "I dont believe this."

Me: "Well believe it." I see a smile on her face.

Lando: "Shes alive. I have to go and call her. Shes still using her old number right. It doesn't matter I'll call the landline." And just like that my wife left me alone in a tub. I guess that's one good thing that came out of this whole mess.



FAITH

Family is never just blood, it's the people who choose to be in your life, blood or not. And my friends have become family to me. So

much so I would do anything to protect them just as much as they would do the same for me.

Today I am meeting my dad. He booked an entire restaurant, the pecks of being a king. I get to the restaurant and the place is quiet. If you didnt know better you would think the place was closed a while ago.

I get inside and he is already sitting down with a cup of tea, his favourite thing since he doesn't drink alcohol.

Me: "Daddy!"

Dad: "Hi princess." I give him a

hug. A waiter comes by and I place my order.

Me: "So how was your trip to the Middle East?"

Dad: "Fruitful. I even got time to do a little assignment my daughter sent me on." I smile.

Me: "Thank you daddy. But you do know the cops are now investigating a homicide."

Dad: "I know, but that's nothing for you to worry about, they won't find anything."

Me: "What if they investigate and things point back to us?"

Dad: "Babygirl, stop worrying, I have everything under control."

Have I ever let you down?"

Me: "No!"

Dad: "Good. Now stop worrying."

Me: "I cant help it. Buli's husband is trying to figure out who did this cause he needs to make sure it doesn't lead back to anyone of us. Maybe if I told him....."

Dad: "Nope, that cant happen. As long as they know nothing then nothing will lead back to anybody. But if push comes to shove I already have someone standing by who will take the fall for it. And dont worry they will be greatly compensated for it."

Me: "Okay." Our food comes and we eat.

I missed my dad. It's been a while since I went home but I guess this will have to do.

After lunch we went back to my house cause he wanted to see his grandbabies. It's always amazing to see my dad in Mkhulu mode. I always thought his daddy mode was impressive but this is way more beautiful. It's like when he walks through the door he leaves the title of king outside and inside he is just a normal family man.

He played with the kids for a while before he had to go. I walked him out to the car and his guards were already waiting.

Me: "I'll miss you daddy."

Dad: "I'll miss you too, but you know where home is, come and visit. And bring those two rascals." I laughed.

Me: "I will. Have a safe trip and kiss mummy for me."

Dad: "When I kiss your mum I kiss her for me not for you, if you want to kiss her go kiss her yourself. But I will hug her for you." I smile.

Me: "Thank you dad. For

everything."

Dad: "Anytime babygirl." He gives me a hug and gets into the car. I watch them as they drive out the gate.

I walk back into the house and these two are already sprawled out on the floor sleeping. I guess they will bath in the morning.

INSERT 74

It's my first day back to work after my maternity leave and quite honestly it feels like I am going back to school. I am a bit

nervous. I don't know why but I am. And since Philani decided he will quit being the CEO I have to do this alone. It would have been nice to have him with me but life. I just hope him and his dad can sort this whole thing out.

I park my car in my parking spot and it feels weird seeing Philani's spot empty. I get out of the car and fix myself up. I look like I am about to take over the world with what I am wearing. I have on a red powersuit with a white blouse that covers my scar, that's the most important part.

I take a deep breath soon as I hear the ping sound the lift makes when it reaches the floor. The doors part and and I walk into a quiet space. The executive floor is empty, even my PA is not at her desk. I look around and there's no one there. Just as I take a step towards my office people jump out from every corner screaming surprise. They even have a banner written 'WELCOME BACK'. I get a bit emotional. I was missed. My PA hands out drinks and someone brings a cake and I cut it. Soon everyone has a piece.

The mini party comes to an end and everyone disperses and goes to their work spaces. I walk into my office and it smells fresh and nice. I missed this place. I take a look around and it's almost like the way I left it. Except cleaner. I sit down and theres a knock on the door. I guess it's really back to the rat race. I tell the person to come in. I look up and its Ziyanda, our head of Finance. She looks nervous.

Me: "Hey!"

Ziyanda: "Hi. Welcome back."

Me: "Thank you. And thank you for holding down the fort." She

smiles and stands in front of my desk.

Ziyanda: "It was a team effort but I am glad to help. So I was hoping we could talk about the email." I sigh. I really was hoping we wouldn't get into that.

Me: "Sure."

Ziyanda: "Look I am sorry, I didn't mean to cause any trouble."

Me: "You didn't."

Ziyanda: "You don't have to say that, I know I fucked up. Excuse my language. That's why Philani quit right? It's because of that email?" She rubs her hands together and takes a seat.

Me: "I think until an announcement is made, no one is quitting."

Ziyanda: "I really hope so, we like working with him, I have learned a lot from him and you. I know together you can take this company far."

Me: "Thank you."

Ziyanda: "You welcome." And just like that, an awkward silence engulfs the room for almost a minute. "Okay I will go back to work now." I smile. She gets up and walks out. There is so much work to catch up on so I get on it.

My head has been glued on these files for a good twenty minutes but it feels like a lifetime. It's not that I don't know what to do but I miss my babies. And the only reason I haven't called them is because my dear husband made a bet with me, that I wouldn't last until ten a.m before I call them. And it's only nine o'clock now. Oh what the heck. I pick up the phone and he answers after the third ring.

Philani: "I told you, you wouldn't last. So what am I getting for my win?" I roll my eyes.

Me: "Whatever, how are my babies?"

Philani: "Don't ignore me. I won. I want my prize." I laugh.

Me: "Okay fine, we will talk about this when I get home. Now how are the babies?"

Philani: "They are good. Theo is busy with his toys and Lakhawe is fighting sleep."

Me: "Put her down in her cot. She will sleep eventually."

Philani: "I will, soon as I can get the bottle away from her." I laugh. That girl and food cannot be separated. "So hows work?"

Me: "Good. Everyone misses you,

and there's a rumour going around that you quit."

Philani: "Its not a rumour if it's true."

Me: "Are you certain about this. As hurt as you are I know you love this place."

Philani: "I do. But maybe it's time I focused on my own businesses. I've neglected them long enough."

Me: "So theres no changing your mind? I miss you."

Philani: "I miss you too, but nope, I am not changing my mind."

Me: "Not even if I....." the door swings open and Mr Biyela senior walks in. "I'll call you back." I

hang up and stand. "Baba!"

Mr B: "Makoti, Philani is not in his office, do you know where he is?"

Me: "Uhm..... he quit. I thought you knew."

Mr B: "He wasn't really serious about that was he?"

Me: "Well he is not here, so...." I shrug my shoulders.

Mr B: "He cannot quit right now, we have a shareholder's meeting in a few days, how am I supposed to explain us not having a CEO."

Me: "Have you spoken to Philani?"

Mr B: "Well he's not answering any of my calls."

Me: "You do know where he lives

right? Shouldn't you be trying to fix this?"

Mr B: "You are right. I should."

He turns around and leaves.

I take a seat and watch him walk out the door. As much as they might not see eye to eye some times, Philani and his father are cut from the same cloth.

They are both stubborn as hell and I pray to God they find a way to fix this, if not for each other then atleast for the company.



PHILANI

I could get used to this stay-at-home dad thing. Okay maybe that's just an exaggeration. But spending time with the kids is good, even though I have Mamnguni to help me.

After putting Lakhive to sleep I decided to go to my office to do a bit of work. I haven't had much time for my businesses but now that i have time on my hands i think it's time i gave my attention to them.

I was busy going through some emails and reports on my computer when the door burst open and my dad walked in. I

looked up and he was standing right in front of me.

Dad: "Aren't you supposed to be at work?"

Me: "I am working." He picks up a file from my desk, looks at it and puts it back down.

Dad: "This does not look like Biyela Holdings work."

Me: "That's cause I dont work for Biyela Holdings any more."

Dad: "Philani you need to come back to work."

Me: "I cant work for someone who doesn't trust me Baba."

Dad: "You won't be working for me, this is your company, you are

working for you." I sit back on the chair and cross my arms across my chest.

Me: "Yeah that's what you said last time and I believed you but then you turned around and made a fool of me."

Dad: "I didnt make a fool out of you I was just checking up on things."

Me: "Theres a difference between checking up on someone and actually spying on them, and what you did was spying." He takes a deep breath, pulls out a chair and sits down.

Dad: "Look I realize that I

should have trusted you, you have done an amazing job running this company and I am sorry for not trusting you." I look at him, more shocked than anything else. My dad never apologizes, to anybody. Especially if he thinks he is right. "Arent you going to say something?" He asks after a while. And then I realize I have been staring at him for a while. Me: "Did you just say you are sorry?" He takes a deep breath. Dad: "Yes, I am sorry. I should have trusted you. Now please come back to work." I want to laugh honestly cause I can see

this was a bitter pill for him to swallow.

Me: "It doesn't work like that Baba. If you want me to really come back you have to relinquish whatever power you have in the company."

Dad: "You cant possibly be serious right now."

Me: "I am. See if I am to really takeover from you then I need to know that I have free reign to do whatever i feel is good for the company." He takes out an envelope from his coat pocket and hands it to me. "What's this?"

Dad: "I signed over my shares to

you. As of an hour ago I am no longer the majority shareholder at Biyela Holdings, you are."

WHAT THE FUCK.

Me: "Are you sure about this?"

Dad: "I am. This was supposed to be your two year anniversary gift but I guess early gifts are welcome too right?"

Me: "I dont know what to say."

Dad: "Look I realize I might not have been the best father to you and I am sorry. But the company is yours. That's what your mother wanted so it's only right that I hand it over now while I

can still see what you will do with it. And I know it will do great."

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

I have been sitting in the same spot with my eyes glued to this envelope since my dad left, and that was probably five hours ago. As much as my dad told me what is in the envelope I am still scared to see it in full black and white.

I hear the sound of someone calling my name. They seem so far away. The voice gets louder and louder. I ignore the the voice until I feel someone sprinkle water on

my face. I look up and its Lando.
When did she get back from work?

Lando: "Are you okay?"

Me: "Yeah I am fine."

Lando: "You dont look fine. What's happening?" She asks as she sits on my lap. I take the envelope and give it to her. She opens it and reads the contents. I see shock on her face.

Me: "What does it say?"

Lando: "It says you, my dear husband are now the major shareholder at Biyela Holdings. Where did you get this?"

Me: "My dad came by earlier and gave that to me."

Lando: "Wow."

Me: "You can say that again. I mean I was only joking when i told him to relinquish power, but this is just a shocker."

Lando: "So what does this mean? Are you coming back to work?"

Me: "I dont know yet. I guess I have some major decisions to make."

Lando: "Clearly."

Me: "By the way we have to go to Nigeria this weekend for Uche's funeral."

Lando: "Do I really have to go and bury your ex?" She says with her hands inside my chest.

Me: "I know what you are trying to do and it won't work. We are going to Nigeria. Someone needs to be there to represent BH."

She sulks and gets up from my lap walks to the door.

Lando: "I am going to make dinner. What are you craving?"

Me: "Cookie!" She smirks and pokes her head in the door.

Lando: "I wasnt talking about dessert Mr Biyela. But if you finish your veggies you might just earn yourself a cookie." She winks and walks away.

I swing the chair around and look out the window. The sun is

setting. When it rose this morning I didn't know it would set with me being a major shareholder in a multibillion dollar company. Being CEO was a great learning experience, but now being major shareholder, now that is just a whole different ball game. But question is, am I ready to step up to the plate. I guess only time will tell.

NARRATED

At a newsroom in the middle of Joburg, a journalist walks into her editors office with a story to tell.

Editor: "I hope this is good, I should be home with my wife right now."

Journalist: "Let's just say I may have a story that could bring someone down to their knees."

Editor: "Okay who are we talking about?" Journalist: "Hold your horses. You know Uche Adebayor right?"

Editor: "The Nigerian oil heiress?"

Journalist: "That one, she just died a few days ago in Dubai. But that's not the interesting part. Uche Adebayor used to date Philani Biyela, her death went from a heart attack to a murder

in less than 48 hours. And guess where Philani was when Uche died? Dubai! Now one death is not really that suspicious, until you find out another one of Biyela's exes also died in some weird circumstances. Ayanda and her friend Cebo were found dead on the Gautrain trails. Reports said they were drunk and even high on drugs. Now the problem with that theory, neither one of them had ever used drugs before that day. A few weeks earlier Biyela's wife was kidnapped and rumour has it Ayanda and her friend had sold her to some human

trafficking ring as pay back for taking Philani away from her.

Now the common denominator in all this is Philani Biyela. "

Editor: "So you think Biyela had a hand in all these deaths?"

Journalist: "From the looks of it, yes."

Editor: "What you want to do is shake a table that might fall hard on us."

Journalist: "Look just give me a few weeks and I will have a sensational story for you."

Editor: "Fine, but whatever you do make sure you have foolproof facts to back you up cause once

you open this can of worms there won't be a way to get them back under control."

Journalist: "I won't disappoint you, I promise." She says excitedly.

Editor: "Never make a promise you can't keep kid. Go home, it's about to be a bumpy ride."

INSERT 75

People can be inconsiderate sometimes. How does a whole ass husband disappear for three days without letting anyone know

where they are. Mxm. It's true what they say, man really are trash. We have a funeral to attend this weekend and Philani is nowhere to be found.

I was in my room getting ready to go to work when I heard the doorbell ring. I am sure MaMnguni opened for whoever that was cause first I heard voices and the footsteps coming towards the bedroom. They knock once and walk in before I can even say anything.

Kazi: "Hey wifey." She throws herself on the bed. Her attitude is surprising though cause for the

past few days she has been cold towards me. I have invited her for lunch, called her multiple times with no response. She's even blue ticked me on WhatsApp. I wonder what has changed.

Me: "Hey, what are you doing here so early?"

Kazi: "I was hoping to see my brother. Is he here?"

Me: "Well I would love to see him too. I haven't seen him in three days." I say tying up my shoes.

Kazi: "What do you mean?"

Me: "He hasn't been home Kazi. I don't know where he is or what he is doing. All I got was a text

saying I am fine three days ago. His phone has been off since." I put on my blazer and spray some perfume on. If he thinks I will be home crying myself to sleep he has another thing coming. Life goes on, with or without him.

Kazi: "Maybe something has happened to him."

Me: "This is Philani we are talking about Qhawekazi, if something had happened to him you and I both know his friends would turn this city upside down to find him." I take my bag and just as I walk to the door she blocks my way.

Kazi: "My brother is missing, and

you haven't tried even one thing to find him?" I swear it's too early for this.

Me: "He said he is fine."

Kazi: "And you believe that?" She shouts at me. "What if he has been kidnapped? What if he is lying in a ditch somewhere fighting for his life, or even worse dead?"

Me: "Okay ke sis wakhe, wena what have you done to try and find him? Since you are so concerned about him."

Kazi: "You are his wife, his wellbeing should be a priority to you."

Me: "He's still not answering your calls or texts is he? That's why you showed up here so early to see him because he is not speaking to you?"

Kazi: "That's beside the point. Philani would not disappear for three days without anyone knowing where he is."

Me: "Well you dissapeared for months, maybe he is taking a page from your book." I push her aside and walk out the bedroom. She follows me down the passage.

Kazi: "Is this the kind of person that you are Landokuhle? Is this what you will teach my son, to not

give a shit about the people around him." I stop dead in my tracks when she says that. I don't know what's more shocking, her calling Theo 'her son' or her attitude. Okay I know biologically he is her son but legally he is mine. I turn around to look at her.

Me: "What did you just say?"

Kazi: "I. SAID. WHAT. I. SAID! You might not give a fuck about my brother but I do. And if you won't find him then I will." She tries to walk past me but I pull her back and pin her to the wall.

She pushes me back and follows with a slap across my face. I turn around too and punch her. She touches her lip and its bleeding, that sets her off even more and she comes for me with all her might. Unfortunately for her I am ready. She jumps at me and I punch her in the gut and stop her right in her tracks. As to how we ended up on the floor punching and scratching each other is still a mystery to me. I felt some strong hands pulling me up from her. I looked up and Sizwe was pulling Kazi away from me kicking and screaming.

Whoever was holding me put me down soon as Kazi and Sizwe disappeared down the stairs. I felt tears coming into my eyes. I was too embarrassed to even turn around to see who was behind me, cause I knew for a fact it wasnt Philani. I stood there with my head hung looking at my bag and its contents spread across the floor. I saw a man's shoes coming around to stand in front of me.

Him: "Are you okay?" I felt a tear drop at the sound of Nate's voice. I looked up and wiped away the tears.

Me: "I am fine." I say faking a smile.

Nate: "No you are not." He drags me by the arm and leads me downstairs. We get to the kitchen and he heads to the fridge and comes back with a pack of frozen vegetables. He hands them to me covered in a cloth.

Me: "What am I supposed to do with this?"

Nate: "Put it on your cheek before it turns purple." He says pulling up a chair and sits facing me. I put the vegetables on my cheek and right then I can feel the sting. Kazi can throw a punch, I'll

give her that. "So what was that about?"

Me: "Nothing."

Nate: "Right, so you and your favourite sister in law decided to play wrestling just for the fun of it?" Seeing as he won't give up I decide to tell him everything.

Me: "I honestly don't understand what happened to the sweet and kind Kazi I knew before she 'died.' Now she's just a full on bitch. I don't know what changed really. The other day she came to the office to see her dad and when I tried talking to her she just gave me the cold shoulder. Did I

perhaps do something to her?"

Nate: "I wish I had the answer for you but I dont. Maybe she's going through something."

Me: "Yeah, like what? The Rodriguez family has been wiped of the face of the earth, she can live her life without looking over her shoulder, she has millions to her name, well Theo does but still. I dont understand."

Nate: "Me neither. But maybe Philani not talking to her is bothering her."

Me: "I didnt tell Philani not to talk to her."

Nate: "I know and speaking of

Philani, that's why we came here, to tell you that he is fine and he will be home soon."

Me: "So you know where he is?"

Nate: "Yes and he is fine."

Me: "Good. Cause the moment he walks through that door I am cutting off his balls." Nate laughs. "You won't be laughing when he has no balls."

Nate: "Believe you me I will remind him at every chance." He says between laughs.

Me: "Can I make you breakfast?"

Nate: "Weren't you on your way to work?"

Me: "I was. But with this face I

dont want people thinking I am being abused."

Nate: "Okay, but no thanks. I have surgery to prep for." He says getting up.

Me: "Okay. Thanks for coming."

Nate: "I'm glad I did. Otherwise there would be two dead bodies being picked up right now." I chuckle as I walk him to the door. "Take care." He says walking out. I close the door soo as he drives off.

I look at my reflection in the mirror by the door and I must say Kazi did a number on my face. I walk back upstairs and pick up

my things from the floor. I take my phone and text my PA to cancel all my meetings since I will be working from home. I get to my room and undress before getting back into bed. How did one beautiful morning turn ugly so quickly?



PHILANI

Have you ever wanted something so bad, longed for it, but when it is finally handed to you all the plans you had and all you hoped to achieve seems so wrong. Or maybe it's just the guilt eating me up.

Maybe Lando getting that email was a blessing in disguise. Maybe that in itself was fate letting me know this is not what I should be doing. These are the same thoughts that keep crowding my brain every night and day.

I am brought back to reality by the sound of Dr Steenkamp calling my name. I open my eyes and look up at the ceiling of her office. I have been laying on this couch for what seems like forever. But it's just been a little over ten minutes. Today is my last day in this place. I have been here for three days now. Lando doesn't

even know I am here. I couldn't bring myself to be close to her with all that's going on inside me. I just needed time to think and make decisions. I just hope I make the right decision cause I have a lot more to lose now than I did two years ago.

Dr S: "So have you come to a decision yet Mr Biyela?" I sighed. I think I have come to a decision. I dont know if it's the right one though.

Me: "I think I have."

Dr S: "And you are certain that it's what you want?" I closed my eyes for a few seconds, took a

deep breath and opened them again.

Me: "Yeah. I am certain."

Dr S: "Okay then, I guess my job here is done." I sat up and looked at her.

Me: "Not by a long shot. You released these demons so you need to make sure they dont run haywire." She chuckles.

Dr S: "I think you have your demons under control Mr Biyela. Now all you have to do is introduce them to the people closest to you, especially your wife."

Me: "Yeah."

I said my goodbyes, got up from the couch and headed home. It's almost ten o'clock at night and I am pretty sure Lando is worried sick. I look at my phone and it's dead. I drive straight home and as I expected I find Lando in the lounge watching some show on TV. She looks up soon as she hears the door close.

Lando: "You are alive!"

Me: "Yeah, I am sorry my phone died."

Lando: "Where have you been?"
Should I lie or tell the truth?
How do you even tell your wife that you are not as strong as she

thinks you are? That deep under that protective gangster exterior you put out there is a damaged little boy hiding away?

Me: "I was at the doctor's office." I see panic and worry flood her eyes.

Lando: "For three days? What's wrong? Are you okay? What did the doctor say."

Me: "Physically I am fine. I went to see Dr Steenkamp. There was some things I needed to talk about." I sit down on the couch opposite her and she decides to join me.

Lando: "What's going on?" I

mentally prepare myself cause I have never told anyone about what I am about to tell her.

Me: "Well when I was little I saw something I shouldn't have seen. We had a nanny, one day Sihle was sick so he couldn't go to school. I think I was about eleven or twelve years old and Sihle was seven I think. I came back from school that day and found Sihle in his room and my dad and the nanny were in her room having sex. My mum was out of the country on business at the time. I told my dad I would tell mum what happened and two days

later I was shipped off to boarding school. When I came back for school holidays I told mum what I saw but my dad had convinced her that I had a crush on the nanny thats why he shipped me to boarding school. I was angry at him for such a long time, because he had an affair right under my mums nose. I knew one day I would have to head up BH, so I made a decision, I wanted to sell BH bit by bit until there was nothing left." I looked at her and I couldn't read her face. I didnt know how she felt by what I had just said but

one thing was clear, she was waiting for the me to keep going. So I did. "When i found out about his monthly reports i wasnt upset that he didn't trust me, okay maybe i was but I think I was more afraid of him finding out what my plans were. And now that I technically own BH, I could carry out my plans, but my conscience won't let me. That is why I have decided to give it back to my dad."

Lando: "What happened to the nanny?"

Me: "She was fired when my mum found out about the affair."

Lando: "So you are willing to destroy everything your father built?"

Me: "I was, but now I am not."

Lando: "Ok then, besides your conscience bothering you, are you giving up this elaborate plan of yours because you want to or because it's the right thing to do?" I could feel the anger in her voice.

Me: "The plan was to get him to trust me, sell the company and then go back to doing what I've always done, gallivanting around the world and doing whatever I want whenever I want and

maybe eventually settling in London or New York. But then he said I had to marry you and I did, fell in love with you and my priorities changed."

Lando: "And when did these priorities change? Before or after the email?"

Me: "Uhm..... that's not important." She pulls her hand away from my grip.

Lando: "So if that email hadn't made it's way into my inbox you would have went ahead with your plans?"

Me: "I dont know." She shakes her head and laughs, not the

happy ticklish laugh but a
sarcastic angry laugh.

Lando: "So you have been lying to
everyone, me, your dad and your
entire family. For what?" She is
now shouting.

Me: "Please dont shout at me."

She gets up and crosses her arms
across her chest with her angry
fiery eyes on me.

Lando: "Who am I supposed to
shout at then? You are the one
who has been fooling everyone. Do
you even love me? Or was that
also just for show." I get up from
the couch and try to hug her but
she takes a step back and I see

a tear escape her eye. That alone is like a knife through my heart.

Me: "Lando I love you, I have meant those words from the first time I said them. I never meant to hurt you or anybody else for that matter."

Lando: "You were planning on selling your father's company bit by bit until there was nothing left of it. Did you think of the thousands of people who would be left unemployed? You didnt think about their families and how your actions would hurt them? Really Philani!"

Me: "I am sorry."

Lando: "I am not the one you should be apologizing to."

Me: "My dad is not the saint you think he is."

Lando: "I dont care if he is the devil himself, I care about you."

Me: "He killed her. He killed my mother."

Lando: "Your mother had a stroke Philani."

Me: "After finding out about my dads secret love child with the nanny."

Lando: "What are you talking about?"

Me: "After she had the stroke I secretly came back to see her. She

couldn't talk properly but she could piece a few words together. She told me that the kid, a fifteen year old boy at the time, showed up at the house claiming he came to see his dad. When my dad showed up he couldn't even deny it. He admitted that the child was his and when the nanny was fired dad moved her to Cape Town and continued the affair, which resulted in the child being born." I sit back down on the couch. "My mum has always had heart problems so when she found out about this love child she had a stroke." She sits back down next

to me.

Lando: "So where is the kid now?"

Me: "I dont know and quite frankly I dont care."

Lando: "Okay, so would selling the company make you feel better?"

Me: "I dont know. I just wanted him to feel what it's like to lose something he loves."

Lando: "He loses the company and then what? Will it bring your mother back? Will it make the child dissapear? What will that solve?"

Me: "I know it won't solve anything and I know it won't bring my mother back. That's

why I have decided to put a stop to this. Look I know that telling you this means losing your trust but for the sake of our marriage I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me." She gets up from the couch and looks at me. Lando: "Go to sleep Philani. We have a funeral to attend tomorrow." She says walking away. I watch her as she walks up the stairs.

I sat on the couch for a while before walking up the stairs. I tried opening our bedroom door but it was locked. I guess I'll be spending the night in the guest

room. I get in and throw myself on the bed and soon as my head hits the pillow I am gone.

INSERT 76

When a woman is angry at you it feels like everything you say or do will just set her off so you have to walk on eggshells around her. I woke up early and made breakfast for Lando and I. I just hope she will eat. And just as I take the eggs off the stove she walks down the stairs with her

overnight bag. I guess she is ready to go.

Me: "Morning. I made breakfast."

Lando: "Thanks." She sits down and I dish up for her. I sit down next to her and we have our breakfast and it's quite awkward honestly.

Me: "So who else is coming with us?"

Lando: "A few employees. We will meet up with them at the airport." At least she is talking to me. That's one step closer to fixing this.

Me: "Okay." Back to the awkward silence. "Listen about last

night....."

Lando: "Can we not talk about this right now." She gets up and puts her plate in the sink then turns around to look at me. "I understand now why you and your father never really got along but....."

Me: "What happened to your face?" I get up and walk towards her.

Lando: "What?"

Me: "Your face, what happened to it?" She touches her cheek and looks away.

Lando: "It's nothing."

Me: "That doesn't look like

nothing to me."

Lando: "Really Philani it's nothing. I hit the sink while I was picking up something from the bathroom floor."

Me: "You sound like an abused woman right now and I know for a fact a sink would not do that. So what happened?"

Lando: "Fine, your sister happened." WTF!

Me: "Qhawekazi did that to you?"

Lando: "Yes. She came here looking for you and when she didnt find you she accused me of not caring about your wellbeing that's why I wasnt looking for you. We got into

a fight and this happened." She says pointing to her cheek.

Me: "I'll meet you at the airport." I take my car keys and head out. Lando follows me and tries to stop me.

Lando: "Where are you going?"

Me: "Just meet me at the airport Lando." I get into my car and drive off.

I got to Dainfen and found my dad walking out. I wonder where he is going.

Dad: "Philani, what are you doing here so early?" He asked as he put his briefcase in the car.

Me: "Is Kazi home?"

Dad: "Yeah she's still sleeping what's going on?" I didn't answer him, I just went straight up to Kazi's room with my dad following behind me. I opened the bedroom door and went straight to the bed. I pulled the blankets off of her and she jumped. She looked up at me and wiped the sleep from her eyes.

Kazi: "Philani! It's still early for this."

Me: "Where the fuck do you get off coming into my house and fighting my wife?"

Dad: "What?" I didn't even hear my dad come in. Kazi tried to

ignore me and go back to sleep so I dragged her by the leg and she fell to the floor.

Kazi: "What the fuck is wrong with you?" She asked me as she got up from the floor.

Me: "I asked you a question. Where do you get off thinking you can come into my house and fight my wife? Who the fuck do you think you are?"

Kazi: "You haven't spoken to me since I came back and the first thing you want to talk about is some stupid squabble? Really Bhuti?"

Me: "Qhawekazi, dont ever come

into my house uninvited again are we clear?" I say and walk away.

Kazi: "You are forgetting one thing Ntshangase, my son is in that house therefore I will come and go as I please." I turned around to look at her.

Me: "Dont try me Qhawekazi, do not try me."

Kazi: "If you dont want me in your house then give me back my son."

Dad: "Qhawekazi!"

Me: "Stay out of this dad." I turn back to Kazi who is standing with her arms crossed across her chest. "You have a son

Qhawekezazi? Which son? The one you gave up? The one you know nothing about? Do you even know what his favourite toy is?"

Kazi: "Give him back and I will learn."

Me: "I don't know what has gotten into you, but whatever it is you better get it out. And fast. Or so help me God you will regret it." I walked out leaving her screaming God knows what.

I got into my car and drove straight to the airport. I found Lando and the rest of the BH staff already in the jet. I got in

and strapped myself next to Lando.



NARRATED

At the Daily Tribunal offices, the editor Mr Goldstein is in the boardroom with his journalists for the morning meeting.

Mr G: "Okay people, please settle down. I need stories for tomorrow's edition. Mabuzza hows the corruption story coming along?"

Mabuzza: "Pretty good, I will be meeting with the Minister of Home Affairs to hear what he

has to say before I publish."

Mr G: "Good, Jolene, what's happening with your story?"

Jolene: "Done and dusted. I just need to send it in for editing. But I do have another story I just need to follow up on. It seems to be an interesting one."

Mr G: "Let me guess, you can't tell us about it just yet?"

Jolene: "Nope."

Mr G: "Right. Zinhle, how's your Biyela story coming?"

Zinhle: "Well Biyela junior and his wife took off from Lanseria airport this morning, destination, Lagos, Nigeria. Lekki Island to be

precise. My guess is they are attending his ex's funeral."

Mr G: "Nice. Have you called to get a statement from either one of them."

Zinhle: "I have but both their phones go straight to voicemail. The spokesperson for BH said Uche had a contract with BH to do their events blah bloody blah. But the story goes to print tonight so it will be hitting the stands tomorrow."

Mr G: "Good. If that is all then let's get to work." Everyone gets up and leaves the boardroom."

Zinhle, a word please."

Zinhle: "Yes."

Mr G: "You do realise that with this story you are about to print, it might be the biggest story of your life or it could be the worst."

Zinhle: "I know."

Mr G: "I hope you have thought long and hard about this and you have your facts backed by more facts because this could backfire, and badly." She smiles.

Zinhle: "Let's just say this story will put The Daily Tribunal on the top of Jozi's best newspapers."

Mr Goldstein laughs.

Mr G: "I hope so. I really hope so."

Zinhle: "Relax G, I got this." She walks out of the room with a bounce in her step.



LANDO

I hate funerals. Even though this is one I should be happy about, I'm not. Yes I wanted Uche out of my life but I didnt think this would be the way it happens. But since I cant change what has happened I might as well thank my ancestors for having my back.

If there's one thing I have learnt since I got here is that

Nigerians can be dramatic, even when it comes to funerals. Uche's casket is matte black with gold finishes. I mean who the fuck does that, put pure gold on something that will be rotten in just a few days. I mean this is just an invitation to have the grave robbed.

We left Uche's house and followed the procession to the church where her memorial service will be held. We get there and there are journalists everywhere. Luckily her father organized security so we are good on that front.

We get to the church and we are ushered to the front where most dignitaries are. I sit next to Philani. Her ex husband walks in followed by his three other wives. They are all matching in black and gold designs, honestly this looks more like a wedding than a funeral. I guess this is the epitome of celebrating a person's life.

Speaker after speaker talks about what an amazing human being Uche was, her kindness and selflessness. I guess they never met the version I knew. One of her sister wives gets up to give

her speech. She wipes a few tears as she is led to the podium. She speaks so fondly of Uche with bursts of tears in between for emphasis. I learnt enough in drama class in high school that I can see when someone is acting, and the oscar for best performance goes to her and her sister wives, bo moghel can really act shem.

After all the shenanigans and the impromptu crying of people we head out to the graveyard, that service is even more dramatic than the one at church, there are people throwing themselves on

the ground screaming and wailing. At this point I wish I had brought my ear plugs so I can shut out this noise. It would be more painful if these were real cries, but the only people really sad and broken about this are Uche's parents and siblings.

Everyone else is on act 1 scene 7. After the funeral we said our goodbyes and then went straight to the airport. I fell asleep soon as the plane took off.

I woke up with my head resting on Philani's shoulder. I decided to keep my head there just thinking about the past few days. As hard

as it was to stomach Philani's confession speaking to Mam'Busi helped me put things back into perspective. Although I was collateral damage in all of this I need to accept the fact that it had nothing to do with me. Philani needs to deal with this whole thing and put an end to it, I don't think I want to play referee between him and his dad.

We landed around midnight and soon as we walked out of the airport there were journalists left right and centre. There were questions being posed and cameras flashing. I didnt

understand what was happening really. We stood in the middle of the crowd since they had decided to surround us. The one question that kept popping up was if Philani killed Uche.

I had my head down behind Philani and before I knew it I was being dragged out of the crowd, and one thing I didn't let go of was his hand. I felt someone placing their hand on my back and pushing me forward. I was shoved into a car but the cameras didn't stop flashing.

I brought my head up when I heard Philani get in next to me. I

saw Sbu and Razor in the front seats.

Me: "What's going on? What's with all these nosey people?" I asked as we drove away from the crowd.

Razor: "Eish sisters." He said running his hands through his head.

Philani: "Eish ini Razor, what's going on?"

Razor took a newspaper from the dashboard and handed it to Philani. My heart rate went up when I saw Philani's jaws clench when he read what was on the paper.

I grabbed the paper from him and I swear my heart stopped beating for a second. Not only was Philani being accused of killing Uche but Ayanda was mentioned too. I folded the paper and put it on the seat between us. I looked at Philani, he was looking out the window but I could see his jaws were clenched. He was balling his fists up and letting go over and over again. I didn't need him to tell me how furious he was. I could almost see the wheels in his head turning. Whoever wrote that article had fucked up big time.

We drove in silence till we got home, and lo and behold there were journalists there waiting for us. I mean when do these people even sleep? It's the middle of the fucken night. We drove in as cameras flashed. Soon as the car parked I knew what I needed to do to make myself feel better about this mess. Kiss my babies. I walked straight up to the nursery. I tiptoed in and kissed Lakhiwe, I swear she looks more and more like Philani every single day. I moved over to Theo's crib and it was empty. Even his favourite blanket wasnt there.

Maybe he got restless and
Mamnguni took him.

I walked over to her room and
knocked. It took a while but
eventually she opened.

Mamnguni: "Madam. You are
back."

Me: "Yeah, sorry for waking you
up. I was in the nursery to see
the kids and Theo wasnt there, I
figured he is here with you." She
looked away. "Where is he?"

Mamnguni: "He's not here
madam." This has to be a joke
right?

Me: "I'm sorry what do you mean
he is not here? Mamnguni where

is my son?" I swear someone wants me dead. My heart rate is sprinting to the finish line.

Mamnguni: "Qhawekazi came by earlier and took him. She packed all his clothes and toys and left. I tried to call you but I couldn't get through." I'm not sure if the aircon still works cause I am really really hot right now.

I left her there and headed back downstairs. I called out for Philani and he came running from the study. He found me pacing up and down in the lounge.

Philani: "What's going on?"

Me: "I. AM. GOING. TO. KILL."

YOUR. SISTER."

Philani: "Okay, but before you kill her will you tell me what she did."

Me: "First she comes into my house and fights me, now she has taken our son. Packed all his clothes and toys and took him. Away from his home."

Philani: "What?"

Me: "Philani Leonard Biyela, you better get me my son back, because if I have to do it, I promise you this time you will bury your sister, and I will make certain of it." I leave him standing there and head to our bedroom.

Qhawekezazi and her moody and stupid attitude better bring my son back or God have mercy.

INSERT 77

I dont even know when or how I fell asleep last night, correction, this morning but I woke up to my phone vibrating and beeping out of control. I checked it and I had tons of missed calls and messages, mostly from the family in Mandawe. Even the family WhatsApp group was out of control. I decided to mute the

group and block everybody else. I called Buli. She picked up and I could tell she was driving.

Me: "Babe, where are you headed so early in the morning?"

Buli: "Bitch its 9AM, for normal people that's not early. Anyways I am on my way to your house. I just picked up Theo." I sat up on the bed.

Me: "What?" She laughed.

Buli: "Relax babe, I'll be there soon. I'll tell you everything when I get there."

Me: "Okay."

I felt tears come into my eyes. I quickly got up and took a shower.

I put on some sweatpants and a vest once I was done and headed downstairs. I was anxiously waiting for Buli in the lounge but I couldn't sit still. I kept getting up and looking through the window to see if they were here. I heard a car pull up outside and I ran out and luckily she was here. I went straight to the backseat and my baby boy was in his car seat playing with his feet. He looked up when I opened the door and he smiled and lifted his hands up for me to pick him up. I unbuckle him from his car seat

and hug the life out of him with tears running down my face.

We walked into the house and headed to the lounge. I sat on the couch with Theo on my lap. He was fascinated by my scar and he kept running his little fingers over it.

Me: "So, spill." I say to Buli who is busy stealing snaps of Theo and I.

Buli: "Well, after you called and woke me up from my beautiful sleep, I called Faith. She then called that ex of hers who is a Cop, and he did the things."

Me: "What did he do?"

Buli: "He and his colleagues went to Mandawe, arrested Kazi and took Theo. He then drove all the way here to drop him off kn Fourways where one of my contacts work. I just picked him up from there and Kazi yena is in a prison somewhere in Durban." She says putting her feet up on the couch.

Me: "Prison Buli?"

Buli: "Ok fine not prison prison, more like a holding cell. But for someone like her, it will feel like prison." I wanted to laugh so bad, but I couldn't. I felt bad, I know we haven't been on good terms

lately but what if this was maybe taking it a bit too far.

My phone rang and I wanted to pick it up but it was so far on the couch, and since Theo had fallen asleep in my arms, I didn't have the heart to wake him up. Buli's phone rang next. She picked up then handed me the phone, she saw my hands were occupied so she put the phone on loudspeaker.

Me: "Hello."

Philani: "Hey, you're up already?"

Me: "Yep."

Philani: "Have you eaten?"

Me: "Not yet."

Philani: "Okay I'll bring breakfast."

We are on our way back from Centurion."

Me: "Okay, see you soon."

Philani: "Okay, I love you."

Me: "I love you too. Bye." He hangs up and Buli looks at me.

"What?"

Buli: "Why didnt you tell him Theo was home?"

Me: "He will see him when he gets here."

I hear a car pull up outside and I know that cant be Philani. I know he can drive fast but not that fast. I hear one knock on the door before it swings open and Faith walks in.

Faith: "Hey guys." She kisses Theo and sits down. "I see baby boy is back home." I smile.

Me: "All thanks to you and your ex. Maybe he's not so bad after all."

Faith: "Please, he wasn't that bad, you just didn't like him." True. I never did like that guy. I don't know what it was about him that rubbed me up the wrong way.

Me: "So what's going to happen to Kazi now."

Buli: "Well since she hasn't been formally charged they might keep her for a couple of days then release her."

Me: "Unless her father gets to her first."

Buli: "Probably. But she is not on the system so it might take a while." That's little comfort to me.

Faith: "What if she decides to fight for Theo, go to court and claim him back."

Buli: "She could, but legally speaking she has no leg to stand on. You legally adopted Theo, so he is yours. Kazi forfeited her right to Theo when she signed those papers. She had six months to oppose the adoption and she didn't."

Me: "But biologically speaking....."

Buli: "She's his mother yes but in order for her to even get a chance in court she'd have to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Theo is not being properly taken care of by you, but everyone knows she can't so....."

Faith: "And if she can prove that Theo was in danger that's why she gave him away, then what?"

Buli: "I doubt it will get that far. But if it does then we'll cross that bridge when we get to it."

Faith: "I have a question though, how did things go so wrong

between you and Kazi, I mean you were close and all next thing she comes back from the dead and she's cold as ice. What happened?"

Me: "I dont know." Honestly I wish I knew what was happening with Kazi, I wish I knew what I did to her, maybe apologise, but how do I apologise for something I dont even know.

The door opens and Philani walks in with Nate, and they have breakfast. They place the food in the kitchen before joining us in the lounge.

Philani: "Hey!" He kisses me and sits down before taking Theo

from me. "So I've been getting calls from home. Apparently Kazi has been arrested." He says looking at me. Buli, Faith and I look at each other. "So?"

Me: "Fine. I called the cops and laid a charge of kidnapping." He chuckles. "You are not mad?"

Philani: "Of course not. Maybe spending time in a cold cell will set her right." Okay this is a surprise. I thought Philani would be upset but clearly I was wrong. "However the family is on their way here and my dad is coming back from London." Yep. Things are about to get really bad.



PHILANI

I got a call from my dad soon as he landed at the airport earlier. He asked, well more like commanded me to come to Dainfern since the family was there. Although I didnt want her to come, Lando insisted on coming too. And since she is hardheaded i had to let her be.

We drive into my dads and the amount of cars in the yard would make you think the whole entire KZN had descended in Dainfern. I parked the car and looked at Lando. She was looking out the

window but I could tell she was nervous. I got out and walked around the car and opened the door for her. I held her hand and helped her down.

Me: "Relax, I have this under control." She nods her head and fakes a smile. "Babe please dont stress. I'll handle this I promise." I bring her in for a hug and she takes a deep breath and tries to relax.

We walk into the house and I swear it's like walking into a home full of Bulldogs and someone inside will say 'ngena azilumi'. (Come in they don't bite.) Three of my

uncles are here, gogo is here and all my aunts are here. And to top it all off my dad is sitting on the one sitter couch shooting daggers at me. I let Lando sit on the one available seat on the couch and I take a chair from the dining table and sit next to her.

Me: "Sanibonani." (Hello). Some greet back but my dad still hasn't moved his eyes from me.

Bab'Zweli: "Ntshangase, we were woken up at 2AM by the police, they arrested Qhawekazi and took Theo. Now we called you here to please explain to us what is happening." I take a deep breath.

Me: "Baba, I am sorry that the police did that, I know it was disrespectful but I had no other choice. First she came into my house and fought my wife, and then she came back while we were away and took our son. In legal terms that is kidnapping."

Dad: "When have we turned to the police to fix our family issues Philani?"

Me: "Baba you were here when I came to confront Kazi about fighting Lando, what did you do about it? Nothing. This little attitude of hers has been happening since she came back

from the 'dead.' Its one thing for her to be a brat but what she did was wrong."

Dad: "Where is she right now, cause the police don't know where she is."

Me: "That's not my problem. My son is back home so I dont care."

Aunt Bonakele: "But everyone knows Theo is Kazi's son. Just because she gave him to you to raise doesn't mean she cant claim her child back."

Me: "Of course you would think that. No one held a gun to Kazi's head to give us Theo and if she knew she would want him back

then why did she let us adopt him, why not make us his guardians then? Also if Kazi really wanted Theo back, there are way more easier ways to do this than what she did. I will not allow Kazi to walk into my house and do as she pleases."

Dad: "What I want to know is where my daughter is?" I chuckle.

Me: "And this right here is exactly why we are here right now.

QhaweKazi fucks up and daddy runs to rescue her. She cant take responsibility for anything because you are always shielding her. Not once since we got here

have you even asked about Theo and his wellbeing, you haven't asked Lando how she's doing since she couldn't sleep last night worried about her son, heck you cant even ask me how I am doing since I not only came back home to find my son missing but my name is being dragged through the mud by the press. You really do not give a shit about me do you? Qhawekazi drove all the way to Mandawe and none of you questioned her about it. None of you called us to confirm if we knew about her taking Theo."

Gogo: "Philani we know this is

hard for you but we still need to consider the fact that Theo is Kazi's son, and if she wants him back we can't stop her." I look over at Lando and she has her head down playing with her hands. I laugh.

Me: "Of course gogo, screw Philani, screw his feelings, screw what he wants. It's always about everyone else. Every single time I have to put this family's needs above my own. And right now you want me to give away a child that I love with all my heart, a child I....."

Bonakele: "You can love him till

Jesus comes back but the truth remains, you cannot change his DNA. Theo is not your son. He never was and he never will be."

Sphelele: "Bonakele asuthule (shut up)."

Bonakele: "Mxm. You cant change the truth." Lando gets up and leaves. "See, even your wife is disrespectful and rude. Who gets up and leaves in the middle of a meeting with your elders."

Kholiwe: "Mxm, you are disgusting man Bonakele. Nx." She says getting up and following Lando.

Me: "If Kazi wants Theo, tell her

to get a lawyer and I'll see her in court." I get up and walk out.

I walk to my car and find Lando crying on aunt Kholiwe's shoulder and that just breaks my heart and makes me realise I cant let Kazi take Theo from us. When Kazi was desperate Lando was the one who stepped up without question. She loved Theo and protected him like her own, hell she got shot and almost lost Lakiwe trying to protect Theo. I dont understand how Kazi can be so selfish right now. I hope once they release her she will

have thought long and hard about this.

I get to them and they pull apart. Lando wipes the tears from her eyes.

Me: "Hey, are you okay?" I ask giving her a side hug.

Lando: "I'm okay." I know she's lying.

Kholiwe: "Look I will try and speak to your dad about this whole thing."

Lando: "It doesn't matter anymore aunty. We'll bring Theo in the morning." I turn to look at her.

Me: "No we are not. Theo is not

going anywhere."

Lando: "Philani, I love Theo, you know that. But I cant just....."

Me: "Lando..."

Lando: "Ngyakcela (please). You saw your family in there, it doesn't matter what we say or do, we are not his parents according to them. And fighting this will just tear the family apart and force people to pick sides."

Me: "I dont care who has to pick what we are not giving up. Why are we the ones who always have to sacrifice our happiness to make others happy. No not this time."

Kholiwe: "Philani is right Lando, you cant give up."

Lando: "I am not giving up. I love him enough to let him go if it means it will bring peace." She opens the car door and gets inside.

Kholiwe: "Talk to her Philani. You and I both know Kazi has no maternal bone in her. And Theo has a better chance with you two."

Me: "I will try aunty." Aunt Kholiwe goes back to the house and I get into the car. I want to talk to Lando about this but she has headsets on. I guess there won't be talking about this

tonight. But one thing I know, I am not giving up my son.



NARRATED

At the daily Tribunal offices, Mr Goldstein and Zinhle are in the office discussing the newspapers sales.

Mr G: "I must admit, your story really made things happen. We had to reprint yesterday cause we sold out early and our website had so much traffic it crashed, twice."

Zinhle: "And the story has been trending on Twitter."

Mr G: "You were right. We are

headed to the top."

Lindani: "I wouldn't celebrate yet if I were you." They both turn around and find Lindani and Buli standing by the door. They walk in.

Mr G: "What can we do for you Mr Ndlovu? It's a little late for you to be here."

Zinhle: "Let me guess, you are here to tell me to retract my story."

Buli: "Of course not. That would be a grave injustice to journalism."

Mr G: "Then what are you doing here?"

Lindani: "To give you a heads up.

We know this won't be the end of this story, you probably have more under your sleeve, so we won't stand in your way."

Zinhle: "I don't understand."

Buli: "What my learned colleague is trying to say is, your story was nothing more than a fabrication. Everything you wrote there was a lie."

Zinhle: "That's not what my sources say." She says with her arms crossed.

Buli: "We know. That is why we are going to let you go crazy with your theories and accusations, you know, give you enough rope to

hang yourselves."

Mr G: "You are blowing hot air. You know the story is legit."

Lindani: "Keep telling yourself that. Word of advice though, keep your lawyers on standby. You will need them soon." They turn and walk out.

Zinhle: "Do you think they mean that?"

Mr G: "Probably not. You know rich people and using lawyers to scare us. Biyela must be scared if he can send his lawyers this late."

In the parking lot, Buli and Lindani are about to get in their cars.

Lindani: "You know I think I will love working with you Mrs Samuels."

Buli: "You mean for once you will be on the winning team since I beat you so many times?" He laughs.

Lindani: "Keep dreaming and drive safe."

They get into their cars and drive off.

INSERT 78

Have you ever felt like someone had pulled the rug out from right under your feet. One moment you

have your feet firmly planted on the ground, and everything seems to be in alignment but then it all comes crumbling down and no matter how hard you try to hold on nothing works.

I have been sitting outside Bab'Biyela's house in Dainfern for the past hour with Theo in the backseat sleeping so peacefully. Its almost time for him to wake up, and I dont think I have the heart to look into his big brown eyes when I leave him behind. I know he will cry for me cause he does it all the time, even when I

have to go to work I have to sneak out.

I looked at my watch and it was just a few minutes before seven. Theo will be up soon and if I delay this anymore then I might just end up turning around with him. I start the car and scan my fingerprint. The gate slides open and I drive in. I park and unload the little that Kazi left behind when she took him, I open the door and take him out of the car with the car seat. I walk to the door with him still laying in the car seat on my one hand.

I knock and wait. This feels like the longest wait of my life. The door swings open and aunt Sphelele smiles and gives me a hug.

Sphelele: "Lando, come in." She says standing aside waiting for me to come in, but it feels like my feet are stuck on the ground and I cant move. Not that I want to but still.

Me: "I would rather not. I came by to bring Theo." She looks at me, shock and pity written all over her face.

Sphelele: "Baby please come in so we can talk about this." I shake

my head, trying to stop the tears from falling.

Me: "I can't, and I don't think there's anything to talk about." I hand her the small bag, kneel down and kiss Theo before handing him to her. I kiss him one last time and turn around and leave. I get into the car and drive off without even looking back.

I drove back home. I ran into the house and started pacing up and down with tears streaming down my face. What have I done? I just left my son like those people in movies who leave their kids at

the doors of orphanages, I just left him there, he'll wake up and I won't be there to kiss him goodmorning, I won't be there to feed him his favourite food, I won't be there to tickle him and chase him around when he refuses to get dressed, dear God I won't be there for any of his big milestones and even the little ones. I crumbled down in the middle of the lounge and just cried. I cried so hard I could feel my eyes puffing up. I felt strong arms engulf me and instead of calming down I cried harder. We sat on the floor for what seemed

like a long time. I closed my eyes and rested my head on Philani's forearm and just allowed myself to breathe.

I dont know when I fell asleep but I woke up in my bed. I had a throw over me. I looked up to the ceiling and my mind went back to Theo. I wonder how he is doing. The door opens and Philani walks in with Lakhiwe in his arms. I thought as she grows up her looks will change and maybe look like me a bit, even if it's just her nose, but no, this girl decided to stick with her dads Gene's.

They walk over to me and Philani gives me a kiss before handing my baby to me.

Philani: "How are you doing?" I shrug my shoulders.

Me: "I'll live. I think."

Philani: "Why didnt you wake me up before you left?"

Me: "Cause you would have stopped me."

Philani: "Probably. I'm sorry you had to do that on your own."

Me: "Its over now."

Philani: "It will never be over babe, you'll never stop loving him and wanting to protect him."

Me: "I know, but he has his

mother to do that now." He sits back on the bed, puts his arm around me and I lay my head on his shoulder.

Philani: "Look I know this is hard but we will get through this, it won't be easy but we will."

Me: "Do you think he'll feel abandoned. I mean I just left him there, no explanation no nothing. What if he hates me for leaving him?"

Philani: "He will never hate you. As for feeling abandoned, well it won't be easy for him not seeing us there or even being able to play with Lakiwe but he's

eighteen months old. He'll forget. Right?" I take a deep breath.

Me: "I miss him."

Philani: "Me too. Are you hungry?"

I made lunch?"

Me: "What did you make?"

Philani: "Chicken feet and gizzards. And theres chocolate cake too." I laughed.

Me: "Ok let's go." He helps me get down from the bed and we head downstairs. He dishes up and its delicious.

I look at him and look at my baby in my arms, my little family might be a member short but maybe

now it's time I focused on the members that are here.



NARRATED

At the Biyela family home in Dainfern, Mr Biyela is in his study when aunt Sphelele walks in with Theo. She hands him to Mr Biyela.

Sphelele: "I hope you are happy Bhuti."

Mr B: "Excuse me!"

Sphelele: "Ungzwile (you heard me.)"

Mr B: "I dont understand why you are blaming me for this, I never

said they must bring Theo back."

Sphelele: "Not in so many words but you did nothing to stop it. Tell me something Bhuti, what did Philani ever do to you? Why do you always find ways to hurt him?"

Mr B: "How did I even do that?"

Sphelele: "The fact that you even have to ask me that is appalling honestly." She turns around and leaves.

Mr Biyela looks at Theo who is restless and looking all around.

Mr B: "Are you hungry? I'm sure you are. Let's go get you something to eat." He gets up and heads to the kitchen. Just as

he walks through the lounge the door opens and Kazi walks in and bangs the door and starts pacing up and down the lounge. Aunt Kholiwe, Sphelele and Bonakele walk to the lounge from the kitchen while Banele, Sihle and Bab'Zweli walk down the stairs. Sihle: "Welcome back sboshwa (convict). Your parcel is here." He says pointing to Theo. She ignores him.

Kazi: "I am laying a charge against Lando."

Banele: "For what?"

Kazi: "For what? Are you seriously asking me that. I spent two days

in a jail cell because of her."

Sihle: "It was just a day and a half stop exaggerating."

Kazi: "And that makes it okay how exactly?"

Kholiwe: "Kazi you did kidnap Theo."

Kazi: "How can I kidnap my own son? All I did was take him back."

Sihle: "Of course you did. And he is right here but since you walked through that door all you have been blabbing about is Lando. Not once have you even checked on him."

Kazi: "He is fine."

Banele: "That's typical

Qhawekazi. Disrupt people's lives and move on like nothing happened." He says walking away to the kitchen.

Kazi: "Dont bore me wena. You know nothing about being a parent."

Sihle: "And you do? Your brother is going through the most right now and all you are worried about is your own shit. Lando and Philani put their own lives on standstill to protect 'your son', Lando almost died trying to protect 'your son' while you were busy living it up in Russia, she almost lost her daughter for 'your son'.

When will you ever take responsibility for your irresponsible behavior, or how you hurt people, even the ones who lay their lives on the line for you? Huh Qhawekazi, when?"

Mr B: "Okay that's enough."

Sihle: "No Baba, it's not enough, it will never be enough. Kazi fucks up and you always rush in to save her, she turns people's lives upside down and walks away like nothing happened because you are always there to shield her from any type of responsibility. You are just as bad as she is if not more."

Mr B: "Sihle dont forget who you

are talking to, I am still your father."

Sihle: "Then start acting like it. Heck start acting like Philani's father for a change. Have his back once in a while. He bends over backwards to make you happy and you cant ever have his back. When will you ever stand up for him? When will you ever be a father to him?" He walks away and goes back upstairs.

Banele: "And this right here ladies and gentlemen is why we never come home. I've been here for less than a day and I am already

fed up." He says going up the stairs.

A few minutes later Sihle and Banele walk back down with their bags.

Bab'Zweli: "Hhaybo, niyaphi (Where are you going?)"

Banele: "As far away from here as possible."

Sihle: "Adios people." They walk out.

Sphelele: "So you are just going to let your children walk away?"

Mr B: "They are grown. I can't force them to stay." Bab'Zweli gets up and takes Theo from him

and hands him to Kazi.

Bab'Zweli: "You wanted your child, Congratulations, he's here now, do what all mothers do, take care of him." She grunts and takes Theo and goes to the kitchen. "Bhuti, I am not sure if the cancer messed with your head or what but your family is falling apart and you are doing nothing about it."

Mr B: "Musa ukuba nehaba (stop exaggerating)"

Bab'Zweli: "Exaggerating? Two of your children just walked out of here, bhuti you have to fix this, otherwise you will lose your children."



BULI

Working with Lindani in this case has been quite an eye opener. I've always thought of him as a corporate lawyer who did little to no court appearances but maybe I was wrong, he's really smart. Although we couldn't decide which offices to work from we eventually had to play rock paper scissors and I won so he has no choice but to come to my side of the fence.

Its almost knockoff time and we still have a lot to do. Putting together a lawsuit means we

have to work twice as hard to make sure when we do strike we have all our ducks in a row. And just like we expected that stupid journalist printed a follow up story and this time she included Ayanda and her 'suspicious' death.

Lindani walks in with a newspaper in hand and no food. He went out to buy food and he has no food. I swear he is applying for his death.

Me: "Where's the food?"

Lindani: "Geez, women and food. Relax your husband is coming by to bring food." Lucky you. I was ready to bust your balls.

Me: "So what's with the newspaper?"

Lindani: "This is the Sunday Times. It's from four years ago."

Me: "How is that supposed to help us with our case?"

Lindani: "Well, four years ago Miss Zinhle Madolo was working for the Sunday Times. One Sunday she broke the biggest story of her career, she accused the minister of Social development of corruption, with evidence to back her up. The minister took the newspaper to court and she won. Turns out all the evidence Zinhle had was all fabricated. Another

minister set the whole thing up to get rid of the SD minister because she did things by the book, and politicians don't like to miss goody two shoes in their midst."

Me: "Let me guess, she was fired from the Times and now she's trying to revive herself."

Lindani: "Yep, which works to our advantage because she has a history of publishing lies...."

Me: "It will make it easy to dispute her story."

Lindani: "Yep. But if we are the ones to put out a statement

about this it will seem defensive."

Me: "Yeah. So how do we do this?"

Nate walks in with takeaways and places them on the desk before giving me a kiss.

Nate: "How's it going?"

Lindani: "So far so good. When we hit the Daily Tribunal they will wish they could turn back the hands of time."

Nate: "I'd hate to be them right now."

Me: "That should teach them to stay in their lane."

Lindani: "Have you spoken to Philani yet?"

Nate: "We were supposed to meet

for lunch but he got caught up at work." I didn't know he went back to work. Guess he decided to take over the company after all.

Nate: "So what are you guys working on right now?"

Me: "Trying to figure out how to discredit that journalist without seeming defensive or desperate."

Nate: "What do you have so far?"
I tell him what we have. "Why not post it on social media?"

Twitter would work."

Lindani: "It would. But the problem with that is we can't be the ones to put it out there. And we can't use a ghost account

because it will seem suspicious."

Nate: "Actually you can use a ghost account. I have a friend who has a ghost account with over a hundred thousand followers. She uses it to do threads or whatever it is they do."

Me: "She?" They both look at me with smirks on their faces. Men are stupid.

Nate: "Relax babe, it's purely professional." Lindani laughs. Mxm.

Me: "Whatever. So when can she do this?"

Nate: "Tonight even. I'll give you her number." He writes it down on

a piece of paper. And he knows it by heart even.

We call her and send her all the info we have. She assures us she'll do the thread tonight.

Hopefully by morning everyone will be questioning these articles, making it easy for us to strike. Man I love my job.

INSERT 79

I dont know what it is that Buli and Lindani did but I woke up to so many notifications on my social media especially Twitter. I decided to check and lo and behold,

Miss Zinhle Madolo was trending. People were questioning her story after it was revealed she had published a false story four years ago and went on to lose the court case. My day couldn't have started on a better note.

I turn over and my beautiful wife is sleeping soundly. She has on a tiny vest that barely covers her scar, I guess her sessions with Dr Steenkamp have helped make her less self conscious of it.

I kiss her on the lips and she stirs a bit. I keep planting kisses all over her face and she smiles. I pull back and she opens her eyes.

Lando: "Good morning."

Me: "A very good morning indeed."

Lando: "You're in a good mood. What happened?"

Me: "Well it's been said in all things God works for the good of those that love him." She laughs.

Lando: "Do you even know where that verse is in the bible."

Me: "Nope. But I know it's there."

Lando: "You never cease to amaze me Mr Biyela."

Me: "I aim to please." She pulls my head down and kisses me.

The kiss intensifies as she wriggles under me. I move my

hand under her vest and cup her breast, and she moans as my finger plays around with her nipple.

I pull back and pull the vest off her. My lips make contact with her nipple and her moans tell me I am on the right path as her hands brush my head.

I was making my way down to sweet heaven when I heard someone banging on the door. I looked up at Lando and she was just as shocked as I was. We kept quiet hoping whoever it was would leave, but unfortunately today may not be my lucky day

because they banged the door again.

Me: "Who is it?" I was trying to be polite because it might be Mamnguni.

Sihle: "I know you guys are trying to make another one of these little humans but can we feed this one first, she's hungry."

Lando looks at me.

Lando: "It's five o'clock. Why is she up this early?" She whispers. I shrug while resting my chin on her stomach.

Me: "Go and feed her, you are her father mosi." I hear some mumbling, like he's talking to

someone. It must be his other half Banele. There's another bang on the door.

Banele: "Kusile madoda akuvukwe. Ingane zilambile. (It's morning. Wake up. The kids are hungry.)"

Yep it's official I am not getting my morning glory.

Me: "Go away." Lando laughs.

"Why are you laughing ke wena?"

This is your fault, they should have stayed at a hotel like I suggested. But no, you had to be welcoming and shit." She covers her face with a pillow and laughs even more. Mxm. I get off the bed and open the door. "What do

you want?" These two idiots laugh at me.

Banele: "Even little Ntshangase is saying hi." I get out and head downstairs.

Me: "Little Ntshangase my foot." They laugh. I take out Lakhawe's bottle from the fridge and warm it up for her. I give it to Sihle since he won't even let me have her. "Why did you wake me up if you won't even give me my child?" Sihle: "We missed you. Stop acting like you didn't miss us." Mxm. Whatever.

He is right though. I did miss them. Although we talk on the

phone all the time its not the same as this, joking around and playing like we are little kids.



NARRATED

At the Biyela residence in Dainfern, Mr Biyela and Sizwe have just dropped the family off at the airport to go back to KZN, except aunt Bonakele who has offered to stay and help Qhawekazi with Theo. Mr Biyela drives to the office.

Sizwe decides to go to Dainfern to see Kazi, he walks into the house and finds Kazi and aunt Bonakele

talking in the kitchen oblivious to his presence.

Kazi: "I dont know aunty, what if this whole thing doesn't work?"

Bonakele: "It will, stop worrying.

All you have to do is get hold of the Rodriguez lawyer handling the estate. Let him know that you have Theo and you will need money to take care of him.

Hopefully they can give you atleast half of it."

Kazi: "Maybe. I just feel bad...."

Bonakele: "Why?"

Kazi: "Because, I went about this thing the wrong way. Lando and Philani dont deserve to be treated

the way I treated them."

Bonakele: "And it didn't occur to you that they were so desperate to hold on to him for the money?"

At the end of the day you are

Theo's mother, if anyone needs some sort of restitution for all the Rodriguez did, it's you. You

have been through a lot because of them so you deserve this." Kazi

takes a deep breath and stirs her

tea. "Look I know this isn't easy

for you, but it has to be done. And

Theo will thank you one day."

Kazi: "I hope so. I just wish....."

Bonakele: "Stop wishing, it's done

now. Anyways how did you get him

to sleep last night, he was screaming till the wee hours of the morning."

Kazi: "I gave him cough syrup."

Sizwe appears and startles them.

Sizwe: "You gave an eighteen month old cough syrup?" He asks looking at Kazi.

Kazi: "Where did you come from?"

Bonakele: "And why are you eavesdropping on private conversations?" He ignores

Bonakele and focuses on Kazi.

Sizwe: "Qhawekazi ngkhuluma nawe (I'm talking to you.)"

Kazi: "Its not what you think."

He leaves them there and heads

upstairs. "Sizwe!" She shouts running after him. He goes to her room and picks up Theo who is sleeping on the bed. He sees the bottle of cough syrup and it's half empty. He looks at Kazi and shakes his head. He covers Theo in a blanket and goes back downstairs. "Babe I can explain."

Sizwe: "How are you going to explain drugging a child Kazi? How long has he been sleeping?"

Kazi: "Since three in the morning."

Sizwe: "And how much did you give him?"

Kazi: "A couple of spoons." She says not looking at him.

Sizwe: "If anything happens to him, trust and believe I will personally deliver you to the police." He carries Theo to the car and puts him in the backseat while Kazi gets in on the passenger side. He straps Theo in and drives off to the hospital.

Kazi: "Sizwe I'm sorry." He ignores her and makes a call.

Sizwe: "Nate, bra are you at the hospital?"

Nate: "I am on my way there now. Why?"

Sizwe: "Let's meet there I'll explain everything when I see you."

Nate: "Alright. Sharp." He hangs up.

Kazi: "Sizwe....."

Sizwe: "I dont want to talk to you right now so please."

Kazi: "Baby please."

Sizwe: "Kazi I said not now."

They get to the intersection and find the robot red so they stop. As soon as the light turns green they keep going, a car overtakes them and comes to a stop in front of them. Aunt Bonakele gets out and stands in the middle of the road.

Sizwe: "Get her out of the road or so help me God...." Kazi gets

out of the car and walks to her aunt.

Kazi: "Aunty please get out of the way."

Bonakele: "If that little boyfriend of yours gets to the hospital how will he explain Theo having cough syrup in his system?"

Kazi: "I didnt think about that but if you dont move....."

Bonakele: "He'll do what? Kill me? Please. Get Theo out of that car now."

Kazi: "I cant. Aunty please get out of the way.....," Sizwe drives around them and speeds off to the hospital.

Bonakele: "Shit. Let's go." They get into the car and drive after Sizwe.

Sizwe gets to the hospital and finds Nate waiting for him in the parking lot. He comes to him soon as he parks his car.

Nate: "Bra what's going on?" He asks soon as he gets to Sizwe, who is now taking Theo out of the car.

Sizwe: "He drank some cough syrup, can you do something?"

Nate: "Does he have a cold?"

Sizwe: "I dont think so."

Nate: "Okay, so why are you so worked up. Kids can drink cough

syrup too you know."

Sizwe: "Even the ones made for adults, and a little more than the recommended dosage?"

Nate: "Shit?"

Sizwe: "Yeah, can you do something?"

Nate: "We can try. Come on let's go inside." They hurry inside and Nate takes Theo to the emergency room leaving Sizwe in the waiting area. Bonakele and Kazi come running in after them.

Kazi: "Where is he?"

Sizwe: "Just shut up okay. Shut up."

Bonakele: "You will not talk to her

like that."

Sizwe: "Or what? What are you going to do?" She clicks her tongue and sits down. "Thought as much."

After a couple of hours waiting Nate comes out of the emergency room.

Kazi: "How is he?"

Nate: "Uhm, the doctor is busy with him. What happened?" Sizwe looks at Kazi who looks away from him. "Look Theo is a baby, an overdose of anything means the hospital has to inform social workers."

Bonakele: "You can't do that. It

was a big mistake."

Nate: "I am sure it was but the paediatrician has an obligation to bring in a social worker so they can get to the bottom of this."

Bonakele: "There's no bottom of this. Theo was playing around, unfortunately he found a half open bottle of cough syrup and being the curious child he is, he drank it. That's all it is."

Nate: "That's good then. You can explain that to the social worker." He goes back to the emergency room.

Sizwe: "I guess someone is going to jail." He walks away leaving them standing there.



LANDO

I am literally the personification of keeping it moving. I miss Theo, but I have to keep going. I know I'll never fully forget him but..... Look at me speaking as if he is dead, when he is right here, same city, but the truth is I don't think I'll ever be able to look at him as my nephew. He's my son and I cant just erase that from my heart. I wish I could but I cant.

Working together with Philani again, side by side is some sort of consolation. It makes me happy, and even though he is still caught up in his vendetta against his father I know he loves this company and now that he owns majority shares in it, it's all up from here.

We got to work and walked in like the power couple we are. I missed work yesterday when he officially came back but better late than never right? This time we didnt even use the underground parking, not when theres an entrance big enough for us to go in.

Whoever voted for Idris Elba as the world's sexiest man clearly hadn't seen my husband in a suit. Well I have and I can assure you, Idris Elba doesn't come close. We walk into the building and immediately it's all eyes on us. We get into the lift and there's a group of people waiting to go in too. We get in and press the button to the executive offices and no one gets in with us. Oh well. Soon as the doors close Philani pins me against the wall and kisses the daylights out of me. By the time the doors open on

our floor I am flushed but ready to go.

First stop Philani's office. We get to his PA and like clockwork she is already waiting with his diary and his messages.

PA: "Good morning Mr Biyela, Mrs Biyela." I want to laugh at the way she greets us. With Philani it's with enthusiasm and almost some level of flirtiness, but me I get the stanky attitude. "You have a meeting with your father in thirty minutes, and you have a message from your friend Nate. He said he couldn't get a hold of you."

Philani: "Thank you. You will update me about my diary later."

PA: "Of course sir." She says with a smile.

We walk into the office and Philani puts his bags down and calls Nate.

Philani: "Bafo, I got your message, what's

happening?..... What?

When?.....Damn it, okay,

thanks for letting me know." He

hangs up and bangs his fist on the desk.

Me: "Babe, what's going on?"

Philani: "Theo is in hospital.

Apparently he drank a whole lot

of cough syrup." I feel my heart sink. The day hasn't even begun and it's already ruined.

Me: "We have to go." I say taking my bags and heading to the door.

Philani: "Babe we can't." The fuck is he talking about.

Me: "What do you mean we can't, he's our son and he needs us."

Philani: "Baby he's not our son anymore. We have to give Kazi space." I feel the tears fall.

Me: "What if he needs us?" I ask slumping down on the couch.

Philani comes over and wraps his arms around me.

Philani: "If she needs us she will

let us know. If not then..... the we just have to let her be."

This feels wrong in so many different ways. I cant help thinking how scared he must be. But how did he even get hold of cough syrup to begin with? A part of me feels like there is more to this.

We sit in the same position for what feels like a long time.

Philani: "You know what. Fuck it let's go."

Me: "What about your dad."

Philani: "He can wait. Let's go." I grab my bag and we leave.

INSERT 80

When I was little my friends and I were swimming in the river by where we stayed, I got a few feet away from the others in an area a bit deeper. I felt the water creep into my lungs, little by little. I was scared thinking I was going to die, the fear made things worse and it felt like I was going deeper and deeper into the water. Luckily an older kid we were with was able to save me. Even though I was saved, I still

go back to that day, especially when i am feeling anxious and afraid. Right now I feel like I am back in that moment. With every passing minute in this car I get more and more anxious, i dont know what's waiting for us at the hospital, but I bet it must be ten times worse for Theo.

Usually the drive from Biyela Holdings to SunMed hospital takes a little over thirty minutes in peak traffic, and in normal traffic, ten to fifteen minutes.

We've been in this car for almost ten minutes, I can literally see the hospital from this

intersection we are at, but it still feels like it's a whole universe away.

We finally drive into the parking lot and my heartbeat goes into overdrive. I get out of the car soon as Philani parks the car, I don't even wait for him. He catches up with me soon as I make it to the entrance. He holds my hand and we keep walking in. We make it to the paediatric floor and find everyone sitting in the waiting area. You would think each person was here for a different purpose. Kazi is sitting in one corner with puffy eyes,

Bonakele is two seats away from her shooting daggers at Sizwe who is sitting on the other side playing a game on his phone.

We figure Sizwe might be the one who can tell us what's going on so we walk straight to him and sit down. I look over at aunt

Bonakele and I swear if she could shoot bullets through her eyes, I would be lying dead right here.

Sizwe: "Bafo, what are you doing here?"

Philani: "Nate called me and told me what happened."

Sizwe: "Oh okay. Lando, unjani? (How are you?)"

Me: "So, so. What happened to Theo?" He looks up and his eyes shoot straight to Kazi. I'm not sure if it's anger or what that I see in his eyes but whatever it is, it's not good. I look over at Kazi and she's not even looking at us. I swear there's a lot going on here.

Sizwe: "Nate said he'll update us soon."

Me: "How long has he been in there?"

Sizwe: "About three hours now."

I sit back on the chair. This room feels hot right now. Whatever is going on in there must be serious.

Nate walks out of one of the rooms followed by an old white man in scrubs that have cartoon characters all over them, I guess he must be the paediatrician, there's also another lady in formal wear. We stand up soon as they get close to us. Kazi and Bonakele come closer.

Nate: "Uhm guys this is Dr Walters, he is the pediatrician treating Theo. And this lady is Mrs Keitumetse Mashego, she is a social worker dealing with this case." We shake their hands. I look at Kazi and she has her finger in her mouth biting her

fingernails.

Me: "I'm sorry but what is happening with Theo? Is he okay?"

Mrs Mashego: "I take it you are his mother?" I was about to answer when Bonakele decided to jump in.

Bonakele: "Actually this is his mother." She says pointing to Kazi.

Mrs Mashego: "So you are Miss Landokuhle Shongwe?" She asks looking at her file. Bonakele and Kazi look at each other. And we are all looking at them.

Bonakele: "No, her name is

Qhawekazi Biyela."

Mrs Mashego: "According to hospital records, Theodore Busani Biyela is the son to Mr Philani Biyela and Miss Landokuhle Shongwe, so if she is not Miss Shongwe then I need to know which one of you is his mother."

Me: "I am Landokuhle Shongwe."

Mrs Mashego: "Oh, perfect. Can we go into the office." Philani and I follow the three of them into the doctor's office.

Dr Walters: "You can have a seat."

We sit down while Mrs Mashego and Nate stand next to the doctor, who is sitting down across

from us. "So Dr Samuels has filled us in on your situation and the drama that's going on. But our priority right now is Theo."

Philani: "How is he? will he be okay?"

Dr Walters: "He will be fine. He's lucky he was brought in when he was. We did a toxicology test on him and he had almost four times the amount of cough syrup in his system that a child his age should have. And what makes it even worse is that this is adult cough syrup, which makes it stronger and could be deadly to a child his age."

Me: "Do you know how he got it into his system?"

Nate: "According to what Sizwe told me, apparently he couldn't sleep last night, he was crying for the better part of the night so Kazi gave him the cough syrup so he could sleep." I feel Philani's hand tighten around mine. If he wasn't holding on to my hand he'd probably have balled his hand up into a fist.

Philani: "I can't believe she did that. How can she be so careless?"

Me: "So what's going to happen now?"

Mrs Mashego: "Well in a situation like this, hospital policy dictates that we file a police report because this falls under child endangerment."

Philani: "Then do it. File a police report."

Me: "Wait what?"

Philani: "She put Theo's life in danger. If going to jail means she can get her head screwed on straight then so be it."

Nate: "Bra, I think you need to think about this a bit."

Philani: "There's nothing to....."

Me: "We will definitely think about it. Can we see him."

Dr Walters: "Of course. Let's go."
We get up and head out. Philani let's go of my hand and puts his hands in his pockets. I know he is angry. I might not like Kazi very much right now but I dont think going to jail is what she needs right now.

We get to the children's ward and Theo is sitting in a little crib playing with some toys. He has a drip in his little arm. My poor baby. As soon as he sees us he stands up on the crib and jumps around. I swear everytime he uttered the word mama a tear drop fell from my eyes. And I am

sure he said it a zillion times because there were way too many tears falling down.

I picked him up and and squeezed him a bit tight, but instead of crying he started giggling. I looked at him again and he was a bit thinner than the last time I saw him. Or maybe I missed him. Me: "Hi baby? I missed you." He mumbled a few things I couldn't understand but I loved it. I missed my baby. I hugged him so many times cause I wasnt even sure how long before I get to hold him like this again.



NARRATED

At the hospital, Kazi and Bonakele are still in the waiting room waiting for news on Theo.

Kazi: "Why aren't they back yet? What if the police show up?"

Bonakele: "Relax Kazi your brother won't let you go to jail."

Kazi: "He hates me, in case you didn't notice." Bonakele laughs.

Bonakele: "Please, he might be angry but he doesn't hate you.

You are his little sister and he'll do whatever it takes to protect you. That stupid social worker will get what's coming to her. I don't get why she would let that whore

in to see Theo and not you. Bloody idiots."

Kazi: "Legally she's his mother so..."

Bonakele: "Did she carry him in her womb for nine months? No! So she's not her mother, you are!

This whole entire hospital is full of incompetent people. Nx." Sizwe walks in.

Sizwe: "Let's go." He says to Kazi.

Kazi: "I cant leave before I see Theo."

Bonakele: "wena mfana uyadelela wena, (you are disrespectful).

Cant you see we are still talking?"

Sizwe ignores her.

Sizwe: "Kazi let's go, you won't see Theo today and your father is waiting for you at home."

Kazi: "I'm not going anywhere."

Sizwe: "I have absolutely no problem carrying you out of here. The choice is yours, you either walk or I carry you."

Bonakele: "Hhaybo wemfana, are you listening to yourself? She said she's not going anywhere." He ignores her. He walks over to Kazi and picks her up and throws her over his shoulder. She wriggles trying to free herself but he is too strong. She keeps telling him to stop and let her go but he

doesn't. Bonakele follows behind them hurling insults at Sizwe.

They get to the parking lot and people are watching them and some are taking videos. Sizwe opens the drivers car door before putting Kazi down.

Sizwe: "Get in and scoot over."

Kazi: "I can walk on my own."

Sizwe: "I gave you a choice, you wouldn't choose so I made a choice for you. Get in."

Kazi: "Sizwe please, I need to see Theo, I need to make sure he's okay." She sheds a few tears and wipes them with the back of her hand.

Sizwe: "He is fine. Philani and Lando are with him."

Kazi: "Look I'm sorry....."

Sizwe: "I'm not the one you should be apologizing to, please just get into the car so we can go." She gets into the car and moves over to the passenger side. Sizwe gets in and they drive off followed by Bonakele.

They get to the house and find Mr Biyela pacing up and down in the lounge. Kazi gets in and throws herself at him and hugs him and cries but he doesn't hug her back. Sizwe decides to leave them alone and give them

space. After some time she pulls away and wipes her tears.

Kazi: "Daddy, I was so scared." He turns his back on her and walks to the fireplace. He looks up at a portrait hanging there of the family. It has him and his wife and their children when they were little. "Dad!" Bonakele walks in spitting fire.

Bonakele: "Bhuti, you need to teach that girl to stay the fuck away from Biyela business, she cant just show up and play hero of the day with Theo, she needs to stay the fuck away. She's not even a full wife laykhaya. Nx." She

throws herself on the couch. Mr Biyela turns around and looks at Kazi before turning to Bonakele.

Mr B: "Bonakele, there's a driver outside waiting to take you to the airport. Your bags are already packed and in the car." He says calmly.

Bonakele: "Angizwa! (Excuse me)"

Mr B: "Ungzwile (you heard me). And make sure you never come back here uninvited again." She stands up and looks at him with her arms crossed.

Bonakele: "Bhuti uyangcosha? (Are you throwing me out?)"

Kazi: "Baba you cant do that.

She's your sister." Mr Biyela ignores her.

Mr B: "I don't want to have to call security to drag you out.

Hamba Bonakele (go)"

Bonakele: "I hope you don't regret this." She takes her bag and leaves.

Kazi: "Baba, how could you do that? Who's going to help me with Theo now?" He sits down on his favourite chair.

Mr B: "Sit down."

Kazi: "Baba....."

Mr B: "SIT DOWN

QHAWEKAZI!" He shouts at her and she quickly sits down. "Tell me

something, have you ever gone to bed hungry?"

Kazi: "Daddy?"

Mr B: "Answer the question, have you ever gone to bed hungry?"

Have you ever been homeless?

Have you ever had no clothes on your back? Have you ever wanted for anything in your life?"

Kazi: "No!"

Mr B: "Then please explain to me what possessed you to do what you did? Where did I go wrong with you Qhawekazi? You listen to Bonakele now? When has anything sensible ever come from her?"

Kazi: "Ngyacolisa baba (I'm sorry)" she says looking at her intertwined fingers on her lap.

Mr B: "What are you sorry for exactly? Almost killing Theo or your greediness and stupidity?"

She keeps quiet. "You took Theo from two people who provided him with a warm home, and barely 48 hours with you he is lying in a hospital bed. Kazi I don't understand, please help me understand where I went wrong."

Kazi: "Ngyacolisa." She says wiping her tears.

Mr B: "Stop apologizing and help me understand. You did all this for

money? Money that doesn't even belong to you? How did Bonakele even convince you that you would get your hands on that money? Or maybe you are the one who convinced her? I'm just the naive idiot who thought you did all this because you genuinely wanted to bond with your son."

Kazi: "Baba ngya....."

Mr B: "Say Ngyacolisa one more time Qhawekazi, say it." He runs his hands through his head. "You have disappointed me Qhawekazi, and right now I just dont know what to do with you."

Kazi: "Baba, I know I messed up,

I'll make things right. I'll apologize to Philani and Lando."

Mr B: "And then what? Give them back Theo like he's some toy you can toss around and discard whenever you want?"

Kazi: "No. I...."

Mr B: "You are 28 years old Qhawekazi, it's time for you to grow up." He gets up and leaves her there.



PHILANI

Call me crazy but I still think Kazi should be in jail. She almost killed Theo, and she needs to pay for it. As to why Lando even

stopped the doctor from filing a police report is beyond me.

The doctor finally discharged Theo, and they promised they wouldn't call the police so now we are taking Theo home. And by home I mean back to Dainfern.

Lando is sitting in the back playing with him i dont think she's even paying attention to the road which works for me.

We get to Dainfern and drive in. I see my dad's car in the driveway. Good.

Me: "Baby we are here." She looks up with a huge smile on her face.

It disappears soon as she sees where we are.

Lando: "What are we doing here?"

Me: "Bringing Theo home. This is his home now." She shakes her head.

Lando: "No. No. Nope. I am not letting him go again. No." I get out of the car and try to open the backseat door but she keeps locking it.

Me: "Lando, I don't want to fight with you. Please open the door."

Lando: "He almost died and you want us to bring him back again, what do you think will happen this time?" She asks opening the

window.

Me: "He is hungry, what are you going to feed him in there?" She looks at him and sheds a tear then opens the door. "Look I know you dont want to do this but we have to."

Lando: "No we dont, please let us take him home." She says holding him close to her chest.

Me: "This is his home baby. We are done playing superheroes to this family. It's time we focus on our family." As hard as this is even for me, sometimes we need to let some things go in order for us to have peace of mind.

We walk into the house and find Kazi sitting on the couch with her feet up looking at the wall. We walk up to her and she gets up and wipes her tears.

Unfortunately those don't move me anymore.

Kazi: "Hey!" Lando hands her Theo who is now sleeping. Lucky for us.
"He's okay."

Me: "No thanks to you."

Kazi: "I'm sorry."

Me: "Whatever. Where's your father?"

Kazi: "He's in his study. Look guys I'm sorry. I never meant for any of this to get this far."

Me: "It doesn't matter. It's done now, baby lets go. You can tell your father we brought his grandbaby back."

Lando: "You have to bath him two hours before his bedtime, feed him then read him the story of the three little pigs. It's his favourite."

Kazi: "Lando I'm sorry."

Lando: "Just take care of him."

She kisses Theo then walks out.

Kazi: "Bhuti....."

Me: "I have a meeting to get to."

I head out and get into the car.

Lando is now sitting in the front seat looking out the window. It's

going to be long day, heck make that a long week, or even a long forever.

INSERT 81

Ever been in a room where there are two people with a rivalry so strong everyone knows about it, and when they are in the room the tension is so thick you'd need a sharp samurai sword to cut it? Yeah that has been the vibe in my house for the past month. Lando is mad at me for letting Theo go. I wish she could understand why I had to do it. As

much as I love him with every fiber of my being I cant keep showing up for people who fail to do the same for me.

Its almost Christmas and I still need to master up enough courage and strength to go home.

Although a part of me feels like I shouldn't even bother going and just have a quiet Christmas with my little family. Now all I have to do is try and convince Lando, that's if she'll even talk to me.

I get up and she's already up, probably feeding Laksiwe. Its Sunday so I had hoped we'd sleep

in and spend time together. I guess I have a lot of work to do. I get up and head to the bathroom but the door is locked. I didn't hear the shower running. I knock and Lando opens and walks out with a towel around her, completely ignoring me, not that I'm surprised.

Me: "You know at some point you are going to have to talk to me." She ignores me and starts lotioning. First her arms and then she lifts her one foot and places it on the ottoman, which lifts the towel up and exposes her naked ass. I close my eyes and calm

myself down. I know I won't be getting any and Ntshangase needs to lay low. I open my eyes again and look at her. She's moved to her other leg but the sight is still the same.

Me: "Lando how long are you going to be mad at me?"

Lando: "How long is forever?" She asks turning around to look at me. I take a deep breath.

Me: "Look I understand you love Theo and you want nothing more than for him to be back in your arms but at some point you are going to accept that I did what I did to protect this family, OUR

family."

Lando: "So Theo is not a part of our family?"

Me: "You know that's not what I meant."

Lando: "We had him Philani, the law was on our side, we could have brought our son home but you decided to give him back to the same person who almost killed him."

Me: "That person is his mother. She gave birth to him I'm pretty sure she can take care of him." She looks down and I could have sworn I saw her eyes glisten with tears.

Lando: "Right. Because I wasn't a mother to him, just someone to take care of him while everyone did what they had to do." I realise then I might have been a bit harsh. I walk closer to her and lift her head up with my hand and make her look at me.

Me: "I'm sorry I shouldn't have said it like that. But at some point we have to face the truth. I love Theo too and if I could I would bring him back, but we have to focus on our family, Lakiwe needs us to be present and we can't keep showing up for people who run the other direction

when we need them." She tries to blink the tears away but she fails and they make their way down her cheeks.

Lando: "Theo is a child. He needs us." She moves my hand from her chin and walks away to her closet. I follow her and stand by the door.

Me: "Lando....."

Lando: "No Philani, Theo is just a baby who knows nothing about what's going on. Do you expect me to sleep soundly at night not knowing if he's okay, if he's eating right or getting his vaccinations. I am sorry I am not like you, I

can't shove my feelings aside just because you want me to. I can't switch off mummy mode just because." She's now shouting.

Me: "For fucks sake, I love Theo too, you think I don't worry about him every night and day?"

Lando: "So what do you want from me? A medal because you think about him, a trophy? What exactly?"

Me: "I want my wife back

Landokuhle. I want to come home to a happy home, I want to make love to my wife, is that too much to ask?" She puts down the clothes she had in her arm.

Lando: "Is that all you care about right now. Sex? Fine." She pushes me out the way and goes back to the bedroom. She takes off the towel and gets on the bed. She lies down with her legs wide open. "If sex is what you want then you can have it." I stand there more shocked than anything. And I dont even know what to say. "I have brunch with my friends so please make it quick." She lifts her legs up and holds on to her ankles.

Me: "Mxm." I leave her there and go into the bathroom. I close the door behind me and just get into

the shower and let the water flow all over me.

I stand there until I feel the water getting cold. And even then I still stay. I get out after a while and go into the bedroom and find it empty. I guess Lando must be gone already. I decide to put on shorts, a golf tshirt and some sneakers. I head downstairs and find it empty. I make a shake and take my car keys and leave. I connect my phone to the cars bluetooth and call Lindani.

Lindani: "Bafo."

Me: "Ukuphi (where are you?)"

Lindani: "Shisanyama bra."

Me: "The usual?"

Lindani: "Yeah."

Me: "Okay, see you in a few."

Lindani: "Sharp." I hang up. My phone rings and this time it's my dad. I'm really not in the mood to talk to him but it's been weeks of ignoring him so I decide to pick up.

Me: "Baba!"

Dad: "I actually didnt think you'd pick up." He says sounding surprised.

Me: "Well I did. So what's up?"

Dad: "Right. Uh are you coming home for Christmas?"

Me: "I dont know."

Dad: "What's that supposed to mean?"

Me: "Just that Baba, I don't know."

Dad: "Oh okay. Let me know when you decide."

Me: "Sure." I hang up and pull up into the parking lot at the Shisanyama.

I get out and go in and head straight to where the guys are. Even though it's full I know our usual table so it's easy to find them. I get to them and greet. I pour myself a glass of whiskey and down it in one go. I pour another one and sit back.

Nate: "Are you okay?"

Me: "I'm fine."

Lindani: "You dont look fine."

Me: "Lando is driving me nuts."

Nate: "What did she do?"

Me: "She's still angry because I wouldn't let her take Theo back."

Sizwe: "Cant blame her, she loves him and I'm sure seeing him with drips wasnt nice."

Me: "I know, but I cant take him back from his mother."

Nate: "Lando is his mother too bra and I'm sure she worries about him, especially after what happened."

Me: "I know but I wish she could

try and understand. I didnt do this out of spite, I did this to protect her."

Lindani: "How about you actually explain that to her. I'm sure she'll understand."

Me: "Lando is too stubborn for her own good." I down my drink and pour another one and decide to change the subject.

Me: "So hows it going with the media?"

Lindani: "So far so good. My guys have been keeping an eye on Miss Madolo."

Me: "I thought we were going the legal route with this?"

Lindani: "We are. But it won't hurt to get some dirt on the girl."

Me: "I guess."

Our food arrived and we dug in.



LANDO

This month has not been the easiest for me. Well maybe for Philani too, but he's the one who refused to take Theo back, I mean he almost died and he figured taking him back there was okay. Who does that? Mxm. Maybe I was a bit dramatic earlier but I cant seem to wrap my head around not having Theo

in our lives. And Philani carrying on like this is normal is just driving me nuts. I just want him to at least pretend like he cares.

I got dressed soon as he went to the bathroom and heard the shower running. I put on a maxi dress and brushed my weave. I went to the nursery and picked Lakiwe up and strapped her into her car seat. Good thing I gave her a bath before I took mine so we are ready to go. Her bag is packed so we head out.

I strap her into the car and get in then drive to the restaurant. I find the girls already sittted so

we head over to them. I greet them and take a seat while miss sleepy head enjoys her nap.

Taki: "You look like you are carrying the world's problems on your shoulders."

Me: "That obvious huh?"

Faith: "Yeah, so what happened?"

I take a deep breath.

Me: "Philani happened." I explain to them what happened earlier and by the time I am done they are all looking at me like I have horns growing out of my forehead. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

Faith: "Baby can I be honest

with you?"

Me: "Sure!"

Faith: "You are stupid." What the fuck?

Buli: "Very very stupid!"

Taki: "Unequivocally and undoubtedly very stupid." Okay why are they ganging up on me?

Faith: "Look, I hate to say this but I think you are being unreasonable. Sure you love Theo, we all know that and nobody would ever doubt that. However you throwing away your marriage for someone like Kazi is extremely stupid."

Me: "Guys you dont understand.

He almost died." Why am I the only one worried about this?

Buli: "We know that, but he's still here, and I am certain Kazi would let you see him if you really wanted. Yes it's easy to take your anger out on Philani but you seem to be forgetting that he loves Theo just as much as you do. His refusing to take him back wasn't about Theo but rather about Kazi and the Biyela's."

Faith: "We all know that Philani would jump through hoops for his family, but how many times have they done the same for him. For the past seven weeks he's been

constantly under attack in the media and none of them have showed up for him. Can you really blame him for wanting to be in his own bubble with the two most important people in his life?"

Taki: "And you taking your anger out on him is hurtful to him, the one place where he's meant to find peace is with you, and you aren't giving him that. He has feelings too, yes he's a man and we expect them to be strong all the time but they have feelings too you know."

I feel tears fill my eyes. My friends have never been the type

to sugarcoat anything, I knew they would be honest with me but i didnt think they would be this brutal.

We have our brunch while talking about this and that. After we were done Buli paid the bill and we left. Buli and I were still in the parking lot and she was helping me put Lakiwe in the car when we heard someone clear their throat behind us. We turned around and she looked familiar. I just couldn't figure out where I knew her from.

Me: "Hi, can we help you?" I asked while Buli played with Lakiwe.

Her: "Mrs Biyela, my name is Zinhle for The Daily Tribunal, I wanted to ask you for a comment regarding the allegations against your husband?" She asked shoving a recorder in my face. I was about to say something when Buli jumped in.

Buli: "No comment."

Zinhle: "I was actually talking to Mrs Biyela, not you Mrs Samuels." She said not taking her eyes off me.

Buli: "And I am talking to you Miss Madolo. NO. COMMENT."

Zinhle: "Right. Have a nice day." She says walking away.

Me: "I hate journalists."

Buli: "Tell me about it."

Me: "When are you guys putting a stop to this?"

Buli: "Soon. Very very soon."

We said our goodbyes and went our separate ways. I decided to buy some Chocolate cake from some bakery on the way home. I got home and took Lakhiwe to her room cause she was sleeping already.

I decide to take a shower since Philani is not here. I finish and put on some sexy lingerie and lay on the bed waiting for him.

I don't know when I dozed off but I woke up and the room was dark. I got up and put on my gown and headed downstairs. I looked in the fridge and found the cake still intact. I looked out the window and Philani's car was parked outside. I guess he must be in the gym or the study.

I decide to cut a piece of the cake and put it on a side plate with a fork. I go to the gym and its empty. I go to the study and find him busy on his computer. I walk in and place the cake in front of him. He looks at the cake then looks up at me.

Philani: "What's this?"

Me: "A peace offering. I know I have been a bitch this past few days....."

Philani: "Make that few weeks."
He really wants me to grovel.

Me: "Right! I have been a bitch the past few weeks and I just want to say I am sorry. I shouldn't have taken out my anger on you. You didnt deserve that." He looks at me with no expression on his face. He picks up the fork and takes a bite of the cake.

Philani: "Its good." He takes another bite. "Its really good."

Me: "So am I forgiven?"

Philani: "Come here." I walk around the desk and sit on his lap and the gown opens a bit. He sees that and decides to open it even further. He sees the lace and theres a smile on his face. He unties the gown and sees the lace lingerie and his smile widens. "You Mrs Biyela are truly and really forgiven."

He lifts me up and places me on the desk and stands between my legs. We made love on the desk and then moved to the couch.

After sometime we laid on the couch, trying to catch our breath.

His phone rings and he takes it out from his shorts that's lying on the floor.

Philani: "Hello.....yeah....."

Are you sure it's him?....."

Okay, thanks for letting me know." He hangs up.

Me: "What's wrong?"

Philani: "That was Sbu. Luis Rodriguez was seen leaving OR tambo airport earlier today."

Me: "Who is he?"

Philani: "Rafael's uncle. I need to get security for Theo and Kazi." I take a deep breath and just lay on his chest. I don't know when this family will ever catch a

break. We need to slaughter something for the ancestors cause clearly something is not right.

INSERT 82

I hate this weather. Its summer for heavens sake but it's cold and gloomy. It's not even raining just cold nje. Global warming is having the time of its life.

I drive into the house and its quiet. The house looks like it just

came straight out of a horror movie. I get out of the car and head inside. As soon as I open the door i am met with a stench of something rotten. I close my nose and turn on the lights, I scream once I see where the smell is coming from. I see Philani's lifeless body laying in the lounge floor. He has Lakhawe on his chest and she too is lifeless. I stand glued in the same spot for a few minutes as tears fall down my face. After a while I take a step forward and walk towards them, Philani has a huge gash on his forehead, there's dry blood on the

floor, and maggot's coming out of his open wound. It looks like they have been laying here for days if not weeks. Lakiwe is wearing a pink dress that's drenched in blood. At this point I'm not sure if it's her blood or Philani's.

I pick her up and she has a bullet wound on her forehead. I hold her close to my chest and just cry. She's so cold and stiff. I hear laughter around me. When I look up I see Rafael sitting on the couch laughing his lungs out. I see Vusi too, Ayanda and her friend. They come closer to where I am kneeling still laughing. Their

laughter gets louder and louder and it makes my screams fade away. I hear someone calling my name over and over again.

I open my eyes and Philani is sitting next to me. I just throw myself at him and just cry.

Philani: "It's okay baby, it was just a bad dream. It's okay." He says trying to calm me down.

How can a dream feel so real?

How can a dream be so clear?

Philani let's go of me, goes to the bathroom and comes back with a glass of water. I drink it and lay back on the bed.

Philani: "What were you dreaming about?" He asks coming to sit next to me.

Me: "You. You and Lakiwe were dead and Rafael was there laughing at me. Vusi was there too and Ayanda and her friend."

He places his hand around my shoulders and kisses my forehead.

Philani: "I'm sorry. It was just a dream okay, dont think too much about it." I put my head on his chest and notice he is wearing formal pants and socks.

Me: "Are you going somewhere?"

Philani: "Yeah, I have to go see my dad before work so we can

figure out what to do with this whole Luis thing." I sit up and look at him.

Me: "Please dont get involved. Just tell your dad what you know and then stay out of it."

Philani: "You know I can't do that."

Me: "Of course you can. You said it yourself maybe it's time we stopped showing up for people who dont show up for us."

Philani: "This is my sister we are talking about Lando, I cant just throw her to the wolves just because we arent getting along right now."

Me: "I know that but your father can take care of this without you getting involved." He gets off the bed and walks to his closet. I follow him. "Philani?"

Philani: "Lando I can't just turn my back on my family."

Me: "That's not what I'm saying. All I'm saying is let your father take care of this." He ignores me and puts on his shirt. "Ngyakcela Ntshangase. If not for me then do this for your daughter. She still needs her father." He turns around to look at me while buttoning up his shirt.

Philani: "I know that and that's

why I need to do this. To make sure she is safe."

Me: "Philani I just dreamt you were dead, you and our daughter, I'm begging you dont get involved in this. For once you dont need to be the superhero." He puts on his shoes and walks out of the closet after spraying some cologne.

Philani: "Not all dreams come true Lando you know that. This is probably one of those."

Me: "And if it's not, what then? Am I supposed to sit back and watch you die?" He comes close to me and cups my face, wiping away the tears that were falling down

my cheeks.

Philani: "I will not die okay, I promise." He kisses me on the forehead, takes his briefcase and walks out.

I sit down on the bed feeling defeated. I know this was probably just a dream but it felt so real, and I can't help feeling like something bad might happen to Philani. I know he cares about his family, in spite of how they treat him he still goes above and beyond for them, but right now I can't help feeling like him going above and beyond for them might lead to a tragic end for somebody,

and I'm afraid that somebody might be him.

And then it hit me, if theres anyone who can get through to Philani its aunt Kholiwe. I pick up my phone from the side table and dial her number. It rings but she doesn't pick up. I call again and she finally picks up.

Kholiwe: "Hi, baby." She says, it sounds like she's out of breath.

Me: "Hey, I was about to give up."

Kholiwe: "Sorry Sthandwa, I was busy shopping " I chuckle.

Me: "Aunty it's not even seven o'clock yet, shops arent open yet."

She laughs.

Kholiwe: "Ok fine I was getting my morning glory. You know you have to start your day with vitamin D if you want to have a good day."

Me: "Ok, that's just too much info." She laughs.

Kholiwe: "Ok. I'll stop. So what's wrong?"

I tell her about Luis showing up, my dream and my fears. "Okay that is scary."

Me: "I know, and Philani thinks I am just overreacting."

Kholiwe: "Tell you what, let me talk to Bhuti Makhosi about your

dream and see what he thinks."

Me: "Ok, but can he interpret dreams?"

Kholiwe: "Of course, he has a gift remember. Although he never went to initiation school but he knows these things. I'll call him and talk to him then get back to you."

Me: "Okay aunty, ngyabonga. (Thank you)" I hang up and go take a shower. Hopefully aunt Kholiwe can help me get through to my hardheaded husband.



NARRATED

At a building in Johannesburg CBD, Luis Rodriguez walks into one of the offices on the top floor. He sits on the chair and swings around while his guys stand by the door. The door opens and Bonakele walks in.

Luis: "You took your sweet damn time."

Bonakele: "I could say the same thing about you. You were supposed to be here weeks ago." He stops swinging and turns around to face her.

Luis: "Do you know the red tape I had to go through? I was in prison for the past five years so

police have to keep an eye on me, even after I am free."

Bonakele: "We dont need the police showing up here."

Luis: "Relax they won't. As far as they are concerned I am in Mexico."

Bonakele: "Good, so what's the plan?"

Luis: "You know what the plan is, I need to get my hands on every penny your brother took from mine."

Bonakele: "You mean half of it."

Luis: "Whatever. Point is we need to get our hands on that money, and since we clearly cant use Kazi,

we need to find another way."

Bonakele: "I've had a guy trying to trace the money from all the accounts your brother had.

According to him the money was moved into one account and then to about twenty more and those twenty turned to forty but he lost the trail when the money was put into a couple of accounts in the Caymen Islands. From there the trail goes cold."

Luis: "And only one person knows all the details, your brother."

Bonakele: "Probably." The door opens and a guy walks in carrying a laptop.

Guy: "Lady and gentleman."

Luis: "What do you have?"

Guy: "My guys have been scouting the Biyela residence in Dainfern and as of this morning it has become impenetrable."

Luis: "How so?"

Guy: "There are about thirty armed guards surrounding the property, the security has been upgraded and the safe codes have been changed." Luis hits the desk with his fist.

Luis: "How did they know theres a threat?"

Guy: "Beats me. But our job just became 100 times harder."

Bonakele: "I can get in." She says getting their attention.

Luis: "Didn't your brother throw you out?"

Bonakele: "He did, but we are family, and nothing is more important to him."

Luis: "And you think he will welcome you back with open arms?"

Bonakele: "Well not really, it will probably take a bit of begging but eventually he will give in."

Luis: "And what happens if he decides not to forgive you?"

Bonakele: "Look we can either go in there guns blazing and probably

end up dead before we even make it to the door or we can try things my way. I can get into my brother's office, thus getting into his safe. The choice is yours."

Guy: "Boss she has a point. We don't have the manpower that they have but if she goes in we can get the info on the accounts without any blood shed."

Luis: "And do you know the safe combination?" He asks Bonakele.

Guy: "Even if she doesn't, I have something that can get us into the safe. All she has to do is get close enough to the safe for me to hack it."

Luis: "I guess that could work. Although I like the idea of bloodshed, and possibly even putting a bullet in Biyela's head."

Guy: "You can do that once we have our hands on that money."

Bonakele: "No you won't. We get the money and that's it." Luis laughs.

Luis: "Of course." He says with a smirk on his face.



PHILANI

The danger of having your wife mad at you is that you never know what they might do, for all I know I could get home and find

my clothes swimming in the pool, or maybe that's a bit extreme. Either way, I can't ignore the danger my family might be in. I might be angry at Kazi and my dad, but it's family first right, no matter what?

I drive from work to Dainfern and my guys are already patrolling every corner of the house. At least I can sleep better now. I get out of the car and walk into the house. I find Theo playing in the lounge.

Me: "Hey big guy." He lifts his head up and immediately runs to me screaming daddy. I pick him up

and tickle him, he laughs so loud. I cant believe how much I missed him. Kazi walks in from the kitchen.

Kazi: "I didnt know you were coming over."

Me: "This isnt a social call unfortunately, wheres your father?"

Kazi: "He's upstairs taking a shower, he should be down any moment now."

Me: "Ok, I'll wait here with Theo." I walk to the lounge and sit on the floor and play with Theo. Kazi walks over to the lounge and sits on the couch. She

plays with the dishcloth she's carrying, it's like she is nervous or something.

Kazi: "Bhuti ngyacolisa (I'm sorry). I know I messed up."

Me: "I'm not the one you should be apologizing to Qhawekazi, unfortunately for me I know the kind of person you are and at the back of my head I guess I expected that. Lando on the other hand expected better from you." She looks down.

Kazi: "I want to make this right."

Me: "How will you do that?"

Kazi: "I want you guys to have

Theo back." I laugh, and crazily enough Theo laughs too as if he knows what's being said. "I know you guys love him and it was selfish of me to take him from you. He deserves to grow up in a stable family and I know you guys can give him that."

Me: "And you didn't know that before you took him? You didn't see how happy he was?" She doesn't answer me. "Okay let's say we take him back, how long before you feel the need to have him back again?" Before she can even answer me my dad comes

down the stairs and walks over to the lounge.

Dad: "Philani, welcome home."

Me: "Yeah whatever. We need to talk about an action plan. I'm pretty sure Luis didnt come here for a vacation."

Dad: "I've spoken to some of my contacts and they are trying to find out where he is based. Once we know that then maybe we can find out what he's action plan is."

Kazi: "What if he's here for Theo?"

Dad: "I doubt that. Either he's here to avenge his brother and nephew or he is here trying to

get his hands on his brother's money."

Me: "Either way we need to be prepared for whatever comes." I get up from the floor with Theo still in my arms. "I have to go."

Kazi: "Please stay for dinner, I made dumpling and tripe."

Me: "I cant, it's my turn to bath Lakhiwe."

Dad: "I miss her, when are you bringing her for a visit?"

Me: "You know where we stay Baba. I have to go." I try to put Theo down but he refuses to stay down, instead he holds on to my shirt. "I have to go boy. I'll see

you next time okay?" Kazi tries to take him but he refuses to let go of me. Eventually she takes him but he starts screaming and fighting. Kazi takes him upstairs and my heart breaks seeing him cry like that.

Dad: "He misses you."

Me: "It doesn't matter, he's with his mother now so...." I take my keys and phone from the side table. "I'll update you once I have something concrete on Luis."

Dad: "Ok. Thanks for doing this." He says walking me to the door.

I walk out get into my car and drive off. I get home and walk in

to loud laughter coming from the kitchen and bab'Makhosi sitting on the couch with Lakiwe in his lap watching the news. I wonder what's going on. I figure the lounge is a safer bet so I head there.

Me: "Baba, unjani (how are you?)"
I shake his hand and sit down.

Lakiwe looks at me and then moves her eyes back to the TV as if she doesn't know me. This child!

Makhosi: "Ndodana, sisaphila (I'm good). How was work?"

Me: "Work was work. I didn't know you were coming this side."

Makhosi: "I wasnt. I got a call

from your aunt earlier today about Makoti's dream."

Me: "Really? It was just a dream, I don't know why Lando would make a fuss about it."

Makhosi: "It wasn't just a dream Ntshangase, sometimes dreams are a sign."

Me: "A sign of what? That I will die? Come on baba." I can't believe Lando had to call in reinforcements just because of some dream.

Makhosi: "Philani I wouldn't be here if this wasn't serious. I also had the same dream. And if your aunt hadn't called me to tell me

about Lando's dream I wouldn't have taken it seriously, but two people having the same dream, that's no coincidence, it's a warning."

Me: "Kodwa baba, I cant just stand back and watch my family being attacked."

Makhosi: "No, let your father handle it. He's capable of doing that and you need to focus on your family. Besides you need to prepare for your wedding." Sigh.

Me: "We haven't even set a date yet."

Makhosi: "Then maybe it's time you did."

Me: "Fine. I will let dad handle it."

Kholiwe: "Finally, something sensible." She says walking in from the kitchen. I can guarantee right now, her and Lando were eavesdropping.

Me: "Baby you can come out too, I know you were eavesdropping."

She walks in looking innocent.

Lando: "Dinner is ready." I just smile and shake my head.

We head over to the table and have our dinner. After we are done eating I take Lakihiwe upstairs and give her a bath before putting her to bed. I go to our bedroom and find Lando

sitting on the couch with her laptop. She puts it aside soon as I walk in.

Lando: "Hey, babygirl is sleeping already?"

Me: "Of course, I have the magic touch."

I head to the bathroom and take a shower. I come back after a few minutes and find her still in the same spot.

Me: "Arent you supposed to be sleeping?"

Lando: "I cant sleep with my husband mad at me."

Me: "What makes you think I am

mad at you?" I ask sitting next to her.

Lando: "So you dont think I ambushed you?"

Me: "Oh you did, but I know its coming from a good place." She smiles and gets on top of me.

Lando: "So we are really letting daddy handle this one?" She asks moving her fingers down to the towel I have wrapped around me.

Me: "Yes, thanks to my stubborn wife." She laughs and circles her fingers around my manhood, sending shivers down my spine.

I put my hands on her thighs, making my way up towards her

little haven. Good thing her silk nightgown is short enough to give me easy access. I rub her clit and she moans. I move my fingers down to her opening and she is wet. Good for me. I stick two fingers into her and she moans. Music to my ears. I move my fingers in and out of her and she moans even louder. I stop a bit and she starts grinding on my fingers. I look into her eyes as her walls contract around my fingers. She collapses on top of me. I give her a few seconds to catch her breath before flipping her over and laying her face down,

ass up on the couch. I enter her from behind and pound the living daylights out of her. She has her second orgasm the same time as me and she lays flat on the couch. I lay on top of her and kiss her head. A part of me is hoping that she didnt get her shot like she had planned. I know its selfish but I want us to have another kid. Lakiwe needs a sibling to play with.

Lando: "I love you." She says before slipping into slumber. I smile and just kiss her.

Me: "I love you too Mrs Me."

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Its moment like these when I wish I hadn't inherited my mother's soft kind heart. I mean she was tough as nails when the situation called for it and sweet when she needed to be. The difference with her though is that she knew when people were taking advantage of her and she put a stop to that real quick. Me on the other hand, I dont know how to just turn my back on my family. They might have hurt me,

failed to support and literally spit in my face when I helped them, but letting go of this is hard.

I've been in this gym punching this bag for the past two hours.

I woke up at 4 am cause I couldn't sleep, so I figured instead of tossing and turning I might as well do something productive with my time. I came here to let off some steam but it doesn't seem to help much.

I have told Lando to let go of Theo because we cant keep showing up for people who fail to show up for us but now here I am failing to do the same. Talk

about being a hypocrite. My phone rings and it's my dad. I wonder what he wants so early in the morning. I take off the boxing gloves and take a seat.

Me: "Hello."

Dad: "I was hoping you'd be up. My tech guy just told me theres someone whose been trying to trace the cartel money."

Me: "So you think Luis is here for the money?"

Dad: "I've met Luis a few times and believe you me he's not just here for the money. I'm pretty sure he also wants to avenge his family."

Me: "So Kazi and Theo might be in danger?"

Dad: "Possibly. But I think he won't strike until he has his hands on that money."

Me: "Okay so where's the money?"

Dad: "Somewhere safe. Only two people know where it is and I am pretty sure neither one of us will tell."

Me: "You sure you can trust this other person?"

Dad: "He knows which side his bread is buttered." I don't know if I trust the guy but if my dad trusts him then I guess I have to trust him too.

Me: "Ok then, you'll let me know what you decide."

Dad: "Arent you coming over so we can find a way forward?"

Me: "No, I'm going to let you handle this one."

Dad: "Oh, okay." He seems shocked. "May I ask why?" I tell him about Lando's dream and Bab'Makhosi's advice. I dont know if he believes it but he says he can handle it. I guess that's one less thing for me to worry about.

I decide to take a shower in the gym. When I'm done I wrap a towel around me and head out. I

find Mamnguni in the kitchen probably making breakfast. I try to tiptoe up the stairs so she doesn't see me but she turns around from the stove and sees me. She smiles, and for some strange reason I feel a bit self-conscious.

Mamnguni: "Sawubona Biyela." I just smile and rush up the stairs. I can feel her eyes on my back. I hurry and get into our bedroom and quickly close the door and stand behind it. That was a bit weird, or maybe it's because she's older than me so I don't think it's appropriate for her to see me

half naked. I look up and Lando is sitting up on the bed with Laksiwe on her lap.

Lando: "You look like you've seen a ghost."

Me: "I just went past MaMnguni in the kitchen, and she was looking at me funny." She has a smile on her face and I don't know why.

Lando: "Is that why you are spooked? I'm sure she didnt mean any harm."

Me: "Maybe." I walk over to them and kiss them. Laksiwe immediately wants to come to me. I leave them there and go into

the closet. I put on some briefs and track pants and then go back to the bed. I pick her up and play with her.

Lando: "Have you told your dad?"

Me: "Yep, he was a bit shocked but he understands."

Lando: "Good. Now you can focus your attention back to that idiot journalist. Have you heard anything from Buli and Lindani?"

Me: "Yeah, they said they'll be serving the summons today. That should give them the weekend to stew a bit."

Lando: "Are you sure you are ready to do this? It's not going to be

easy Philani, I'm pretty sure their lawyers will dig up everything there is to find about you."

Me: "They won't find anything. If there's one thing we know how to do, it's cover our tracks."

Lando: "Good."

Me: "Relax babe, it will be fine."

She gets off the bed. "Where are you going?"

Lando: "To take a shower. We still need to get to work."

Me: "We are taking the day off. And I think I'll give Mamnguni the day off too." She chuckles.

Lando: "Philani Biyela we have a

business to run."

Me: "Landokuhle Biyela, the good thing about an established business like ours is that it can run without us there to hold people's hands."

Lando: "Dont you have important meetings?"

Me: "Nope!" She gets back into the bed.

Lando: "So what I am hearing is that you, CEO of Biyela Holdings are ordering me, the COO of Biyela Holdings to stay home and spend time with my husband and babygirl." I smiled.

Me: "Yes Mrs Biyela that is

exactly what I am saying."

Lando: "I guess refusing that order would be considered insubordination."

Me: "Yes. Yes it would be. Now I am going to put this sleeping princess back into her bed so when I come back please make sure you are naked. We have work to do."

She laughs as I walk out.

I put my babygirl back into her crib and just as I walk out of the nursery i meet MaMnguni walking upstairs with a laundry basket.

She still has this weird look going on. Or maybe i need to stop walking around half naked. But

then again this is my house so. I walk past her and then I remember I still have to give her the day off. I turn around.

Me: "Ma." She turns to look at me still with that weird look.

Mamnguni: "Yes."

Me: "I know this is your weekend off so Lando and I were thinking maybe you can take today off too."

Mamnguni: "Why? Is everything okay?"

Me: "Everything is okay ma, I know you said you're going to Soweto to see your daughter so maybe you can go this morning."

Mamnguni: "Oh okay. Ngyabonga. (Thank you)" she smiles, I dont know why but her smile seems fake now.

Anyways I turn back and head to my bedroom. I walk in and find Lando laying on the bed, ass in the air, face and boobs on the bed. Yep, it's time to work on Philani junior, even though she doesn't know it yet.



NARRATED

Outside the Biyela home in Dainfern, Bonakele, Luis and their tech guy Prince are sitting in a

car a few houses away watching the house. They see Mr Biyela drive out led by two cars with armed guards and two more behind him.

Prince: "So now what?"

Luis: "B, I think that's your cue." She gets out of the car and walks towards her brothers house. She gets to the gate and tries to open using her fingerprint but she cant get through. She decides to press the intercom. Kazi answers and soon the gates open. The two guys watch her as she goes in.

Prince: "Do you think she'll find what we are looking for?"

Luis: "No she won't."

Prince: "So we are sticking to plan B?"

Luis: "Yep. I don't understand how stupid she is thinking her brother would keep information on an account with millions of dollars just lying around in his house, even if it is in a safe." Prince moves from the backseat and sits in the front.

Prince: "He could you know, especially if he thinks it's safe."

Luis: "Biyela has been part of the cartel for almost his entire life. The fact that they spent all that time making money and even

interpol couldn't find anything on them should tell you something. That man is smart. He won't keep important information just lying around."

Prince: "I guess you have a point there. So what do we do now."

Luis: "Get the guys ready to get their hands on the first born.

Now that we have the two boys in our care all we have to do is get the oldest and Biyela will hand over the information we need. Kill him and his sons and live happily ever after."

Prince: "You do know Biyela junior is also gangster like his father?"

Luis: "I know, and who knows, maybe we'll take over his operation too once we are done."

Inside the house. Bonakele walks in and finds Kazi feeding Theo.

Kazi: "Aunty, what are you doing here?"

Bonakele: "Well I came to see your father, is he home?" She asks putting her bag on the couch and sitting down.

Kazi: "You just missed him actually."

Bonakele: "Oh, that's a pity. I wanted to talk to him about something."

Kazi: "What about?"

Bonakele: "It can wait. So has he forgiven you for what we did?"

Kazi: "I guess. I don't think we are fully back to him trusting me but one day at a time right." She gets up with the bowl and puts it in the sink.

Bonakele: "So he still thinks you wanting Theo's inheritance is wrong?" Kazi comes back and sits down.

Kazi: "Well I don't want it. You know how they say money is the root of all evil, well thanks to me listening to you and wanting that money I have ruined my relationship with my brother and

Lando, my dad doesn't trust me and my two other brothers aren't talking to me."

Bonakele: "Please. They are just being unreasonable. You also have a right to your son."

Kazi: "Yes but I had a relationship with him and then I took him from the only parents he has ever known. It broke my heart to see him cry for Philani the other day. He misses them and I took that from him."

Bonakele: "He is a baby, he will forget."

Kazi: "I guess. Let me go clean him up then put him down for his

nap. I'll come back and make you something to eat."

Bonakele: "Don't worry about me I know where the kitchen is." Kazi picks up Theo and takes him upstairs.

Bonakele waits until Kazi is out of sight before she takes her bag and heads to the study. She closes the door and goes straight to the family portrait on the wall. She pulls it aside and finds the safe. She punches in a code and the safe opens. She proceeds to go through the documents but doesn't find what she's looking for.

She puts the documents back and goes to the book cabinet. She pulls six books in sequence and the bookcase parts revealing another safe. She places a little magnetic machine on it and then makes a call.

Prince: "Yes."

Bonakele: "The thing is on. So what now?"

Prince: "Good. Hold on." Prince takes his laptop and goes to work. Soon they are able to bypass the safe's fingerprint sensor, iris sensor and the pin. The safe opens and Bonakele goes through the documents in there.

She finds a file with a number of different accounts information. She takes it and puts it in her bag.

She closes the safe and walks back to the lounge. She finds Kazi watching TV.

Kazi: "Aunty. I was wondering where you dissapeared to."

Bonakele: "Oh I was just making a phonecall. Anyways I have to go."

Kazi: "Already?"

Bonakele: "Yeah. Dont tell your dad I was here. We dont want him getting angry at you now."

She walks out leaving Kazi shocked.

She gets back into the car with Luis and Prince. She takes the file from her bag and hands it to Prince. Prince opens it and his mouth opens in shock at what he finds.

Prince: "Holy fuck."

Bonakele: "What is it?"

Prince: "These are accounts in different parts of the world.

From the Bahamas, Sweden, Caymen Islands, Mexico and even Panama."

Luis: "Wait, Really? So you think the money is there?"

Prince: "We have to go back to the office so I can check them out."

Luis: "Okay then. Let's go." He starts the car and drives off.

Meanwhile at Biyela Holdings, Mr Biyela is in his office when Razor walks in.

Razor: "You know Mr B I still dont understand why you still have an office here. I mean you are retired for heavens sake, travel the world, see new people and fuck some girls." He laughs. Mr Biyela looks at him and says nothing. Razor pretends to cough and sits down. "Forget I said anything."

Mr B: "So do you have anything for me?"

Razor: "Oh yes." He takes out his iPad and hands it to Mr Biyela.

"Your suspicions were right all along. Someone on the inside is working with Luis. And you won't believe who it is."

Mr B: "My sister." He says with his jaws clenched when he sees the footage of his sister in his office.

Razor: "Yep. And she's the one whose been feeding that journalist info on Philani."

Mr B: "I can't believe she would do something like this."

Razor: "Well it's right there. And it's a good thing we had those fake accounts planted in the safe. I'm pretty sure they think they found the money."

Mr B: "Good. All that's left now is to find Sihle and Banele."

Razor: "Luis has them. Which is why we have put more security at Philani's place. I think he might come after him too."

Mr B: "Good job Razor. Now all they have to do is transfer all that money into their accounts and then interpol will be all over Luis."

Razor: "Are you sure about that,

cause now your sister is involved too?"

Mr B: "I'll take care of my sister myself. Luis is going back to prison. This time he won't make it out alive." He says getting up and standing by the window with his hands in his pockets.

Razor: "Remind me never to cross you." He says walking out and leaving Mr Biyela with his thoughts.

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My court case started today. In the morning I was a bit nervous

but once I got to court and saw Lindani and Buli in action I relaxed a bit. They seem to have this under control.

Lando and I were supposed to meet my father for lunch, apparently he has some info we might need. He never showed up though, instead he sent a text saying he got caught up somewhere. Oh well I guess it's just gonna be me and wifey then since even my lawyers need to strategize some more.

We get to the restaurant we had booked at and find our table ready and waiting for us. We sit down

and place our order. Lando seems to be faraway.

Me: "Earth to Lando." I say clicking my fingers in front of her face. She blinks a couple of times and then looks at me. "What are you thinking about?"

Lando: "Do you think we can win this case. I mean those guys seem to have a solid case"

Me: "And we have a solid case too baby. Stop worrying."

Lando: "I know. I just feel like the info that the newspaper has could open us up to investigation by the police. We could literally end up in jail." I smile.

Me: "I like the fact that you keep saying we."

Me: "This is not a joke Philani."

Me: "I know. But you really need to stop worrying. Buli and Lindani have this under control." She let's out a sigh.

Lando: "I guess you have a point there."

Our order comes and we eat.

Halfway through our meal my phone rings. I pick it up from the table and see Kazi's name on the screen. I put it on silent then put it back on the table and continue eating. It rings again and I put it on silent again. Lando looks at

me like I am trying to hide something from her.

Me: "Don't look at me like that, it's not a side chick. It's Kazi."

Lando: "So why aren't you picking up?"

Me: "I am not in the mood for her." My phone rings again. And just as I reach for it Lando gets to it first. She picks it up and puts it on loudspeaker.

Lando: "Hello." There's silence for a bit before a sniffing Kazi speaks.

Kazi: "Lando! Hi."

Lando: "Are you crying?"

Kazi: "I need..... I I need to speak to Philani." She says

between sobs. Now I am curious to know what's going on.

Me: "What's going on?" She cries some more when she hears my voice.

Kazi: "Please come home. Something's happened."

Me: "What happened?"

Kazi: "Please come home Bhuti." She says before hanging up.

Lando and I look at each other.

Lando: "We need to go see her."

I call the waiter and pay the bill.

By the time I am done Lando is already waiting in the car. I tell her to text Buli and Lindani and

tell them we won't make it back to court after lunch.

We get to Dainfern and it looks like half of Jozi is here. There's a whole lot of cars in the yard. I recognize some of them. We rush into the house and Kazi is on the couch crying. Most of our relatives who are based in Joburg and Pretoria are here. This must be serious then. Bab'Nqoba is the only 'adult' here and the rest are cousins.

Me: "What's going on?" Kazi hears my voice and quickly rushes to me. She throws herself at me and

just sobs. "Is anyone going to tell me what's going on?"

Bab'Nqoba: "Hlala phansi Philani (please sit down.)" He says. Kazi pulls away from me and I follow her to the couch. I sit down and look around, almost everyone seems to be crying and no one wants to tell me why.

Me: "Okay someone please tell me what the fuck is going on?" I snap.

Bab'Nqoba: "There was an accident." He keeps rubbing his hands together and he won't even look at me. "Your father was involved in an accident. He might

be dead." I feel the air leave my lungs. He can't be dead. I spoke to him earlier, granted it was almost three hours ago but still.

Philani: "And how do you know all of this? Where did this accident happen? Who was involved and who identified his body?"

Hlengiwe: "We don't know all the details yet but it's all over social media."

Lando: "Social media? How?"

Hlengiwe: "Someone shot a video of the accident, malume Busani's car hit a truck and....." she doesn't even finish talking instead

she breaks down and cries. I am still confused as fuck.

One of my cousins gives me his phone and plays a video for me. I look at it and see the car crash into a truck, a big truck. Half of the car literally ends up smashed into the front of the truck. The only visible part is the backseat and the boot. I pause the video and zoom into it, the license plate is unmissable. It is my dad's car. He is dead. My father is dead.



MR BIYELA

Ever since I joined the cartel I have learnt to be on my toes 24/7. It's my duty to know what's going around me, to be a step ahead of my enemies. And a lot of the time I succeed. Of course theres that occasional miss but I would say ninety five percent of the time I come out on top. But never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would ever be betrayed by my own family.

It's been a week since I've found out about this, and since then my sister and her idiot friend have been trying to get their hands on

the money. Luckily for me I keep moving the money from one account to the next, so by the time they get to said account the money will have been moved to another account. Its fun to watch their frustration but I think it's time I put a stop to this.

My MO has always been simple, you mess with me or my loved ones and I take you out. When I was younger taking you out meant basically killing you, but as I got older I realized death sometimes becomes the easy way out cause you put a bullet

through someone's head and that's it, they are dead and gone. No pain, no remorse no nothing. But if you make them suffer then what they have done to me lingers in their mind for life. Some have begged me to kill them but now i enjoy seeing them suffer. Take Ngwenyama for instance, he always thought he was untouchable, invincible even, but now he is stuck in a jail cell with the same people he used to put away and many were more than happy to welcome him. I know what Luis deserves and he's going to get it, but how do i

even begin to punish my sister for her betrayal. It probably would have been easier to do this had it been just me she betrayed, but since she has been feeding the press information on Philani too I have to let him know, or should I? I was hurt when he told me to handle this one myself. But now I am glad he did. I don't know how he will take this.

Luis still has Sihle and Banele, and I have found out he has been trying to get his hands on Philani, fortunately for me I made sure Philani has security too, and Lando has been working from home and

only going to the office when really necessary.

I've been in my office at home trying to figure out how to get to my sister without making her suspicious, after all I threw her out of my house so calling her out of the blue would raise some red flags. I need to make sure I get to her without causing a scene and drawing attention to me.

I get up and head out, I'm having lunch with Philani and Lando. I take my phone and go out. When I get to the lounge I find my sister with Kazi. I swear

the universe is smiling down on me today.

Me: "Bonakele, what are you doing here?"

Bonakele: "Bhuti, I came to see you. I hope you dont mind!"

Me: "I was actually on my way out. But you can come with me if you want, we can talk in the car."
Her face lights up.

Bonakele: "Okay." She grabs her bag, says goodbye to Kazi and follows me. I text Razor and tell him to get the merchandise ready.

We get into the car and I switch on the signal blocker, I dont know

who she might call. I drive out with the security leading the way.

Bonakele: "So where are we going?"

Me: "To see a piece of land I want to buy for Laksiwe."

Bonakele: "Mhmmm."

Me: "What's that for? You don't think it's a good idea?"

Bonakele: "Of course not. I just think her parents should be able to do that for her."

Me: "She's my granddaughter and that's my gift to her. Besides I bought one for Theo too so it's

only fair."

Bonakele: "I guess."

I know where her bitterness is coming from, she doesn't like Lando and her hatred for her is beginning to trickle down to Lakhiwe. I wish I knew why she hates the poor girl so much, and asking her is no use cause she won't tell me the truth.

We drive out of the city and head to Muldersdrift. She has been talking non stop and I swear she is irritating, or maybe its cause i know of her betrayal so anything she does makes me angry. I answer when she asks me

questions but mostly it's just her yapping away.

We get to Muldersdrift and drive into this vacant land that only has a two bedroom house in the middle of it, the land is huge, and no it's not for my grandbaby, I wouldn't want to taint her land with blood, especially of family.

I park the car right in front of the house and my sister is quick to get out of the car, she looks around admiring the place. Its beautiful that's for sure. I get out of the car and stand by the front and watch her survey the place as if she'll ever see it again.

Razor comes out of the house and walks over to me, he stands next to me, crosses his arms and watches her.

Razor: "Does she know she's probably looking at her grave somewhere?" He asks not taking her eyes off of her. Luckily she is a bit far from us so she can't hear us.

Me: "Her grave cannot be here. Once I am done with her I need to make sure her body is found, her kids need to know she died, and I wouldn't want my mother dying of worry not knowing where she is."

Razor: "Makes sense. The merchandise is ready." He walks into the house.

I call my sister over and we walk into the house. Razor is in the kitchen making tea. We sit down in the lounge.

Bonakele: "I like the place, but dont you think it's a tad too big?" She asks taking out a hand fan from her bag and fanning herself, its summer so it's hot.

Me: "Nothing will ever be too big for my children. If i could i would lay the stars at their feet if they said they wanted them there." She smiles.

Bonakele: "They are really lucky to have you. You spoil them."

Me: "That's a grandfather's job. Can I ask you something?" She nods. "Do you think i am too soft? Especially on my family? Or maybe I have failed as a brother?" She takes a deep breath.

Bonakele: "You are strict when you need to be and soft when the situation calls for it, I think that's why even our kids find it easier to speak with you. You haven't failed as a brother. We are lucky to have you." Razor brings the tea and pours for us. He hands her her cup and she

takes a sip. I sit quietly and watch her as she takes a few more sips. Razor takes a seat across from us with a cup in hand. When her tea is halfway down she coughs a bit and takes another sip.

Me: "Thank you for saying that sis wam, now my next question, if I haven't failed as a brother why was it so easy for you to betray me?" She looks at me and I can see the shock in her eyes, but she tries to keep a straight face.

Bonakele: "Ukhuluma ngan Bhuti (what are you talking about?)"

Me: "I know you're working with

Luis, I know you're the one feeding the press info on Philani, I know you somehow convinced my daughter to hurt her brother for your own selfish reasons, I know everything sisi." I stir my tea without looking at her but I can feel the tension and nerves coming from her.

Bonakele: "Bhuti I swear I dont know what you are talking about. I would never betray you, you are my brother, my blood, I could never do that to you." Razor hands me an iPad with the pictures and videos of her meeting up with Luis this past

week, theres even some of her with that idiot journalist. I hand the iPad over to her.

Me: "So that's not you?" I swear I saw the blood leave her face. See my family isnt really light skinned, the lightest person in our family is my sister Sphelele, and her light version is the caramel type, not the light light skin.

Despite her dark skin at that moment I swear the melanin left her skin.

Bonakele: "Bhuti..... I.....

um.....I....." I can see the sweat dripping down her face.

Me: "You what? I'm listening."

Bonakele: "I can explain."

Me: "Explain ke?"

Bonakele: "I.....I....."

Me: "You dont even know why you did it do you? You betrayed me and worked with someone who at this very present moment has my sons, probably torturing them and getting ready to kill them and you dont know why you did it. Is this what family does Bonakele, is this what mum meant when she talked about family over everything?"

Bonakele: "Please dont tell her about this?"

Me: "Yeah unlike you I know what

putting family first means, I will not kill my mother by letting her know of your betrayal."

Bonakele: "Thank you." She says wiping away her tears.

Me: "Oh dont thank me yet. See if it was anybody else who betrayed me like this I would be hanging them from the ceiling and torturing them. But because it's you, my sister, and our mother needs to have closure and be able to bury her daughter I had to go a different route, a subtle and clear route."

Bonakele: "What's that supposed to mean? Bhuti wam ngyacela,

please dont hurt me."

Me: "I won't hurt you, but the tea will." She looks at the tea, first with confusion and then shock and panic.

Bonakele: "You poisoned me."

Me: "And you betrayed me, I guess now we are even." She gets up and runs to the door but finds it locked. And she panics some more.

Bonakele: "Bhuti wam ngyacela, ngyacela Ntshangase, think about my children. They need their mother." She comes and kneels in front of me with tears streaming down her face.

Me: "And Lakhiwe didnt need her father, that's why you were plotting to send him to jail with that friend of yours?"

Bonakele: "I'll fix it, I promise."

Me: "Dont worry about it, I'm already fixing it." I look at my watch and it's been almost half an hour since she drank the tea, the poison should start working by now.

I open the door and she quickly rushes out, we hear the car running and soon it fades away into the distance. We get into Razors car and follow her from a distance. Somewhere along the

way the car starts swerving and zigzagging on the road. She keeps driving which draws attention to her. I'm sure the other motorists think she's drunk. Or maybe she is, after all the poison is doing its job.

She keeps driving and I see a truck approaching from the other direction. And from the looks of it, it seems to be going at full speed. And at that moment my nerves, or is it my guilt kick in. I am about to watch my sister die. She keeps zigzagging and the truck hoots but she keeps going. As the truck gets closer she keeps going,

some drivers have even pulled up on the side of the road. The truck driver keeps honking the horn but nothing. Everything seems to happen in slow motion, the car slams into the truck and because the truck hasn't stopped it drags the car backwards to where it's coming from.

I never in my wildest dreams ever thought I'd ever see anyone i love be killed, by me, but here i am now, watching people rush over to try and help my sister. Even Razor rushed out so to not draw attention to us. I stayed in the car and watched from a distance.

Razor came back and got into the car.

Razor: "Its done." Not that I needed the confirmation. We drive off as the police and paramedics rush to the scene. I guess I should start preparing for my sisters funeral.

INSERT 85

I have seen death, I've experienced death or loss, I have caused death, but i never thought it would ever hit me this hard. The video of my dads car

crashing into the truck keeps playing over and over in my head, but then another part of me refuses to believe it. Everyone else around me seems to have come to terms with it. Although sniffles and puffy red eyes seem to be the order of the day.

Most of the family in Mandawe has been informed, I can only imagine how my grandmother took the news. News like this can be hard for an old woman like her to stomach, but we can't really shield her from it. She deserves to know.

I've been trying to get as much info as possible on the accident but last time I called I was told they were still scrapping his remains from the car. I guess we won't be having an open casket then.

I looked around me and the only sound was just sniffles. I looked over at Lando and she had Theo in her arms and her eyes were bloodshot red. I wanted so badly to make this right but how do I bring back someone from the dead, I can literally make one phonecall and get what I want,

but this, this i don't know how to fix.

By ten o'clock in the evening most of the family had flown up. The moment they walked through the door it was like someone had opened the floodgates, tears flowed. Hugs went around but Lando stayed put with Theo refusing to let go of her. After sometime we sat around the dining table.

Bab'Zweli: "I wish I knew what to say, but I dont so maybe let's just go to sleep, it's late already and I'm sure most of you have work tomorrow. We will meet

tomorrow once we've calmed down and discuss a way forward." He said trying to hide his red eyes. We all agreed and allocated each person a place to sleep. Some of them will have to come with Lando and I cause I don't think they will fit in here.

I sat on the table watching people try to find a space to sleep, the door opened and Sihle and Banele walked in looking like they had a fight with the undertaker. We all looked up in shock. They had bruises all over and it looked like Sihle had a broken rib since he

kept his one arm around him.

They looked around.

Sihle: "I know we look like shit but you should see the other guy."

They laughed, but their bruises wouldn't let them laugh too hard.

They looked around and saw the seriousness on everyone's faces.

Banele: "Okay, who died?" He asked. I got up and went over to them. I was about to speak when I saw my dad walk in.

I took a step back, not sure how to react. As soon as he was visible to everyone all I heard were screams and people crying. Next thing i know Kazi had thrown

herself on my dad. These three didn't understand what was happening judging by the looks on their faces.

When everyone had calmed down and the elders had come back down and hugged their brother with tears streaming down their faces we all sat down hoping that dad would explain what happened and why his car ended up being morphed into a truck.

Dad: "Now that you've stopped crying and screaming will someone explain what's going on? Why nigcwele indlu yami (why are you in my house)". He asked taking a

seat.

Me: "We thought you were dead."

He turned to look at me as if I have committed the worst kind of sin, if there is any.

Sihle: "Bra what the fuck are you talking about."

Bab'Zweli: "Language Sihle!"

Sihle: "Sorry baba, but what do you mean you thought he was dead?"

Me: "Baba, wheres your car?"

Baba: "Which one?"

Me: "The ford ranger."

Baba: "Oh that one, Bonakele took it. Where is she anyway?"

Bab'Zweli: "Bhuti what do you

mean Bonakele took it?"

Kazi: "But you drove out together this morning. When did she take the car?"

Baba: "I know, we drove to Muldersdrift cause I wanted to show her a piece of land I bought, she said she had to rush of to some meeting I dont know with who, I gave her the car since Razor was with me and he would drive me around, and that was the last I saw her. Where is she?" The room went silent as the realization hit us all almost simultaneously.

How anybody got any sleep last night is beyond me. Lando and I drove home with Theo since he wouldn't let go of her. I woke up to an empty bed. I decided to go take a shower before anything else. After I was done I got dressed and went for a jog.

I ran for almost ten kilometers and my brain still couldn't process the last 24 hours. How did aunt Bonakele end up under a truck?

Why was she zigzagging through the road like a drunk person cause I know for a fact she quit alcohol almost ten years ago? I had way too many questions and no

answers. But since today is a new day maybe I might get the answers I need.

I turned around and jogged back to the house. I got in and took off my vest and wiped the sweat from my face while making a shake in the kitchen, with my headsets still on. I turned around with the shake in my hand and found MaMnguni staring at me. I swear something isn't right with this woman. I greeted her and left her there.

I got to our bedroom and Lando was still nowhere to be found. I decided to check the only place I

know she could be at, the nursery. I found her fast asleep on the couch with both babies in her arms. I took them and placed them in their cribs. I came back to her and picked her up. She woke up and saw that she was in my arms, I thought she'd want me to put her down, instead she buried her head deep in my neck. I carried her to our bedroom.

I tried laying her down on the bed but she wouldn't let go of me so we both got into bed. We laid like that for a while before I felt my neck getting wet, she was crying.

Me: "Baby please dont cry." I said holding her closer to me.

Lando: "When he walked through the door I thought maybe this whole thing was a mistake, I was relieved."

Me: "I know."

Lando: "Do you really think it was her in the car? For all we know she could have been hijacked." She asked sitting up to look at me.

Me: "Probably, but she would have called by now, we would have heard something."

Lando: "I guess." She said. And that felt like I had sucked the life out of her. I know she and

Bonakele didnt get along that well, but yet she's here, eyes red and hurt. "You know as crazy as our relationship was, I think somewhere deep in her heart she loved me, in her own weird way." I smiled. Trust Lando to find humor in this.

Me: "Let's set a date."

Lando: "Mhmm."

Me: "Let's set a date, for our wedding. If theres one thing I've learnt through this whole thing, life is short. Let's just get married." She looked at me like I had rainbows and sprinkles coming out of every part of my body.

Lando: "Okay." She said and jumped on top of me. She kissed me with so much emotion and intensity I didnt want it to end. She pulled away and looked at me. "I love you Philani, I hope I never ever forget to tell you that." I smiled.

Me: "When you forget I will remind you." She chuckled and hugged me.

I dont know how much time I have on this earth but Dear God please let me spend every day loving this woman, so that the day you take me home, she'll never

forget or even doubt my love for her. Amen.



MR B

I hate social media, and no it's not because I am old, or okay maybe it is, but in my time people didnt go spreading news about other people at the speed of light. In my time people respected death, families were allowed to grieve in private before the world even knew what was happening, But now people announce news before families even know.

After watching my sister drive to her death, Razor and I drove to Luis' "office". When we got there the place was crawling with police officers. We drove into the building and made our way up to the "office", he was handcuffed together with his men and the police were tearing the place apart. I got in and greeted the head detective, Dladla.

Me: "Mgabadeli."

Dladla: "Mgazi. What are you doing here?"

Me: "I was in the neighborhood, I saw the police cars and thought I should come by." He looked at

me and smiled.

Dladla: "A law abiding citizen willing to help the police is very welcome in my books."

Me: "Last time I checked you were being investigated for corruption, how did you instead end up being a Detective." He laughed and gulped down his water. Although I know he probably wished it was alcohol instead.

Dladla: "Let's just say the powers that be could not pin anything on me, and since they had nothing on me they had to compensate me for the trauma." I smiled.

Me: "So how's it going here?"

Dladla: "We found drugs, guns and all sorts of illegal things, so Mr Rodriguez here and his cronies will be in jail for a while, that's if the US authorities don't come after him for violating his probation."

Me: "Music to my ears."

We left and went to the house Luis had rented in Hyde Park, it had guards, I figured since Sihle and Banele were not found at those shady offices he must have kept them here. We parked outside and called for backup.

In thirty minutes the guys had shown up, armed and ready. We

sat there and waited until it was dark, since Luis was already in jail I'm pretty sure these guards did not know that. I decided to put our plan in motion. I made the call.

Guy: "Bab'Ntshangase."

Me: "Its time."

Guy: "Stage 4 loadshedding about to hit Hyde Park. Have fun." He hung up and in less than ten minutes the lights went off. We waited for a few minutes just to make sure there weren't people peeking out their windows.

When we were certain the coast was clear we went in guns blazing.

We found Sihle and Banele tied up in a room at the end of the hallway. We untied them and helped them to the car. Once they were safe we picked up the bodies that were scattered all over the place and laid them down in the lounge before pouring petrol all over them. We poured the petrol all the way to the door before setting the place alight. We closed the door and left.

I was surprised when we got home and found the place full of people, Sihle actually thought someone had thrown them a welcome home party. Even with

broken ribs, bruised all over he still thinks about parties. Mxm.

I was brought back to reality when there was a knock on the door, I've been holed up in my study since morning.

Me: "Come in." Zuzu walked in looking like she had the weight of the world on her shoulders.

Zuzu: "Malume, Bab'Zweli says you should go."

Me: "Okay nana, I'm coming." She turned around to leave. "Zuzu!" She looked back and I motioned for her to sit and she did. "I know this is a stupid thing to ask but how are you doing?" She wiped

the tear that had fallen.

Zuzu: "I dont know, I think I am worried about Sindiswa more than anything. She and mama were close, I dont know how she'll get through this." I took a deep breath and sat back.

Me: "It will take time but we'll be here to help her through this, just like we'll be here for you too." She smiled.

Zuzu: "Thank you. Would you like some breakfast?"

Me: "Depends, who cooked?"

Zuzu: "Sis Hlengiwe."

Me: "I'm not ready to die just yet." She laughed.

Zuzu: "Okay I'll make you something."

Me: "Now we are talking. I'll be out soon." She walked out and a ping of guilt hit me, hard. I got up after a while and went to the lounge where everyone was and sat down. True to her word Zuzu made me breakfast for the gods, culinary school is doing wonders.

After I was done eating we drove to the Muldersdrift police station and they led us to the mortuary where Bonakele's body was. I let my brother's go in first to see her. Nqoba came out after about ten minutes and vomited all over

the floor. Zweli followed and just sat down next to me without a word. I decided since they wont say anything I would see for myself, even though I did not want to.

I got into the room and the attendant asked me who I came to see, i told him and he pulled out a shelf with a body on it, he opened the sheet and left, looking at her I understood why Nqoba had vomited, this was not the kind of thing any person should have to see. Bonakele's body looked like it someone had hammered away at her for hours.

Her face was unrecognizable. I guess we won't be having an open casket.

R.I.P

Bonakele Kate Biyela

Loving mother, sister, aunt and grandmother. ❤️

INSERT 86

The thing about death is, you can never get used to it. You could lose ten people in the space of a month and it would still hurt just the same if not more. Even when it has happened around you time

and time again, losing another life is never easy.

We drove down to Mandawe the day after it was confirmed that it really was aunt Bonakele in the car. I don't think I'll ever get the picture of the car out of my head. It is still etched in my memory and it probably will be there for a long time.

Tomorrow is the funeral, everything has been set, and the great thing about rural areas is that the people will show up every single day to help, from morning to sunset they will be there, whether it's to help make

breakfast, bake for the mourners and cook for the family. Although it still baffles me why families who've lost a loved one have to go an extra mile just to cater to people, shouldn't the people be catering to the family in mourning?

Anyways, we have been chopping and peeling since last night, aunt Kholiwe convinced us to chop the vegetables and keep them in the freezer, and I must admit she was right, all one has to do is get our version of 'frozen vegetables' and we are good to go.

A few mourners came, I decided to make tea for them, unfortunately there were no scones left in the kitchen, but like in every ceremony theres always a stash put away somewhere. I tried to find the keys to aunt Bonakele's room where the scones were but the keys weren't where I last saw them. I decided to check if anybody was in the room and sure enough the door was unlocked. I walked in and took one bucket of scones.

I was ready to walk out when I heard some sniffing coming from the other room. I know it's a

funeral and you are bound to hear someone crying but curiosity got the better of me. I closed the door and put the bucket down. I opened the door and saw Sindiswa sitting on the bed with her back to me.

Me: "Hey." She wiped her tears and turned to look at me then turned back again.

Sindiswa: "What do you want?"

Me: "I came to get more scones, we've run out."

Sindiswa: "There's a bucket in the kitchen." She said with her back still on me.

Me: "Yeah, I saw that. Don't you

want to come with me to the kitchen, everyone is there?"

Sindiswa: "No thanks. I'm fine by myself."

Me: "I don't think that's a good idea, you need to be around people." She got up from the bed and turned to look at me.

Sindiswa: "Why? Do you have experience in losing a mother? Have you ever had to bury the one person who was always by your side even when the world was against you? Have you?" She said with tears streaming down her face. I walked closer to her.

Me: "Look I can't pretend to know

what you are going through, I can't say I know what it's like to lose a mother but I know what it's like to lose someone who means the world to you. When my grandmother died I never thought I could ever be okay but as clichè as it sounds, time does heal." She faked a smile and crossed her arms over her chest. Sindiswa: "Great, so you know what it's like, good for you, now please leave me alone." She sat back down in the bed.

I decided to let her be so I left and went back to the kitchen. I made the tea and served it to

the mourners. I decided to go check on Lakhawe since she was sleeping, Theo on the other hand had decided to run rampant outside. I got to the bedroom and my baby was still fast asleep, even Sindiswa's newborn daughter Nongcebo, was sleeping comfortably next to her.

I went back to the kitchen and there was commotion happening outside. The girls and I went out to see what was happening. It was Bonakele's husband, or ex husband and his family. They walked into the main house and

being the nosey individuals we are we decided to eavesdrop.

Bab'Zweli: "Bonxumalo, to what do we owe the pleasure of this visit."

Nxumalo elder 1: "So when were you planning to tell us that Bonakele died, we have been patiently waiting and tomorrow is her funeral and you still wouldn't have told us."

Bab'Nqoba: "Why would we tell you anything?"

Nxumalo elder 2: "She was married to our son, or have you forgotten that?"

Bab'Zweli: "I think you need to

underline the word was. Your son divorced her so he could be with a woman young enough to be his daughter."

Nxumalo elder 1: "It still doesn't change the facts. You should have let us know, and she should be buried kwanxumalo, that's where she belongs." We heard a bit of sarcastic laughter, and I can bet you now it's the Biyela's.

Bab'Makhosi: "You have time to waste, if you want to attend her funeral we wont stop you, but as for her being buried by you, hell will freeze over first."

Nxumalo: "She was my wife. I

loved her."

Bab'Zweli: "You loved her so much you divorced her, then came here and demanded your lobola back."

Nxumalo elder 2: "Yes but you never gave us our lobola back."

Bab'Biyela: "Yes we told you that the lobola will serve as damages for the two daughters you had with my sister since she was now technically a single woman."

Nxumalo: "Bonakele was a Nxumalo, she was my wife. I am going to bury her and if it means getting the law on my side then so be it." He stood up.

Bab'Ngoba: "Good luck with that."

The Nxumalo's left. We went back to the kitchen and picked up where we left off. Zuzu looked like she was deep in thought. I went over and sat next to her.

Me: "Hey! Are you okay?"

Zuzu: "I'm okay. I know my mum and I weren't close but she was still my mother, and my dad and I were a bit close, until that weasel walked into his life and turned it all upside down."

Me: "I'm sorry."

Zuzu: "Dont be. Its life right. I need to check on Ngcebo since Sindiswa has decided to shut

everyone out." She left us there and went to the bedroom.

I decided after serving lunch to go and have a nap before the night virgil later on. I got to our bedroom and got into bed. I kept tossing and turning for almost half an hour before Philani walked in looking tired and smelling terribly. He came over to kiss me but I couldn't stand the smell so I covered myself with the blanket. Philani: "Hey its rude not to kiss your husband when you haven't seen him for almost the entire day." He said trying to pull the

blanket off me but I held on to it.
Me: "Dude you smell, please go take a shower." He laughed.

Philani: "But you said you love my scent, you said its manly and hot and sexy and it makes certain parts of your body wiggle." I could sense the smile on his face as he said this so I smiled too.

Me: "Normally yes, but right now you smell like cow dung mixed with blood and all things stinky." He laughed.

Philani: "If you don't kiss me I am getting under the covers with you." I reluctantly pulled the blanket down and pinched my nose.

I pouted my lips and kissed him. He smiled. "Great now I can go get that shower." He said walking away.

Me: "And burn those clothes when you're done." He laughed and closed the door behind him.

I texted Zuzu asking about the kids and she assured me they were fine. I got out of the bed and went to the bathroom, as soon as I opened the door the smell hit me first. Ugh. I took the clothes that were on the floor and put them in a plastic bag before throwing them in the laundry basket. I took some air

freshener and sprayed it around. I took off my clothes and joined Philani in the shower.

I got in and wrapped my hands around his waist and kissed his back. He turned around to look at me and smiled. This is probably not the place to ask him about this but I have no choice.

Me: "How's your dad taking all this?"

Philani: "As bad as everyone else is I guess. He seems to be in his head most of the time."

Me: "The guilt getting to him?"
He looked at me shocked.

Philani: "What are you talking

about?"

Me: "Babe, it doesn't take a genius to figure it out. Your father killed your aunt." He let go of me and took a step back.

Philani: "I know my father is a lot of things but he wouldn't kill his own sister."

Me: "Your father found out about Bonakele working with Luis and that Zinhle girl, next thing she ends up under a truck, in his car?

Anyone with a brain can figure that out. And you and I both know your father doesn't take kindly to betrayal, even by his own family." He turned off the water

and got out of the shower. I followed him to the bedroom.

"Look I know this is a bit too much to take in but....." he walked back to me and put his hands around my face.

Philani: "I am begging you, stop this and make sure you never ever again utter those words to anybody else. Are we clear?" I nodded my head.

He got dressed and left me there. I might be reaching but I am scared. As much as I know Philani believes me, I'm pretty sure at this moment he has a hard time wrapping his head around this.

But my biggest fear in all this is our kids and maybe even us paying for this, after all they do say the 'sins of the father will always fall on the sons.' Lord help us all.



PHILANI

I dont know why what Lando said unsettles me, truth be told for a second I did think that my dad was behind aunt Bonakele's death, but then I told myself as much as he has power and influence I am pretty certain he couldn't have known the truck would be there at that exact moment. And she was alone in the

car so she couldn't have drove herself straight to the truck just for the fun of it. My dad would have had to plan all this down to the millisecond. And I don't know if he would do that. Or would he? Throughout the night virgil and the funeral I couldn't help but look at my dad and wonder if he really is capable of killing his own family.

We buried aunt Bonakele inspite of her ex husband showing up with the police and a court order saying we should not bury her, lucky for us by the time he got there with his court order she

was already on the ground, of course the cops wanted us to dig her up, but no one was willing to do that. He was told if he wanted her he would have to dig her up himself.

We got home and food was served. Soon after that Lando and I drove home. We should have flown up with the rest of the family the following day but I needed a bit of time to try and figure this whole thing out. I called Dladla since he was heading up the investigation on Luis and sure enough he confirmed getting a tip off from my dad. So maybe Lando

was right, this was all him. I may just have underestimated him.

We got to Joburg late and headed straight to bed. When we woke up in the morning we got a text from my dad asking us to be at his house by lunch time. I don't know why but when he summons us we all have to show up.

I decided to go to the gym to let off some steam. When I was done I went to the kitchen to make my shake. While I sat in the kitchen I decided to check out the security footage on my iPad. There wasn't nothing much to see

except a certain car parked just a few meters away from my house. But it hasn't been there for almost a week now. I wonder what happened to it. I decided to move to the cameras in the house and honestly what I saw there scared the shit out of me. I went upstairs and found Lando in the toilet. I walked in and showed her the footage.

Lando: "What's this?"

Me: "Remember when I told you there was something strange going on with Mamnguni? Well now I have proof." She took the iPad and looked at the footage.

Lando: "She's been watching you."

Me: "Yep. Like a spy she's been watching my every move."

Lando: "Maybe she has a crush on you." I could hear her trying to stifle a laugh.

Me: "Lando this isn't funny." She smiled.

Lando: "I know." She got up and went back to the bedroom and I followed her.

Me: "You need to fire her."

Lando: "Why me? You do it."

Me: "You hired her so you fire her.

Soon as she comes back tomorrow you fire her, or better yet call her

today and let her know not to come back tomorrow."

I left her there and went down to make breakfast. She came down after a while with the kids in her arms. She placed them in their chairs and sat down too.

Lando: "Her phone is off. So I sent her a text message."

Me: "You fired her via text, how cruel can you be." She just looked at me and rolled her eyes.

Lando: "Of course not, I just asked her to text me." I placed the breakfast in front of her. We ate while feeding the kids.

We took a bath and prepared to drive to my dad's. We got the kids ready and off we went to Dainfern. We got there and there was a car outside, I didn't know whose it was cause I've never seen it before. We walked into the house and there was a guy sitting on the couch playing a video game on TV.

Me: "Hello." He didn't turn, and then I noticed he had headphones on so I moved closer to him. I tapped him on the shoulder and he jumped screaming.

Guy: "The fuck dude, don't sneak up on people like that." He said

taking off the headsets.

Me: "Who are you and why are you here."

Lando: "Uhm babe, I think....." a woman walked in from the kitchen with an apron on. She looked way too fancy to be a maid. Just then my dad, Sihle, Kazi and Banele walked in.

Dad: "Maggie, what are you doing here?" He asked looking at her.

The rest of us just stood around confused.

Maggie: "Hello Busani."

Dad: "I asked you a question. What are you doing here?" He asked clearly irritated.

Maggie: "Well I cooked lunch. I figured maybe it was time for Junior to come home, and meet his siblings." And then it made sense. She's our former nanny, my dad's mistress. We all turned to look at the boy and for the first time I saw the resemblance. He really was our half brother.

Junior: "Hello family, it's nice to finally meet y'all." He said putting up the peace sign. Dear Lord we have another skrr skrr in our midst.

INSERT 87

This family deserves a reality show honestly. There is always some sort of drama happening, if it's not people being killed its hidden sons showing up announced.

Kazi: "Daddy, who is she?"

Maggie: "Kazi you dont remember me, but then again last time I saw you you were a small girl."

Sihle: "I don't think that was the question. Who are you and what are you doing here?"

Me: "I think maybe we need to sit down." I said and walked to the couch, I greeted Junior and put Lakhiwe down since Theo was

already running around. The others followed and we all sat down. Maggie sat next to Junior, the three sat together in one couch and Philani sat next to me. Bab'Biyela was sitting on the single couch looking at Maggie like she had horns on her head.

Banele: "Okay whose going to tell us what's going on?"

Bab'Biyela: "This is Maggie, and that is Junior, your brother."

Sihle and Banele look at each other, Kazi looks at her dad with disappointment written all over her face and Philani yena is just pissed nje.

Sihle: "So you cheated on mum and got another woman pregnant?"

Bab'Biyela: "I wouldn't put it like that." He says looking rather uncomfortable. I'm sure he is not used to being put in the spot like that.

Kazi: "Then how would you put it? If you didnt cheat then how did lo Junior wakho come into the world? You planted him on the ground and he grew?"

Baba: "Theres no need for the sarcasm Qhawekazi."

Philani: "Since you wont tell them the truth then I will. Dad had an affair with Maggie when she was

still our nanny."

Sihle: "I knew her face was familiar."

Philani: "I caught them in mums bed when i was little and then when i told mum about it dad denied everything and then sent me to boarding school. When mum finally found out the truth Maggie was fired, but I guess dad couldn't get enough of her so he bought her a house in Cape Town and that's where they have been staying."

Banele: "I have a question though, Junior when last did you see your father?"

Junior: "Uhmhhh about a week ago." He says scratching his head. I'm sure this is just as hard on him as it is on every body else.

Sihle: "So basically you have two families, one in Cape Town and another this side?" He says looking back at his father who looks away.

Maggie: "Look I know this is a shock to all of you and it will take time to get used to it. I made lunch so maybe we can sit around the table and talk about this a little more." The siblings all turn to look at her and I swear if eyes could pop out daggers that

woman would have been dead by now.

Philani: "So let me get this straight, you got into my mother's kitchen, uninvited and you made yourself at home?"

Maggie: "I thought you might love a home cooked meal after the funeral. I didnt think it would be a problem."

Sihle: "Madam, I am not sure which world you come from but in this world that is our mother's kitchen, you are just a side chick who got lucky but you have no right to come into our mother's house and do as you please. Are

we clear?" She looks at Bab'Biyela, I guess looking for some type of protection but she gets none.

Junior: "Look I'm sure mummy didnt mean to step in anybody's toes. Right ma?" He says looking at his mother.

Banele: "Listen Blowjob stay out of adults business, go play with the kids."

Baba: "Banele!"

Banele: "What? You're the ones who named your kid Busani Junior, in short BJ and in my world BJ stands for blowjob."

Baba: "Ngyakukhuza njalo Banele

(I'm warning you.)"

Banele: "Mxm whatever, I'm going to the Phoenix." He gets up and grabs his car keys.

Sihle: "Wait for me." He follows his brother out.

Kazi: "I'll go make lunch."

Me: "I'll help." I follow Kazi to the kitchen.

We open the pots and it smells divine in here. Maggie can cook.

Kazi takes the food and throws it all in the trash. I decide to keep my mouth shut and just let things be.

We cook lunch while talking and I couldn't help but notice the silence

from the lounge. I guess neither bull wanted to stand down.

Kazi: "You know I missed this."

Me: "What? The drama?" She chuckles.

Kazi: "No this, us cooking and laughing together. Lando I'm sorry, about everything."

Me: "It's fine Kazi, it's in the past now."

Kazi: "I'm serious, I honestly don't know what came over me."

Me: "It's fine really. Let's just forget it ever happened." She smiles and goes back to chopping the cabbage.

We set the table and sat down to eat. I saw the hurt in Maggie's eyes when she realized her food would not be set, and I'm sure she thought it was still in the kitchen, little did she know it was in the trash. I felt bad for Junior though, I'm sure having his siblings not even trying to acknowledge him and welcome him was hard.

After lunch Philani and I drove home. We got there and put the kids down for their nap. I went downstairs and saw Philani pour a glass of scotch and down it all in one go. I walk over to him and

wrap my arms around his waist with my head in between his shoulder blades.

Philani: "Am I wrong?" He says after a long time of silence. "Am I wrong for hating him?"

Me: "Who?"

Philani: "Junior. Am I wrong for hating him?" I take a deep breath and walk around to stand in front of him.

Me: "In a way, yes. I know you are angry and seeing him just reminded you of your mother but he is just as much a 'victim' in all this as any of you are, he didn't ask to be born as a result of an

affair." He takes a deep breath, pours another glass of scotch and takes a sip.

Philani: "I don't know if I'll ever be able to look at him and not think about my mum, if he hadn't showed up that day mum would probably still be alive."

Me: "Take each day as it comes, get to know him first, he might just surprise you."

Philani: "And his mother? The woman made herself comfortable in another woman's house, my mother's house and I am supposed to be okay with that?"
He literally pours the glass of

scotch down his throat. "I have to go, I have to meet the guys at the lounge." He kisses me on the forehead and leaves.

I decide to get started on dinner, I decide on something simple, rice and tinned fish with a green salad on the side. The kids wake up and I give them a bath before feeding them and letting them play a bit. The doorbell rings. I go and open and I find a very beautiful woman, I don't know who she is. And I don't know how she made it past security.

Me: "Hi, what can I do for you."

Lady: "I'm sorry I'm sure this is

a shock, my mum is not feeling well so she asked me to come fill up for her until she recovers."

Me: "I'm sorry, your mum?"

Lady: "Yes, MaMnguni, she was robbed a few days ago, lost her phone and money so she's shaken a bit and her blood pressure went up so the doctor suggested she takes things slow, that's why I am here." I guess that explains why I haven't heard from her since I sent her that message. I let her in and she starts looking around admiring the house.

Me: "Okay and wena you are?"

Lady: "Oh yes, my name is

Zamanguni Mnguni. I know, weird, but you can call me Zama." I force a smile. How do you fire someone whose just been robbed and maybe needs this job even more now? As crazy as this may be I am not comfortable having this woman in my house.



PHILANI

I know I am probably being unreasonable for hating Junior but seeing him just reminded me of my mother's death. If he had stayed hidden like my dad wanted him to be I would still have a mother. But I don't, my mother

will never get to know her grandkids, she'll never get to spoil them like the doting grandmother she would have been. But you cant really hide an entire human being can you? I just wish things would have played out differently. I left Lando at home and told her I am meeting the boys, truth is I dont even know where any of them are, I just needed some time to be by myself and drown in my own stupid hate cause listening to Lando would have just made me feel bad, but i want to feel angry, even for just a few more hours.

I drove around Joburg until I ended up in some strip club downtown. I couldn't even pay attention to the women gyrating themselves on the poles, so all I did was drink my whiskey and just try to forget this day. Yesterday I buried my aunt, she might not have been my favourite but she was still family and the thought of my father being responsible for her death still plagues me. But somehow all that has taken a backseat since Junior and his evil mother showed up.

I drank until midnight, by that time I was drunk and since I

knew I couldn't drive, not that I am a bad driver but Lando would kill me before the car even does so I opted for an uber. I was standing outside the club leaning on the wall when some girl in a crop top designed as a dress came up to me trying to get my attention, any other day she would have made a great bed warmer, but I have a wife waiting for me at home so I ignored her.

My uber came and I got in and he drove me home, although I was trying to not fall asleep, I kept closing my eyes and opening them

again. In the end I made it home just before one o'clock in the morning. I paid the guy and walked all the way from the gate to the house. I guess I needed the walk and fresh air. I got to the door and put my key in, and tiptoed all the way upstairs.

I first got to the nursery to see the kids sleeping like little Angel's, but I knew better, and I wouldn't trade these little terrorists for anything in the world. I didnt kiss them cause I didnt want to leave them with the smell of alcohol and cigarettes.

I went to our bedroom and Lando was sleeping peacefully. I decided to take a shower to get the smell of everything off of me. When I was done I went back to the bedroom and got into bed. I put my arm over Lando and she held on to it, I thought she'd be mad at me, I guess today is my lucky day.

I woke up with the worst kind of headache to ever exist. It felt like I had nails being screwed into me from the inside. I got up and walked to the bathroom to relieve myself, I should be going to work

but the way I am feeling now, I don't think that's going to happen. I get under the shower and turn the cold water on hoping that the cold water would help ease the pain but I was wrong, it just seems to get worse.

I switch off the water and and go back to the bedroom, I find Lando sitting on the bed in her formal wear, I guess she is going to work then. She smiles when she sees me in pain, what kind of a wife does that? I get into bed and my sweet angelic wife places a tray on my lap with the most

greasy breakfast, she even has mango artchaar on the side.

Me: "Thank you baby. But I think I need pain medication instead."

She picks up a packet of pills and holds them up.

Lando: "Not until you finish your food." I take a deep breath and dig into my food. "So we have a new nanny."

Me: "Good, as long as it's not Mamnguni then I'm good."

Lando: "She might as well be."

Me: "Why? What happened?"

Lando: "Our new nanny is Mamnguni's daughter, apparently Mamnguni didnt get the message

I sent her cause she was robbed a few days ago. And now Zama is here to fill in for her while she gets better." She says as if she herself is trying to convince herself of something.

Me: "So what are we going to do now?"

Lando: "I dont know. But I need to get to work since you are too drunk or hungover to do anything."

Me: "Thanks babe, I'll meet you for lunch though."

Lando: "Cool." She kisses me on the forehead before she leaves

with the tray. I take the pills and they knock me out flat.

I am woken up by the sound of a vacuum machine, it's so loud it feels like it's right next to me. I open my eyes and look around and lo and behold someone is busy cleaning our room and it is not my wife.

Me: "Hey." I scream and she cant seem to hear me, I scream some more and finally it seems like she hears me cause she turns around and looks at me before switching off the vacuum cleaner.

Zama: "Hi, I'm sorry I didn't mean to wake you, the kids are

sleeping so I thought I'd clean up in here." She says smiling.

Me: "Thanks but there's no need for that, my wife doesn't like anyone in her room, she prefers cleaning it herself. So you can go and do something else."

Zama: "Okay, I'll just get the laundry."

Me: "Leave that too, Lando prefers doing it herself." I get up and leave her there and go to the bathroom. I relieve myself and wash my face. I get back to the bedroom and this girl is busy making the bed. "I'm sorry did I not tell you not to do anything in

this room." She turns around to look at me.

Zama: "I am just trying to help."

Me: "Like I said, this room is off limits to you. I am certain your mother told you that so please stay out of our room." I open the door for her and she drags the vacuum cleaner out. She stops at the door and turns to look at me.

Zama: "I'm sorry, I didnt mean to offend you." She says before walking out.

I close the door and get ready for my lunch date with my wife. Once I am done I grab my phone head out. I head downstairs and find

the girl watching TV. I really need to call an agency to get a proper nanny cause this ain't it. I grab my keys and drive to McDonald's, I need as much junk as I can take today.

I get there and place our order. Lando joins me soon as our food arrives. We eat while chatting about anything and everything. Once we are done we get up to leave. Lando pulls me back just as we are about to walk out the door. I look at her and she points me to something or someone. I look at the person and its Junior.

I try to keep walking but Lando won't let me.

Me: "We need to leave, you said you have a meeting in twenty minutes."

Lando: "I have a meeting not you, I'm sure you can spend five minutes talking to him. He is your brother after all."

Me: "No actually I don't have five minutes to spare, I'm meeting the guys in a few minutes."

Lando: "You mean the same way you had to meet them yesterday and then ended up in a club?" I look away from her. "Now you will either go talk to him or don't

bother coming home tonight." I chuckle.

Me: "You can't be serious."

Lando: "Try me and see how funny this joke is tonight." She says before walking out.

I swear this woman doesn't know who I am. Some people tremble at just the mention of my name and she wants to order me around like a little boy. Mxm. She doesn't know me. I walk out soon as I see her car drive off. I get to my car and I see a message from Lando, and all it says is 'I am dead serious.' Women seriously need to know that they are not

the boss of everyone. As much as the macho me believes this, someone please explain to me why I am walking back into this restaurant. Women!

I get in and take a deep breath before walking over to Junior. He has headphones on so I tap him on the shoulder. He looks up and takes them off.

Junior: "Hi!"

Me: "Your food is getting cold." He looks at his food then looks up at me.

Junior: "I wasn't really hungry anyway, I just needed to get out of the house and since I have no

friends I came here." I sit down opposite him.

Me: "Maybe you might make friends here, who knows?"

Junior: "Nah man, I'm cool. We heading back to Cape Town anyway."

Me: "Why? What happened to 'getting to know your siblings.' That's what your mother said right?" He chuckles.

Junior: "You dont have to pretend man, I know y'all dont like me."

Me: "I never said that."

Junior: "No but your actions did. Look I wasnt expecting a red carpet welcome, and honestly I

understand why you dont like me."

Me: "Really, please tell me more."

I say crossing my arms across my chest.

Junior: "You hate me because I am the reason your mother is dead."

Me: "What are you talking about?"

He chuckles and his smile reminds me of my dad's.

Junior: "You can stop pretending bro, I am seventeen not stupid. I showed up to your father's house three years ago and later that night your mum had a stroke and died a few weeks later." He says looking at me, and for some

strange reason he looks like he is in pain.

Me: "I uh I have a meeting to get to, I'll see you around."

I get up and head to the door. I look back and he has his headphones back on and his phone in his face. Maybe Lando was right, maybe I am being too hard on the kid, maybe, just maybe I can try and put my feelings aside and get to know him, the operative word being try.

INSERT 88

"I hate men. All of them. I HATE MEN." Buli shouted as she barged into my office. She was about to bang my poor door but luckily for me Faith was right behind her so she handled the door. It's the last day of work for the year and my girls and I are meeting so we can head to the end of year party together. Buli puts down the Krispy Kreme box of doughnuts on the coffee table and opens it while Faith and I watch her in silence. She smells the doughnuts before taking one, looking at it like a love sick puppy before shoving all of it into the

box. Faith and I try to hide our laughter but its impossible. Buli sits back on the couch and sheds a tear.

"I hate men." She whispers with tears running down her face. We sit down next to her and I hug her, she continues to cry on my shoulder.

Me: "Friend what's wrong?" I ask Faith who still has a smile on her face.

Faith: "Let her tell you." I can see Faith trying to conceal her laughter but failing dismally.

Me: "Buli what's going on?" I ask Buli. She pulls her head up and

looks at me.

Buli: "I hate men, all of them, especially Nate Samuels. I hate him." She says. As much as she is trying to say that with some venom or anger in her voice she is failing.

Me: "What did he do? Did he cheat? When are we cutting his balls off?" I asked.

Buli: "His stupid sperm beat the crap out of my IUD and went straight to my egg and fertilized it." She says putting her head on my shoulder again and sobbing. I have never heard anyone announcing a pregnancy like that

before.

Me: "Babe are you pregnant."

Buli: "Yes!" She said and sobbed harder. I looked over at Faith and she was laughing her lungs out.

Me: "But Buli that's good news." She shot her head up like a rocket.

Buli: "Good for who? Me? I don't think I'm ready to be a mum." She says getting up and begins pacing up and down. "I mean for Nate maybe, but I'll get fat, have more stretch Mark's and what if the baby doesn't even like me?"

Me: "How far along are you?"

Buli: "Ten weeks." She says shoving another doughnut into her mouth.

Faith: "As funny as this is, friend there are very few people in the world who are ever ready to be parents, but once the baby is here all that disappears."

Me: "And you have had great practice with Ayabonga, Avumile, Lakhiwe and Theo, even Ndobile's kids. I think you can do this."

Buli: "Being an aunt and a mum, two different things. It's easy to be an aunt cause I get to spoil your kids and then give them back

and I go back to my normal childless life. Technically speaking I was supposed to be the rich aunt." She says slumping on the single couch.

Faith: "Look I think you need some time to get used to the idea, tell Nate and see what he thinks and then make a decision. Right now you are a bit emotional cause you just found out."

Buli: "Maybe." She sighs.

The door opens and Philani walks in. He looks at the scene before him and just shakes his head.

Philani: "I am going home to change. I will see you at the

venue." He says and turns around and leaves without even waiting for a reply.

Faith: "Anywho we need to get going."

Buli: "I'm not going, I cant go looking like this."

Faith: "You are a mess."

Me: "Faith shut up." She chuckles.

"Look you are fine. You just need to touch up the make up." She gets up and heads to the bathroom. She comes back after a few minutes with her puffy eyes hidden and looking better than when she walked in here.

I pack up my things and we head out. We get to the venue and find the guys already there standing by the bar. I see Philani and he is still wearing the same clothes he was wearing about an hour ago. Except his tie and suit jacket were off and he had unbuttoned his shirt.

We walked over to them and ordered drinks. Of course Buli ordered a dirty Martini but we had to stop her dead in her tracks. We were asked to sit down and the program started. Retiring employees were acknowledged and thanked for

their contribution, long standing employees were awarded for their contribution and by the end of the night we had some employees dancing on tables.

We left just after midnight when the party was getting heated.

We got home and soon as we walked in to the bedroom I couldn't help but notice things had been moved around. The bedding was changed, I went to the closet and our laundry had been done and neatly packed in the closet. I might be overreacting but I need to have a word with Zama, I don't want anyone in my

room and I dont want her touching my things either.



PHILANI

I woke up and Lando wasnt next to me. However there was a note stating she had gone to meet up with her friends. Oh well! I look at the time and it's almost midday, I guess that explains me sleeping in. I got up and took a shower. I put on black track pants and a white tshirt, I put on white sneakers and got ready to leave.

I went to the nursery and the kids weren't there, I guess Lando took them with her. I went downstairs and made myself a shake since I didn't have breakfast. I had just finished downing my shake and putting the glass in the sink when I turned around and found Zama leaning on the wall, gown open and some sexy lingerie on.

Me: "What are you doing?" She smiled and gyrated over to me.

Zama: "You like what you see?"

She asked turning around slowly.

Me: "Not really. What are you doing? Why aren't you dressed?"

Zama: "Well I have an itch that needs scratching. I thought maybe you can help."

Me: "Well here's how i can help you, you are going to go to your room, pack up your things and get the fuck out of my house. When I come back and find you here all hell will break loose. And tell your mother to also never set foot in my house again." I said and left her there.

I drove to the lounge and took a bottle of Hennessy from the bar and headed upstairs to the office. I greeted the guys and sat down, poured myself a glass.

Lindani: "Dude it's the festive season, lighten up."

Me: "My kids nanny just tried to seduce me." I hear gasps all around me.

Nate: "The fuck! When did this happen?"

Me: "Just before I left the house. And last night when we got home she had cleaned our bedroom and did our laundry when I specifically told her not to do it cause Lando doesn't like people in her space. Did she listen, no! And this morning she tries to sleep with me."

Sbu: "Amathanga ahlanzela

abanganamabhodo (luck falls on the wrong people.)" He says looking at his glass, we all turn to look at him. "What?"

Me: "Instead of daydreaming please just look into this girl. Find all you can on her."

Sbu: "On it."

Sizwe: "So what did you do besides run away." They laugh. Idiots.

Me: "I told her to leave and never set foot in my house again, together with her creepy mother."

Nate: "You know what I think?"

Me: "What?"

Nate: "Her mother watching you

all stalkerish and stuff, I think she saw you as her future son in law, that's why she ignored the text Lando sent her then sent her daughter to take her place so she can seduce you and who knows, divorce Lando and marry her."

Lindani: "Or even better, marry her as a second wife."

Sizwe: "Or get her pregnant and she'll milk you for the next eighteen years."

Me: "Wow, you guys have runaway imaginations."

We sat and drank for the better part of the day. In the evening I drove back home and to my

surprise I found a bunch of police cars outside. I drove in and walked into the house. My house looked like a mess, and it didn't look like the mess the police had made. My first instinct was Lando and the kids so I rushed upstairs and they were not there. I started panicking thinking something had happened to them. I took out my phone and called Lando. She picked up.

Me: "Babe where are you?"

Lando: "Hey, I am at Faith's with the kids. I'm sorry I'll be home soon."

Me: "No no don't worry, stay there,

heck stay the night if you want."

Lando: "Are you sure?"

Me: "Yes baby I'm sure, and I am pretty sure you are drunk right now so it's not safe for you to drive." She giggled.

Lando: "Okay, I love you."

Me: "I love you too babe. Have fun." I hung up. I texted Lindani and told him what was happening before going back downstairs. I asked one of the police officers to show me who was in charge and he pointed me to someone who was outside by the pool. I walked out and found a female detective taking notes by the pool, there

was blood on the ground. I wonder whose is it.

Me: "Officer, may I ask what's going on? Why are you in my house?" She turned to look at me with disgust in her eyes.

Detective: "It's Detective Maswanganyi Mr Biyela." Oh she knows me but I don't know her.

Interesting. And her last name, I wonder if she is related to Officer Maswanganyi.

Me: "Right. So to what do I owe the pleasure of this visit, and why is there blood on my paving?" She closed her little notebook and put it in her pocket before

turning to look at me.

Detective: "That's a question I should be asking you Mr Biyela, a case was opened against you."

Me: "For what?"

Detective: "For the rape and attempted murder of a Miss Zamanguni Mnguni." She says taking out her handcuffs. "Are you going to turn around and let me cuff you or should I get my colleagues to help me?" I've known something wasn't right with that girl but this, this was just messed up. I turned around and let her cuff me. And just as she was putting the cuffs on

Lindani came rushing to us.

Lindani: "Detective, why do you have my client in handcuffs?"

Detective: "A case of rape and murder has been opened against Mr Biyela, so we are just collecting evidence."

Lindani: "I'm sorry who opened the case?"

Detective: "A Miss Zamanguni Mnguni, who at this very moment is lying in a hospital bed because your client tried to drown her in the pool after raping her." I chuckled and looked at Lindani.

Lindani: "I assume this supposed crime happened today?"

Detective: "Yes it did, let me guess you want to give your client an alibi? Even if you did, Miss Mnguni had a rape kit done, so any evidence, semen, bodily fluids and hair has been taken for testing, so I would think twice before lying to the police if i were you."

Lindani: "I would like to talk to my client please. And please take the handcuffs off, I need to speak with my client, and since he has not been formally charged he is innocent till proven otherwise."

Detective Maswanganyi clicked

her tongue before taking the cuffs off of me and walking away.

Lindani: "Dude what the fuck is going on?"

Me: "If I knew the answer to that question i would tell you."

Lindani: "The cameras still work right?" I nod my head. "Good, i need to see the footage from earlier." I turn and go to the house with Lindani behind me, I head to the office and retrieve my iPad from the desk drawer. I power it on and it lights up, eventually after what seemed like forever I open the security app, i go to today's footage and show it

to Lindani. It shows Zama trying to seduce me, and me leaving her standing in the kitchen. It then shows her breaking stuff, cutting herself and then shoving something into her vagina before making a call then throwing herself into the pool. A few minutes later the cops show up and she is taken away in an ambulance.

Me: "That is enough proof that I didn't touch that girl."

Lindani: "I know." He downloads the footage into the laptop before transferring it to a USB drive. "I think we need to hold on

to this a bit until Sbu has enough info on that girl and what she could be playing at."

Me: "I'm not sleeping in jail for this bra."

Lindani: "You will have to, only for tonight though, I already have a judge on standby to grant you bail in the morning."

The door opens and Maswanganyi walks in followed by two other officers.

Detective: "Okay I have given you two enough time, Mr Biyela it's time to go." She cuffs me again and pushes me out.

I pray Sbu finds something before this gets out of hand. And for the first time in forever I am glad I had cameras installed in the house, even though most people can't see them, it helps me sleep better at night knowing they are there, and now they are about to save me from death.



NARRATED

In a hospital in downtown Johannesburg, Zama is lying in her hospital bed when Detective Maswanganyi walks in together with journalist Zinhle Madolo.

Zama: "It's a bit late for visitors don't you think?" She asks sitting up on the bed.

Detective: "We need to strategize, Biyela will be spending the night in a cold cell, hopefully tomorrow he won't get bail and he might stay in jail for a long time."

Zinhle: "Knowing him, he'll probably be having lunch at his house tomorrow afternoon."

Detective: "Not with all the evidence against him."

Zama: "You do know that he didn't really rape me so his DNA will not be on the rape kit."

Detective: "It will be, I made

sure of it. When the results come back all will point to him."

Zinhle: "Zama how sure are you that he doesn't have cameras in the house."

Zama: "I searched every corner of that house and there are no cameras. In this day and age where a woman saying she was raped is easily believed, and me being the innocent nanny who was taken advantage of, this case will be a slam dunk." She says smiling.

Detective: "Hopefully by the time this is done we will have enough evidence to prove he killed my father."

Zama: "And Zakes too, dont forget Zakes."

Zinhle: "All I want is my reputation and my job back."

Detective: "That's why we need to stand strong and not allow that man to get away with any of this. We need to let justice takes its course."

Zama: "Once all this is done we need to take a trip to Zanzibar to celebrate."

Zinhle: "Definitely."

Detective: "We need to get going before someone sees us here."

They hug Zama and walk out, oblivious to a figure lurking in the

corner. Soon as Zinhle and Maswanganyi walk out of the hospital the person takes out a phone and dials a number.

Razor: "Hello!"

Person: "You wont believe who just came to see our patient."

Razor: "Who?"

Person: "Detective Maswanganyi and Zinhle Madolo the journalist."

Razor: "Perfect. I'll have your money delivered to you tomorrow at your house."

Person: "Pleasuring doing business with you sir." They hang up.

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I swear this feels like De ja Vu, just a few weeks ago I was in court fighting a newspaper for printing lies about me and now I am in court fighting rape allegations. One thing I am grateful for is that my wife and kids were not home when all this mess happened. I hate to think about the emotions it would have brought back for Lando hearing that I supposedly 'raped' someone. Even though it would have been a lie it still would have hurt her.

I sat in court as Lindani argued why I deserved bail, although this was just a formality it was still nerve wracking. Luckily for me the public and media were not allowed to be in the courtroom. Sure enough as Lindani said, I was given bail, five hundred thousand to be precise, but I get to sleep in my own bed tonight and have lunch with my wife. Hopefully I get home and clean up before she gets there. Soon as bail was paid we left through the backdoor. Me: "I need a long shower to wash the smell of jail off of me."

Lindani: "That will have to wait, we are meeting the guys at the lounge so we can find a way forward, plus Sbu and Razor have some info we might need."

Me: "Dude I need to clean the house before Lando gets there. You saw the mess it was yesterday."

Lindani: "Relax, I got a cleaning company to clean up early this morning. They finished about thirty minutes ago, so soon as she gets there all will be well, even the broken vases have been replaced." I chuckle.

Me: "You do know some of those

vases were one of a kind." He laughs.

Lindani: "Well that one you are going to have to explain yourself."

I smile.

Me: "Thank you brother."

Lindani: "Anytime my man, anytime."

Its moments like these that I am truly grateful for my friends, over twenty years of friendship that has somehow turned into a brotherhood.

We drove to the lounge and headed straight upstairs to the office, we get in and the guys are

already here, and luckily for me they bought breakfast.

Nate: "You smell like jail."

Me: "Shut up." They laugh. I take a plate and dish up then sit down to eat.

Sizwe: "Man, they dont feed you in the slammer." They laugh. I am about to be the butt of jokes.

Me: "Fuck off."

Lindani: "Enough, stop teasing lebhantinti." Mxm. I will never hear the end of this.

Sbu: "Okay so I looked into the Zama girl, turns out she is Mamnguni's daughter, she was staying in Soweto, she has a six

year old daughter whose father disappeared almost a year ago, he was found dead a few months later, his bones were discovered by game rangers at Kruger National Park, police suspected he was a poacher who ran into a pride of lions and was eaten so they ruled it as an accident."

Me: "Do we know this baby daddy?"

Sbu: "Zakes." Huh, I guess that explains why the girl was after me. But how did she even know I had anything to do with his death.

Me: "How did she know I had

anything to do with his death?"

Sbu: "Well one of his guys got away, told her what happened before disappearing from the face of the earth. So when his bones were found and DNA tests confirmed it was him she tried to find a way to make you pay, she started by calling the investigating officer and told her what Zakes guy told her but the officer didnt believe her, the death was ruled as an accident and when that happened she figured....."

Me: "She'd take the the law into her own hands."

Sbu: "Yep."

Nate: "What role does her mother play in all of this?"

Sbu: "Her mother wanted her to seduce Philani then blackmail him into marrying her so she can live the high life, Zama on the other hand saw that as an opportunity to make you pay for Zakes death."

Me: "Stupid girl."

Razor: "It gets worse." Really!

What would be worse than this?

"A contact of mine from the hospital where Zama is saw

Detective Maswanganyi and

Zinhle Madolo leaving her room

last night, long after visiting hours had passed."

Sizwe: "Okay, so what's the connection between the three of them?"

Razor: "Detective Maswanganyi is Officer Maswanganyi's daughter, my contact at the police station said she has been investigating her father's death on the side, despite the fact that her superiors told her to let it go. His last known case before he was suspended from the force....."

Me: "Was the drugs he was looking for in my office."

Razor: "Exactly! And Zinhle yena

well you know about the articles and stuff, she lost her job when the Newspaper settled the defamation case out of court, and her reputation that she was trying so hard to rebuild went up in flames, again."

It's crazy how for most people the mention of my name alone leaves them shaking in their boots, but not these women, somehow when one fails another comes up and takes over, but now they have banded together to try and destroy me, if my life wasn't on the line I would be impressed. I guess it's true what they say

'hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.'



LANDO

Have you ever had so much fun with your friends that you lost track of time? Well I have, and I did last night, so much so that I ended up drunk and passed out in Faith's guestroom. Thank God for Mbuso and the nanny, Lord knows our drunk asses would not have been able to take proper care of the kids.

I woke up next to Buli who was luckily not drinking, but Taki was

sleeping on the floor drunk too. I got up and went to the bathroom and washed my face. I brushed my teeth and took a shower. I took a gown and wore it, I went downstairs and found Mbuso in the kitchen and a greasy breakfast on the table. The kids sat on high chairs having their own breakfast, where did he even get the extra chairs I wonder. I kissed all the kids and sat down.

Me: "Goodmorning."

Mbuso: "Morning, breakfast is served." He says putting the eggs on the table. I sit down on the chair and dish up for myself. "You

guys had fun last night." He says chuckling.

Me: "Please dont remind me, my head hurts."

Mbuso: "Eat your food and I'll give you painkillers for the hangover." I smile.

Me: "Thank you, and thank you for taking care of the kids last night."

Mbuso: "Only a pleasure. These terrorists keep me sane and sharp." He says laughing.

Faith walks down the stairs, well more like wobbles, but still she makes it down the stairs and joins us at the table.

Faith: "I need painkillers." She says softly banging her head on the table.

Mbuso: "Eat first. Then painkillers."

Faith: "I don't need food I need painkillers to end the torture in my head."

Mbuso: "And the sooner you eat the sooner the torture will end. Eat your food." She dishes up and takes one spoon.

Faith: "Done. Can I have the painkillers now?" He shakes his head and hands her the bottle of pills.

Mbuso: "You still need to finish

your food." He says getting up, he kisses her on the forehead then heads upstairs.

Buli and Taki join us after what seemed like forever. We had breakfast together and then I took my kids and went home. The house was empty but for some strange reason it smelled clean, like professionals were in here. Oh well lucky me.

I put my phone on the charger and called out for Zama but there was no reply. I tried calling her but her phone went straight to voicemail. Where the hell is she? I need to start Christmas shopping

and any sane person knows that shopping with two kids especially around December is just an extreme sport.

I switched on the TV and put on some cartoons, and let the kids watch, not that Lakiwe knew what was happening but she had her eyes glued on the screen. I tried calling Philani but his phone also sent me straight to voicemail. I decided to surf the net since it was clear shopping would have to be postponed for one more day.

I opened Instagram and browsed through a whole lot of booty pics

and thirsty girls before I decided to head to Facebook, unfortunately for me I couldn't remember my password so I decided to move to Twitter instead. The first tweet I saw was a [#justiceforZama](#). Being the nosey person I am I went through the hashtag and almost lost my mind at what I saw. The hashtag was trending at number one and all the tweets said was that she was raped and by none other than my husband.

I felt dizzy, fuzzy even, my body temperature went up a few notches and it felt like my heart

was on overdrive. I didn't know what to believe. The rape victim in me wanted to believe she was telling the truth, but the wife and mother who shared a bed with this man every night, I know him, I know what he is capable of and I know how far he can go to protect the ones he loves, but rape, he is not a rapist. He is no rapist. Right? Oh am I just a desperate wife wanting to believe her husband. Gugu is coming home today, she spent the first half of the school holidays with her friends' family and today she comes home, how do I tell her

that the man who vowed to protect us is now being accused of rape. How do I even begin to explain this to his family, my family?

I was sitting there with questions running through my head with no answers when the door opened and Philani walked in. I stood up from the couch to look at him. I don't know if it was my face that gave it away but I could see by his walk towards me that he knew that I knew.

Philani: "I didn't do it, I promise you, I did not do it." For some strange reason I believed him. I

dont know why but I believed him.

Me: "I know." He walked over to me and engulfed me in a hug.

Philani: "Tell me you believe me. I need you to believe me Lando."

Me: "I believe you." I said with my head buried in his chest. "I believe you."

We stayed like that for a while before he let me go and we sat on the couch. He told me everything that happened, he even showed me the footage of Zama destroying my house. If I ever get my hands on that woman I

will rip her head from her body
with my own bear hands. I swear.



NARRATED

At the hospital in downtown Joburg, Razor's contact is watching as Detective Maswanganyi and Zinhle walk into the hospital and go straight to Zama's room. She texts Razor and tells him that the two have arrived. A few minutes later, Philani, Sizwe, Nate, Lindani, Sbu and Razor walk into the hospital and head straight to Zama's room. They find the girls conversing.

Lindani: "Good you are all here, makes the work easier for us cause we dont have to repeat this three times." The girls get startled and Zama acts like she is afraid and hides behind Detective Maswanganyi.

Detective: "I'm pretty sure you being here is against the law." She says trying to shield Zama. Nate nods to Sbu and he takes out a sensor and runs it over the girls looking for any recording device they might have. When he is done he nods for the guys to continue.

Lindani: "And I'm pretty sure crying rape is a crime, oh wait, not in this country, so many people are behind bars because of people like you Miss Mnguni who lie about innocent men raping them."

Detective: "It is not up to you to decide whether the victim is guilty or not, the court has to decide on your friend who raped Miss Mnguni and make sure he goes to jail and never sees freedom ever again."

Nate: "That's where your mistake is Detective. As we stand here this little case of yours can be blown up with just one piece of

evidence, and it's not just the case that will be blown up but your career too, if I were you, I would think very carefully about the way forward about this. Don't embarrass yourself."

Detective: "If you think you can intimidate me or the victim Dr Samuels then you clearly don't know me. Your friend is going to jail come hell or high waters."

Nate chuckles.

Sizwe: "Miss Madolo what are you doing here?"

Zinhle: "Doing my job."

Philani: "Last time I checked you didn't have a job."

Zinhle: "I'm a freelancer."

Philani: "Right. Last time you wrote BS about me you ended up losing your job and your reputation went down the drain together with your career. You didn't learn your lesson then because I treated you with kid gloves. But now all bets are off. You will curse the day the words Philani Biyela left your lips. That much I can assure you."

Zinhle: "I'm not afraid of you Mr Biyela."

Philani: "Oh honey you should be, you really should be afraid. I let you drag my name through the

mud before and that somehow made you believe I was weak and you could do whatever you wanted, that ends today, right now. From now onwards you will really know the real Philani Biyela, not the fabrication of your imagination. And as for you Zamanguni, your biggest mistake was coming into my house, eating my food, sleeping in my blankets and playing with my children, see theres one thing I hold above everything else, my wife and children and you came into their space with your negative energy, and trust me, you haven't seen me angry, you

are about to experience my full wrath and I can assure you right now it won't be pretty."

Detective: "You really are brave Mr Biyela, threatening people right in front of me, an officer of the law." Philani turns to look at her.

Philani: "You Detective Maswanganyi should have stuck to the cases you were assigned to, instead you came after me for what? For daddy dearest? I don't know what you think I did to your father but I can promise you, by the time I am done with you, you will wish he was here to save you,

you will beg me to end your life so you can be with him, you will be at my mercy and I will show you none. You should have never come after me, ever." He turns and leaves.

Sizwe: "You know the saying never poke a snake in its hole cause when it comes out it wont be pretty? You just let the snake loose and it's about to bite everything in its path."

Lindani: "And theres no anti-venom for that snakes venom. Once it bites you, chances of survival are zero to nil."

Nate: "You have 24 hours to end

this. Twenty four! Tick-tock ladies, tick- tock." He says hitting his watch and leaving and the guys follow him except Razor who stays behind.

Zama: "Are you about to threaten us as well?"

Razor: "No, I'm just trying to imagine the caskets that will suit you. Or you might just end up in unmarked graves in the middle of nowhere. Either way, get your affairs in order ladies, you are about to meet your maker." He walks out leaving them stunned.

Zama: "What are we going to do?" She asks as a nurse walks in to

check on Zama.

Detective: "Nothing, they are just bluffing, trying to scare us, we can't back down now, clearly we are close to finding something that's why they are spooked."

Nurse: "I hate to break it to you ladies, Philani Biyela doesn't bluff. If I were you I'd tread very carefully. And for your sake miss Mnguni, I hope this rape case is watertight. Because if it's not that man will wipe the floor with you. Don't say I didn't warn you." She walks out leaving the girls with their mouths wide open, unsure of where to go from here,

but one thing was certain, theres no going back, ever again.

INSERT 90

A great support system for anyone can make them feel like they can conquer the world. It will make you feel like the stars are right at your fingertips, like all you have to do is reach out your hand and scoop them up. And that is how I feel right now, untouchable.

My friends and family are coming over to my house cause today we

are meeting with the Minister of Police and The National Police Commissioner with all the evidence we have against Detective Maswanganyi, we also found out that the rape kit test results came back positive with my DNA, which is funny because I don't remember giving the police my DNA to compare with.

Anyway we will get the answers we need soon as we get to the police station. Since this case has generated a whole lot of publicity, and me being me, there are a whole lot of people working to make an example of me. Any other

given day I would be supporting the victim and hoping that justice takes its course, but I am not about to go down for a crime I did not commit. Not now, not ever. Faith walked in with the twins and her nanny while we were feeding the kids. We seriously need to get our own nanny, on second thought maybe day care will work better from now on. Clearly all the women we bring into the house end up being psychopaths.

Lando: "Hey, you are early."

Faith: "I know. These two woke up early so we figured we might as well. Are you ready?"

Lando: "I just need to put some shoes on." She says lifting her leg to show Faith her slippers. She fed Theo the last spoon of oats and then took the bowl to the sink before heading upstairs.

Faith: "So you are really going to end this today?"

Me: "Yeah. I cant keep letting people mess with me. At some point I need to let people know not to underestimate me."

Faith: "Good. Make sure you make an example of them." She said just as Nate, Buli, Sbu and Razor walked in followed by Lindani and Sizwe with takeaways.

They sat down and had breakfast, soon after Kazi, Sihle and Banele walked in. Sihle was in his usual skinny Jean's, formal shirt and formal shoes combo. But Banele surprised me though, his style is simple, skrr skrr gang all the way, but not today, today he had on a suit, like a proper business suit, I was impressed honestly cause he's never one to conform to the masses, his words not mine.

Everyone had breakfast, Lando came down looking like she just stepped out of a magazine. She changed from the suit she had on

earlier and now she had on a black body hugging round neck dress with a red coat sitting over her shoulders. She had on black Christian Louboutin heels, a pearl necklace and a small black bag.

Honestly if we were alone I would bend her over the couch and have my way with her. But we have somewhere to be so I just need to be patient a bit.

I heard whistles from the lounge but it was like she only had eyes for me cause she came straight to me and gave me a kiss. Man I am one lucky son of a bitch.

Lindani: "Mrs Biyela we are trying to get this case thrown out not have a murder charge on top of this." Everyone laughed.

Me: "I think we are ready to go."

Buli: "Okay, so who is staying and who is coming with."

Faith: "I'll stay with the kids."

Kazi: "Me too."

Me: "You do realise this is just a meeting and not a court case, theres no need for everyone to come."

Sihle: "I'll be in the car, hurry up or we'll be late." He said walking out with his tail Banele right on his heel.

Buli: "I am your lawyer so....."

Lindani: "Since when?" If I didn't know any better I'd say these two are siblings the way they squabble. Or maybe it's a law thing we mere mortals won't understand. Buli turned to look at me.

Buli: "Do you have one rand?" I nod my head. "Give it to me?" She says holding out her hand. I take out my wallet and hand her the one rand. She turns to look at Lindani again. "Since now." She says showing him the one rand. I guess I just hired her too. I look at Nate and he has a smile on his

face as Buli walks out leaving Lindani gobsmacked. He looks at Nate and Nate just smiles, holds his hands up and follows his wife out. He walks out too and I follow him while Lando kisses the babies. We get into the different cars and drive off.

We got to Pretoria with just a few minutes to spare. Traffic was hectic but we made it. I walked into the SA Police Head Office with my wife by my side and my squad behind me. As we walked in the media was taking pictures and asking questions which we did not answer.

Before we got to the Commissioner's office I saw my dad sitting on a bench reading a newspaper. We walked up to him. Me: "Hi! What are you doing here?" He got up and closed the newspaper before putting it under his arm.

Baba: "You are late. Let's go." He says walking before us. Instead of knocking he just grabs the door handle and walks in. We find the minister and the commissioner sitting in a makeshift boardroom inside the office.

Minister: "Biyela, doors were made for a reason, so you can knock."

Baba: "Oh my bad, I forgot." He says taking a seat.

Commissioner: "Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats." We take our seats while the others stand. "Thank you.

With us here we have representatives from the National Prosecuting Authority, you know Detective Maswanganyi, and station commander for the Fourways Police station where a rape case was opened against you Mr Biyela."

Lindani: "Is my client being charged?"

Minister: "With the evidence

before us we have no choice, your client Mr Ndlovu wasn't just accused of rape but there is DNA evidence implicating him. And I'm sure you understand the seriousness of these allegations, but also the public is waiting for justice to be served in this case, so we have no choice but to proceed with it and charge your client."

Buli: "Where did you get Mr Biyela's DNA?"

Commander: "From the victim when a rape kit was done."

Lindani: "You got DNA from the victim I get that but where did

you get DNA to compare it to cause I know for a fact my client did not give samples of his DNA." The commissioner and the minister turn to look at Detective Maswanganyi and the station commander.

Detective: "We got his DNA samples when we were collecting evidence at the crime scene."

Lando: "My house is not a crime scene." She says looking pissed.

Detective Maswanganyi has a smug look on her face.

Lindani: "My client still maintains that he did not rape Miss Mnguni and if you proceed with this case

the only people who will be embarrassed here is the police department."

Minister: "Mr Ndlovu there is evidence, you can't expect us to ignore the evidence and just trust your word for it. If you want us to believe that your client is innocent then present the evidence." Lindani reaches into his briefcase but I stop him.

Me: "I have listened to you talk about evidence and that's nice and all but before my lawyer presents my evidence I would like to let you know that by the time we leave here, we will sue the department

for wrongful arrest, manufacturing evidence and defamation of character." The minister and commissioner look at each other.

Lindani takes out the files from his briefcase and throws them to the minister and commissioner.

Lindani: "In your hands minister you have sworn affidavits from two lab assistants from the hospital lab where this supposed rape kit was tested, claiming that Detective Maswanganyi over there not only fabricated the DNA evidence but she paid the assistants to do that." He takes

out the USB drive and puts it in front of him. "And in this drive we have surveillance footage that will prove without a shadow of a doubt my clients innocence." He hands the USB drive to Razor. Razor plugs the drive into the flat screen TV on the wall. He presses play on the remote and the video plays. I look around the room and my friends and family now have smug looks on their faces, the commander takes out a handkerchief and wipes the sweat from his forehead. At that very moment I knew I had won.

I know, dont count your chickens before they hatch but....

Once the video is done playing we all turn to look at the minister and the commissioner. The minister loosens his tie and wipes his face with his hands.

Lindani: "That minister will be the basis of our civil suit against the police department. And if that is not proof enough we also have surveillance footage from the Phoenix lounge where my client spent the rest of that afternoon drinking with his friends."

Minister: "I dont know what to say."

Buli: "You can start by telling the media that is camped outside that your department manufactures evidence to put innocent people behind bars for crimes they didnt commit."

Commissioner: "Look we will get to the bottom of this." I stand up.

Me: "while you are busy 'getting to the bottom of this', I am going out there to clear my name. And if that means putting those affidavits and surveillance footage on social media then I will."

Minister: "Mr Biyela I understand you are angry but please dont

rush into this, we will sort this out."

Me: "You can sort it out that's fine with me but I will clear my name. Christmas is six days away and I want to enjoy the holidays knowing that I don't have a fake rape case hanging over me. Thank you for your time gentlemen." I turn to look at Detective Maswanganyi and she swallows. "And lady, I'll see you around." I help Lando and we get out.

We get to the entrance of the building and the media is still there. Soon as they see us walk out they come rushing like a

swarm of bees and they shove their cameras and microphones in my face.

Journalist 1: "Mr Biyela are you still denying the allegations against you?"

Lindani: "There are no allegations against my client, all there is is fabricated lies meant to tarnish my clients reputation. We have met with the minister of police and the commissioner and also representatives from the NPA and presented our evidence. Now we have given the department twenty four hours to clear my clients name, and if they fail we

will post all the evidence we have on social media since that is where my client has been judged and persecuted for a crime he did not commit. Thank you." We walked down the stairs with journalists still throwing questions left, right and centre.

We got into the car and drove away. Now that my name has been somewhat cleared, I need to come up with a plan to make every single person who had a hand in this mess pay, and pay they will, dearly too.



NARRATED

In Vanderbijlpark, Nate, Philani, Sizwe and Razor are parked outside the Maswanganyi home. It's almost midnight and Detective Maswanganyi is still not home. Razor and Philani jump the fence and make their way into the house. They pick the lock and get in. They walk around looking for any recording devices or cameras that might implicate them while talking to Nate and Sizwe on the phone and listening through their airpods, luckily they find none.

Nate: "Okay gentlemen we have company."

Philani: "Who is it?"

Nate: "Looks like the Detective."

Philani: "Great."

Razor and Philani hide and wait for the Detective to come in. She walks in turns the lights on, she goes around the house closing curtains still oblivious to the intruders in the house. Eventually she goes into the kitchen where Razor is hiding behind the door, soon as she walks in Razor creeps out behind her and sticks a needle in her neck. She tries to fight but Razor overpowers her. He holds her in a choke hold until she cant fight anymore. And once the drug

in her system takes effect he picks her up and places her on the couch. Philani comes out from one of the rooms and finds the Detective already passed out.

Philani: "Dude, how the fuck do you have all the fun alone." Razor laughs.

Razor: "She was about to catch me so I had to act."

Philani: "Mxm. So we do this here or the bedroom?"

Razor: "I think here should work."

Philani: "Cool, let's get to it before the sun comes up."

Razor opens his waist bag and takes out a vile of medication, a

packet of sleeping pills and another syringe.

Meanwhile outside, a car parks outside the house and someone gets out and walks to the gate. They find the gate locked then walk back to the car before coming back with keys to open the gate. Sizwe and Nate notice and alert Razor and Philani.

Nate: "Guys we've got company."

Philani: "Who is it?"

Nate: "I dont know I cant see....."

Sizwe: "Ngcebo! It cant be."

Nate: "Dude it is. Its Ngcebo."

Philani: "The fuck is he doing

here?"

Nate: "I dont know but you need to get the fuck out of there NOW!"

Razor: "Yeah that's cool and all but how do you explain the Detective being passed out on her couch with her work clothes on? We cant leave her like this." He says looking through the window.

Sizwe: "Then get her out too. Get her out through the back door, we'll be at the neighbors house we'll catch her over the fence." He says as they get out of the car and sneak into the neighbors house.

Nate: "Make sure you get her car keys, her bag and house keys as well. Hurry up Ngcebo is walking towards the door and you know if she doesn't open the front door he'll go to the back." Razor picks her up and throws her over his shoulder while Philani grabs her keys and bag and they walk out the back door.

Sizwe: "Leave her car keys."

Philani: "The fuck dude!"

Sizwe: "Her car is here so it will be suspicious if her car keys aren't here." He quickly runs in and places the keys on the table by the door just as Ngcebo knocks on

the front door. He tip toes out the back door and locks the door as quietly as he can.

Philani helps Razor push the Detective over the fence and Sizwe and Nate catch her. Razor and Philani then jump the fence just as Ngcebo comes towards the back door. He starts knocking and the guys sneak out of the neighbors house and throw the Detective in the boot of their car before they get in and quickly drive off before anyone sees them.

Nate: "That was close."

Philani: "Yeah, I still dont

understand why Ngcebo was there. He ruined everything."

Sizwe: "We need to figure out what their connection is."

Razor: "On it." He says sending a text to someone.

Philani: "For his sake he better not be working with her."

Nate: "You can't put it past him though."

Sizwe: "So what are we going to do with the bundle of joy in the boot." Her phone rings in her bag. Philani takes it out and the caller ID says Ngcebo. He puts it on silent and puts it back in the bag.

Nate: "That's him?"

Philani: "Yep."

Razor: "Oh shit!" They all turn to look at him.

Philani: "What?"

Razor: "I think I left the pills at the house."

Nate: "Do they have your fingerprints?"

Razor: "No, I was wearing gloves the whole time."

Philani: "I hope you are right or else we are screwed."

INSERT 91

There is absolutely nothing in the world that pisses me off than a plan being derailed, we plan everything to the last t, we dot our I's and cross our T's, that's why we have never been caught before. We've been suspected sure, but never caught, and tonight means someone isn't doing their job, because if they were Ngcebo would not have surprised us like that. We would have known that he might show up and we would have prepared for it, but we didnt, and now we have a woman in the boot of our car.

Our plan was perfect and the timing too, all we had to do was ensure there was enough sleeping pills and morphine in Detective Maswanganyi's system to let the police believe she committed suicide. With all that we presented to the minister and commissioner it would have been obvious that she committed suicide because she was ashamed, not just of herself for lying and fabricating evidence but for dragging the departments name through the mud. But oh well, now we need to strategize and come up with plan B.

We drove to the safe house and I was surprised to find Lando's car parked outside. I got out of the car and quickly rushed into the house. They all got up soon as I came in, and by all I mean Lando, Buli, Faith, Taki and even Razor's girlfriend Gcina was here.

Me: "What are you doing here?"

Lando: "You didnt kill her did you?"

I look at Lindani and Sbu and they just shrug their shoulders. Razor, Sizwe and Nate walk in with the Detective slumped over Razor's shoulder.

Me: "As you can see she's still alive, unfortunately."

Lindani: "What happened? Weren't you supposed to finish everything at her house? Why did you bring her here?"

Nate: "We had no choice. Ngcebo showed up."

Lando: "Which Ngcebo?"

Me: "The one and only, Ngcebo Dlamini your ex boyfriend." She and Faith look at each other surprise written all over their faces.

Buli: "Okay we'll discuss Ngcebo later but Detective dickhead over there needs to go back to her house." We all turn to look at her.

Nate: "What the fuck do you mean? We can't go back there. You

did hear us say we almost got caught right?"

Lando: "Buli is right you have to take her back. If Ngcebo is there it means he knows her and they probably have some type of relationship. You have history with Ngcebo, and if the Detective comes up missing, he might just point the police to you."

Me: "Then how do we explain being in her house? The drug in her system?"

Faith: "Simple, you put her back and and make it look like a robbery. Take her phone, TV and anything valuable in her house."

I know they are right, but the way I am pissed off right now I can't seem to think straight. I leave them there and get out, I need some fresh air. It's times like these when I wish I smoked.

Lando: "It's almost morning Philani you have to take her back." I turn around to look at her.

Me: "How did you know we'd be here?"

Lando: "A hunch. Although we didn't find you and Lindani and Sbu wouldn't tell us where you were."

Me: "And if they had told you what would you have done?" She

shrugs her shoulders.

Lando: "I don't know, stop you maybe."

Me: "Did Ngcebo tell you he was back in town?" She frowns.

Lando: "Why would he tell me anything?"

Me: "I dont know, you used to be fuck buddies, so who knows..."

Lando: "Wow, you're unbelievable."

She takes a deep breath. "You have two and a half hours before the sun comes up and this little plan of yours blows up in your face. And this time you'll really end up in jail." She turns and walks back into the house.

I text Nate and they come out with Maswanganyi and put her in the boot. We get into the car and drive back to Vanderbiltpark. We get there and luckily Ngcebo's car is gone. Razor sneaks in to make sure there's no one lurking around. Its almost morning and people will be up soon, so we need to get this done soon.

Razor gives us a thumbs up and we get the Detective out of the boot and sneak her back into the house. Lucky for us Ngcebo doesn't have the house keys cause the house is still the same as we left it.

We place her on the couch. We take the TV, her phone and some money from her wallet. We get more valuable stuff from the house. I walk to the bedroom to get some jewellery. I open her drawers and mess up the bedroom as much as I can. I look at her bedside table and see the pills we left earlier. I know Razor did not come to the bedroom so how did the pills end up here? I take them and head back to the lounge.

Me: "Razor, where did you leave the pills?"

Razor: "In the lounge. Where are

they anyways?" He says looking around. I show them to him.

"Where did you find them?"

Me: "In the bedroom. And I know for a fact you didnt go in there so how did they end up there?"

Nate: "Clearly someone came in here."

Me: "Ngcebo?"

Sizwe: "Guys we need to get the fuck out of here, now."

Me: "Everything is in the boot?"

Nate: "Yeah let's go." We get into the car and drive off.

I hate this. I hate being nervous about something, and this night just went from bad to worse. I

prefer a clean job, and this, was not it.



LANDO

Philani is getting sloppy, he's letting his anger and frustration cloud his judgement. If he was thinking clearly he would have known going after Detective Maswanganyi right now is bad news, especially with the police watching and the public being so invested in this case. And as for why his friends didnt try to stop him is honestly beyond me. I had hoped that by the time we get to the safehouse we would be able

to stop them, but when Lindani wouldn't tell us where they are I thought we were screwed, but thank God for Ngcebo showing up when he did, otherwise we would be telling a different story right now.

After Philani, Nate, Sizwe and Razor went back to wherever they took the Detective from, we also got into my car and headed back home. I dropped Taki off first before dropping Faith. I drove to Nate's to drop off Buli.

Buli: "Hey, are you sure you're okay?" She said just as I stopped the car in front of her house.

Me: "I'm fine. Have you told Nate about the baby?"

Buli: "Not yet. I'm waiting for the right moment."

Me: "And when will it be the right time? The way they are getting sloppy, we might just have to bail them out of jail one of these days."

Buli: "Tell me about it. Maybe I'll tell him when he gets back.

Anyways let me get some sleep. I'll call you in the morning."

Me: "You mean later today?" She laughs and gives me a hug.

Buli: "Later baby." She gets out of the car and gets into the

house. I drive out and head back home.

By the time I get home it's almost five in the morning and it's way too early for me to go pick up the kids from Dainfern. I get into the house and take a shower before getting into bed. I haven't slept in almost twenty four hours and somehow my anxiety won't let me sleep. I take a book from my drawer and start reading.

At something past six Philani finally decides to show up. He looks angry and frustrated. He goes straight to the bathroom and I soon hear the shower running. He

stays there for almost twenty minutes before walking out stark naked.

He goes into the closet and comes out wearing shorts and he gets out of the bedroom and I can tell you now he is headed to the gym to punch the fuck out of that punching bag. I decide to let him be.

After about an hour I decide to go check on him. I get to the gym and I swear if the punching bag was a person it would be dead by now. I stood by the door and watched him for a while. He punched the bag one last time

while groaning in frustration. He took a towel and wiped his face before taking a bottle of water from the mini fridge. He took a sip and then closed the bottle before flinging it onto the wall mirror. The poor mirror shattered and crumbled on the floor.

I walked over to him as he stood hunched over the towel rack. I wrapped my arms around his waist and rested my head on his back. I know, sweaty and disgusting but ke a girl has to do what a girl has to do to bring her man back from the edge.

Me: "You feeling better?"

Philani: "No!"

Me: "Look I know this is frustrating, and it feels like you have been under attack for weeks now but baby you cant afford to be sloppy right now. And what happened last night, or this morning, that was sloppy and that is not who you are."

Philani: "I just need to put an end to this. I am tired of defending myself."

Me: "I know, but if you keep this up you'll be defending yourself from jail. And I did not sign up to have a convict for a husband."

Philani: "I'm sorry. I almost fucked things up and put you all in danger. I'm sorry baby." He sighed.

Me: "Its okay. You are under self imposed pressure but I understand." He laughs and turns around to look at me.

Philani: "Your cheek is sweaty." He says wiping his sweat off of my cheek. "Thank you for coming to the safehouse. Lord knows how that would have ended."

Me: "So what now?"

Philani: "Right now, I want to forget about what happened." He says putting his hands inside my

pyjamas.

Me: "Okay, so how are you going to do that?" He lifts me up and walks with me while we kiss. He places me on top of the mini fridge before pulling down my pyjama shorts.

Soon as the shorts are on the floor he moves up planting kisses on my legs. He parts my legs as he moves in between my thighs towards my honeypot. He lifts my legs and places them on his shoulders before burying his face inside my coochie.

I know he was frustrated and all and he was probably taking out

his frustrations on me right now but my clit was singing Haleluya so I didnt care. I was moaning and shouting in tongues and things got even worse or is it better? (who cares) when he stuck two fingers inside of me and I swear I saw Abraham at the pearly gates. I felt my legs shake and my eyes rolling to the back of my head before I squirted all over his face. I have never squirted in my life before.

When I opened my eyes he had a smug look on his face and my juices mixed with his sweat.

Me: "Oh My God." He came up and kissed me and call me crazy but that shit tasted so fucken good. I dont know when he took his shorts off but while we kissed I felt him enter me, and since I was already dripping wet he just slid in. We made love on top of the fridge and on the floor before moving to the bedroom. By the time we were done sleep had come back tenfold so I went to dreamland a happy girl.



NARRATED

In Vanderbijlpark, Maswanganyi is woken up by someone banging on

her door. She tries to stand but the drugs in her system have not completely worn off. She tries to get up but she keeps falling so she crawls to the door. She pulls herself up using the doorknob before turning the key. Soon as she pulls the door open she falls back on the floor. Ngcebo tries to pull the door so he can get the key but it's too wide and the Detective's leg is stopping the door from closing.

He rushes to the backdoor and opens it before rushing to the Detective. He picks her up and places her on the couch.

Ngcebo: "Precious! PRECIOUS!"
He calls out while hitting her on the cheek a bit to wake her up. When she doesn't get up he rushes to the kitchen and comes back with a glass of water and throws it on her face.

She opens her eyes and looks at him. He breathes a sigh of relief when he sees her open her eyes.

Detective: "What.....what.....what happened?" She asks trying to sit up. Ngcebo helps her and she looks around while holding her head.

Ngcebo: "I dont know, I should be asking you that. I came by earlier, your car was outside but

you weren't in the house. What do you remember?"

Detective: "I can't remember anything. The last thing I remember is going to the kitchen to close the curtains. Next thing I know someone sticks a needle in my neck and that's all I remember."

Ngcebo: "Shit. You think maybe someone was trying to rob you?" They look around and notice that the TV is gone."

Detective: "Well the TV is gone so maybe it was a robbery." Ngcebo seems unconvinced. He gets up and looks around the house. He goes

to the bedroom and notices the sleeping pills are gone.

Ngcebo: "Do you take sleeping pills?" He asks coming back into the lounge.

Detective: "No, why?"

Ngcebo: "When I came by earlier I found a packet of sleeping pills on the coffee table, I took them and left them in the bedroom but now they are gone." He says sitting back down on the couch.

Detective: "Maybe the robbers took them."

Ngcebo: "And maybe they brought them in too. Which then begs the question, if they drugged you

before I got here and then came back after I left where did they put you cause you were not in the house when I came in."

Detective: "I dont know. Closet maybe." She says shrugging her shoulders.

Ngcebo: "The closets were empty I checked. Maybe this wasnt a robbery, more like someone wanted it to look like a robbery."

Detective: "And who would go to those lengths just to leave me here again? Stop overthinking this, I'm sure it was just a robbery."

Ngcebo: "This has Biyela written

all over it."

She laughs.

Detective: "Come on, if he is as dangerous as you say he is why would he leave me and then take my stuff. Even my phone is gone."

Ngcebo: "Shit Precious, we are screwed. I'll be right back." He gets up and rushes out. He comes back with a laptop. "You need to wipe your phone before they find something that will connect me to you." She takes the laptop and logs onto her iCloud.

Detective: "I cant get in. My password is not going through."

Ngcebo: "See, this wasnt a

robbery. Go to find my iPhone."

She does.

Detective: "My passwords have been changed, I cant access anything on my phone."

Ngcebo: "Then you need to call the police. Maybe they will be able to trace your phone."

Detective: "And if they can't?"

Ngcebo: "Then all this will have been for nothing. Basically we are screwed."

INSERT 92

It's easy to pretend you are not bothered by something when it's happening, I guess that's the upside of being a part of this gangster world, you have to show no fear, even when people come for you from every part of the universe, if you show fear they will rip you apart. There's always someone waiting for your downfall, heck some even plot your downfall. With all the times Philani said he didn't want me being a part of his world but somehow I ended up in it, deep deep in it. At times I wished I was your typical slay queen who just spent the money

and stayed with my head buried in the sand in terms of where it came from.

Its three days before Christmas, we are flying down to Mandawe later today. Although my mother wanted us to come home for Christmas, I had to decline because I wasnt ready to go back to that house with all it's bad memories. Gugu also said nope, she's not going either. So we are all going down to Mandawe.

I drove to the mall early in the morning to do the last of my Christmas shopping. After walking around the mall and

getting almost all I was looking for I decided to go to Mugg and Bean for a quick cup of coffee.

I sat down and a waitress came to take my order. She brought my coffee and muffin and after the day of walking around I had, I deserved it. I was halfway through my mini break when I sensed someone sitting down across from me. I looked up and found Ngcebo smiling at me.

Ngcebo: "Hello Mrs Biyela." I sigh.

Me: "Ngcebo." I say coldly. He smiles.

Ngcebo: "A bit of a cold greeting for someone who saved your life."

Me: "Thank you for saving my life Ngcebo. So what do you want?"

Ngcebo: "You know you and I used to be close once, you got married and forgot I exist." He says putting his elbows on the table.

Me: "You tried to set the cops on my husband for something he didnt do."

Ngcebo: "And then he killed my child and let me bury a dog."

Me: "And he told you where she is. Healthy and happy. So what are you whining about." I see him clench his teeth.

Ngcebo: "And that is supposed to make us even?"

Me: "No it's supposed to make you stay away from him. You know what he is capable of and you don't want to get into it with him, again." He smiles and sits back on the chair.

Ngcebo: "So I hear he is also a rapist, and I am surprised that you, a rape victim yourself chose the perpetrator's side. How does that work exactly? Make it make sense." A part of me wants to tell him I know about his stupid relationship with Detective Maswanganyi but I know I can't let him know that we know anything about his involvement in

this.

Me: "He is innocent and there's evidence to prove that."

Ngcebo: "And yet no one has seen that evidence."

Me: "Look I don't know what this has to do with you but you need to stay out of this. Philani is innocent." I get up and take my bag, I take out some cash and hand it to the waitress as I walk out. I push my trolley and head to the parking lot. I put all my packages in the boot and drive home.

When I get home I find everyone there, Banele, Sihle and Kazi

together with Gugu and the babies. But Philani is not here. We are supposed to meet Junior at the airport since there is also a welcoming ceremony for him at home. I decide to pack all our stuff in the car including Philani's bags. For his sake I hope he packed everything, and if he didn't, well there are shops in Eshowe so we good. I text him and tell him to meet us at the airport.

We get to the airport, the jet is good and ready so we go in while the crew sorts out our bags. I strap the kids in and we wait for

Philani and Junior is not here either.

Banele: "Philani is late, do you know where he is?" He asks taking a seat next to me.

Me: "I dont know. He isn't picking up any of my calls."

Sihle: "We should leave him. He has a car he'll drive to KZN."

Kazi: "If you want to die tell the pilot to takeoff. Besides we still have forty five minutes before takeoff."

Me: "And your other brother is not here either."

Banele: "Hhayike even if we leave that one it wont matter." As if on

cue Junior walks in.

Junior: "Sanibonani." He says taking a seat.

Banele: "Blowjob, you are late."

Me: "Banele, stop."

Banele: "What, he is late."

Junior: "I apologize. My mother was taking too long."

Sihle: "Your mother?" He asked and Junior nod his head before putting on his headphones. We heard clicking of heels, we turned and there she was. I swear Maggie thinks she's the new Mrs Biyela senior. Not only was her outfit dramatic but she also had on a huge summer hat and huge

sunglasses too. We didnt even know she was coming. Yeah I thought last Christmas was dramatic, seems this year it might just be a level up in the drama stakes.



PHILANI

This thing with Ngcebo is going to drive me nuts. I just found out he has been in town for almost two months now, I wouldn't be surprised if he also had something to do with feeding that journalist information on me.

I woke up early today and drove to the safehouse, even though we are going home for Christmas I just needed to get this one thing out of the way so I can enjoy my Christmas.

I got to the safehouse and the guys are ready and waiting. I just hope Sbu was able to get something from the Detective's phone. We had to block her from remotely accessing the phone so we can get as much out of it as possible.

I get into the house and they aren't in the lounge. I walk to the bedroom turned office and

find them chatting and laughing.
I greet and take a seat.

Sbu: "Finally. I thought you weren't coming."

Me: "I am here now. So what did you find?"

Sbu: "Okay, so I was able to extract all the Detective's messages, WhatsApp, texts, Facebook, everything. It turns out she was the one who reached out to Dr Dlamini after she found out he used to work with her dad, he saw an opportunity to, well, make you pay for whatever you did to him."

Me: "I know my aunt was the one

feeding the journalist info but did you find a connection between her and the Zinhle girl?"

Razor: "They actually met after Zinhle's little expose on you, since the cops wouldn't investigate without enough evidence,

Detective Maswanganyi did the investigation herself on the side."

Me: "And Ngcebo?"

Sbu: "Well there was communication between all three of them so some of the info Zinhle had he definitely got from Ngcebo."

Nate: "I think we really need to step away from the business. And

not just step away with one foot still in but completely walk away."

Sizwe: "But we've been walking away and somehow we end up back here."

Lindani: "Nate is right, we have to walk away, now with this happening the department will do anything to try and redeem themselves and they will dig as deep as possible to find something."

Me: "Right. We have made enough money for us to never work in our lives. The offshore accounts are healthy so we can sit this one out for a year maybe two and let

everything calm down."

Razor: "I'll believe that when I see it." He says with a smile on his face. Well he has a point though, we did say we are walking away before but ended up back in again.

Sbu: "So what are we going to do about the doctor and detective?"

Nate: "Let them be. For now. We need to think clearly before we do anything so it's best we let it go."

Me: "What about the Detective's phone? Are you sure they won't be able to trace it back here?"

Sbu: "No, we took it to the hospital where Zama was, since

the Detective was there that night she'll just think she left it there."

Me: "Okay then gentlemen, I have to go. Merry Christmas and whatever else comes with it." We hug and I leave.

Since Lando sent me a text to meet them at the airport I drive straight there, but then I remember I didn't pack Lando's gift. Now I have to drive to the house first. Luckily for me most people have gone home for the holidays so traffic isn't that bad. I get home and quickly grab the gift from the safe. Since it's

small enough to fit in my pocket I dont have to worry about hiding it.

I get back in the car and drive to the airport, I make it there with just ten minutes to spare before takeoff. I get in and find Maggie sitting with a fashion magazine on her lap and a glass of champagne on one hand. I stood frozen at the door looking at her. Lando quickly got out of her chair and came to me.

Me: "What the fuck is she doing here?"

Lando: "I dont know but baby please let her be. Come sit down."

She drags me to the seat next to hers. I sit down and buckle up and we take off. She might think she's the madam in here but I am pretty sure gogo will remind her that she is just a baby mama.

The flight seems to take longer than usual, or maybe its cause I cant wait to get out of this sudden family. Maggie has had almost an entire bottle of champagne. Mxm.

We land at King Shaka and drive to Mandawe. By the time we get there it's dark but they've been expecting us. We find Gogo and

aunt Kholiwe sitting in the verandah of the main house. Since our car is the first one inside the gate, we get out take the kids and go to gogo.

Gogo: "Ncooh, my babies." She says taking Laksiwe from Lando. She kisses her a few times and Laksiwe giggles.

Kholiwe: "So wheres your new brother?"

Me: "He is coming, together with his mother."

Gogo: "Why is his mother coming here?"

Me: "Beats me. Maybe she will tell you." Their car finally pulls up and

they get out. They all come to greet gogo and aunt Kholiwe before heading to the house we'll be using. Finally Junior comes up and shakes gogo's hand. I don't know why my dad is not here to introduce his little family properly. Finally the madam walks up to greet gogo, it's dark and she still has her shades on.

Gogo: "Wena ke, who are you?"

Maggie: "Oh, hi my name is Maggie, I am Junior's mother."

Gogo: "Okay. So what are you doing here?"

Maggie: "Really? I'm here with my son."

Kholiwe: "Your son is what, seventeen years old. Is he still breastfeeding?"

Maggie: "Eeeuw really. Of course not."

Gogo: "Good, then the driver will take you to the guest house."

Maggie: "I am not leaving my son. I don't even know what you'll be doing to him. If I leave he leaves too."

Dad: "Junior is not going anywhere. What are you doing here Maggie." I don't even know where he came from. Banele and Sihle are busy taking videos of this moment. Good thing Lando

took Junior away otherwise this would be uncomfortable for him.

Maggie: "I came for our sons welcoming ceremony."

Dad: "And I told you, you did not have to come. Junior is old enough to come home without you holding his hand."

Maggie: "Really? What will you be doing to him? I need to be there to make sure he is okay." Dad takes her by the arm and leads her to where the cars are parked.

Gogo: "Who told her she is the new madam?"

Me: "Beats me." I head to the

house and find Lando, Gugu and Kazi in the kitchen.

Kazi: "Hey, where's your stepmother?"

Me: "Outside. Her boyfriend is talking to her. Gogo told her to book at a guesthouse."

Kazi: "Good. I dont know why she thought she would sleep here like she is somebody's wife. Mxm."

Lando: "But guys, have you stopped to think about Junior? That is his mother."

Me: "His mother is not a Biyela wife. She cant walk in and out of here as she pleases. This is his home, at some point he needs to

understand that."

Lando: "But technically speaking I was not a wife the first time I slept here."

Kazi: "You were a wife. By law you were married." Junior comes in from one of the bedrooms just as the girls set the food on the counter for us to eat. Since we came late we bought takeaways.

Junior: "Have you seen my mum."

Me: "Probably on her way to the guesthouse." I said going to sit down and eat.

Junior: "Oh okay." He said taking a plate to dish up.

Lando: "So you not worried about

her."

Junior: "I'll call her later."

Lando: "She's your mum Junior, you're allowed to worry about her."

Junior: "I know. But my mum is a bit dramatic. Dad told her not to come but she came anyway. She's just stubborn for no reason."

Lando: "Maybe she wants you guys to be a family. You and your dad and her." He chuckles.

Junior: "That's never going to happen. Dad told her it wont ever happen. I mean she was a side chick, sure it would be nice to be a family but that's never going to

happen."

Lando: "You are a Biyela though, so you'll always be family. You have your ceremony in two days, it's more like a nice Christmas gift. An extra Biyela."

Junior: "Nobody wants a bastard for Christmas sis Lando, ever." He takes his plate and goes to the bedroom.

I dont know why I was even listening to their conversation but his last statement kind of made me sad. I know I haven't been as welcoming to him and hearing how he feels or thinks we feel about him kind of hurts. Maybe I should

try a bit harder to be a big brother to him.



NARRATED

At a hospital in downtown Joburg, Nurse Gcina is busy with with a patient at reception when the Matron shows up with two police officers and Detective Maswanganyi.

Gcina: "Ok, don't forget your follow up appointment in two weeks and make sure you finish all your medication."

Patient: "Yes nurse, thank you."

Gcina: "Take care of yourself."

Patient: "I will. Bye!" She leaves.

Gcina: "Matron, what can I do for you?"

Matron: "Nurse Gcina, these gentlemen and lady are looking for a stolen phone."

Gcina: "Okay so why are they here?"

Detective: "My phone was stolen from my home a few days ago, the police were able to track it and found that its here. So you wont mind if we search you."

Gcina: "Search me? For what? Am I a suspect?"

Officer: "Of course not ma'am, we just trying to find a phone."

Gcina: "Fine, go ahead." She says

standing aside. The officer takes her bag and searches but finds nothing. He opens all the drawers and he finds the phone on the last drawer. He lifts the phone up so the Detective can see it.

Detective: "That's my phone."

Officer: "Nurse why is the Detective's phone in your possession?"

Gcina: "Hhaybo wenja, did you find the phone in my possession or the hospital drawer?"

Matron: "Nurse do you know how the phone got into the drawer."

Gcina: "How the fuck am I supposed to know?"

Detective: "My phone was stolen from my house and next thing it shows up where you are. Excuse me for being curious. Maybe you bought it from those guys who robbed my house." She takes out her phone from her bag.

Giina: "You see this? It's an iPhone 10 plus, that my man bought for me. You really think I would buy an iPhone seven from the streets. My man can buy me ten of those without blinking.

Ungangijwayeli kabi."

A nurse joins them from doing her rounds.

Nurse: "What's going on?"

Gcina: "They are saying I stole a phone."

Officer: "Since you also work here maybe you can clarify. We found this phone in one of the drawers, do you know what's happening?"

Nurse: "Please that phone has been sitting there for the past three or four days."

Detective: "No this phone was stolen from my house a few days ago."

Nurse: "I dont know which house you are talking about but that phone was brought in by a porter who found it in one of the wards."

Gcina: "There you go. Now you

know. Mine my shift is over so
goodbye." She takes her bag and
walks towards the entrance. She
turns around and comes back to
them. "Oh and Matron, I quit!"
Matron: "Gcina you cant quit. We
need you."

Gcina: "Of course I can quit. I
was just accused of stealing and
you didnt even defend me so no I
dont think you need me. It's not
like you were paying me anyway, I
was just volunteering anyway. So
it's been nice bye bye." She walks
out and finds Razor waiting for
her in the parking lot. She gets
into the car.

Razor: "Hey baby."

Gcina: "You owe me." He kisses her on the cheek.

Razor: "I know sthandwa sam. So how did it go?"

Gcina: "Fine, that stupid Detective showed up. She got her phone."

Razor: "Good. And the other nurse?"

Gcina: "She knows not to open her mouth. She's just waiting for her money."

Razor: "I'll come bring it tomorrow. Did they say anything about the pills?"

Gcina: "No, maybe she didnt see

them. And you better hope so cause if they link them back to me I will cut your balls off." He laughs.

Razor: "Relax. Nothings going to happen." He takes her hand and kisses her. "So what do you want to eat?"

GCina: "Anything is fine by me."

Razor: "Chicken lickin it is then."
They drive out of the parking lot.

INSERT 93

Being home means I dont get to have sex with my wife. According to Lando that is disrespectful, I

don't know why cause we are married. I got up and it seemed everyone had woken up at the crack of dawn, including my wife. I decided to take a shower before joining the family for breakfast. I came out of the shower and found Lando sitting on the bed with a tray filled with food next to her. She looked up at me soon as I came out of the bathroom and smiled.

Me: "Whatever it is, I didnt do it." She laughed. I sat down and took the tray and started eating.

Lando: "I know, but I want you to do something for me."

Me: "Okay, what?"

Lando: "I want you to talk to Junior." I already know what she is talking about but I still need to ask.

Me: "About what?"

Lando: "What he said last night. He feels unwanted, and it's mostly because of you."

Me: "I'm sorry what?"

Lando: "You and your siblings treat the poor child like he is trash."

Me: "Okay firstly I did not tell Sihle and Banele to treat him like that."

Lando: "You didnt have to tell them, you are their big brother,

they follow your lead whether you see it or not. You've been cold to Junior from the moment you met him, so obviously your siblings are going to follow suit since that's what they see you do." She comes closer to me and takes my hand in hers. "Look I know why you don't like him, but you are being unfair and unreasonable. He didn't ask to be born this way, if you want to be angry at anyone be angry at your father. He is the one who cheated on your mother not Junior, stop punishing the child for something he had no control over." She walks over to the

closet and comes back with a picture, she puts it in my lap. I take the picture and it's her with my mum at her graduation.

Me: "What's this?"

Lando: "Do you think your mother would be okay with you treating Junior the way you are?"

Me: "Don't bring my mother into this."

Lando: "I didn't, you did. The moment you decided to hide behind your mother's death and treat an innocent child like trash. Your mother was the kindest woman I knew, and I know for a fact she wouldn't crucify Junior for being

born from an affair two consenting adults chose to engage in."

As much as I know she is right my pride and ego somehow wont let me admit that to her. I haven't been as welcoming to Junior as I should be. And what he said last night wasnt nice.

Kazi knocked on the door and took Lando away since they have to bake. I finished my food and got dressed. I then took the tray and went to put it in the kitchen. I found Junior hunched over the counter with a bowl of porridge in front of him and his headphones

on, I'm beginning to think those things are glued to his head. I put the dishes in the sink, turned on the water and cleaned them. I turned around and he still had his head down. I tapped him on the shoulder and he lifted his head to look at me. He took his headphones off.

Junior: "Hi!"

Me: "Hi, how did you sleep?"

Junior: "Great! The peace and quiet was nice."

Me: "Glad to hear that." I took a seat next to him. "Look I'm sorry, I know I haven't been nice to you, I'm sorry."

Junior: "Its okay, I understand, nobody wants a bastard to ruin their perfect family."

Me: "Please stop calling yourself that. You're not a bastard."

Junior: "But its....."

Me: "Call yourself that one more time and I'll slap the shit out of you." The shock in his eyes was enough for me to know he heard me. "Now go get dressed, we need to start slaughtering."

Junior: "Yeah, no I ain't doing that, I will babysit the kids and y'all can deal with the cows and shit." I laughed.

Me: "Unfortunately for you, it's

not up for debate. Go get dressed." He mumbled something as he went to his room. He came back after five minutes wearing grey sweatpants with a black tshirt. I cant wait for his introduction to rural life.



LANDO

I saw Philani and Junior walking out of the house laughing and joking around. I almost jumped for joy, but I had to keep myself in check. But now that I have done my part it's time for Philani to do his part and get his siblings in line. Junior is a kid and he needs

his family. The crazy thing though is that with all the drama Maggie brings with her she actually raised a level headed, smart human being.

I went back to helping the ladies bake while the guys did what they had to do. While some of us were baking others were cooking lunch. Even though this looks like we have a wedding or funeral coming up, sheesh. We finished cooking lunch, dished up for everyone and while the younger kids washed the pots and dishes the elders sat in the verandah sipping some wine from tea cups.

We were busy laughing when a black SUV pulled up to the gate, one of the kids ran to open and it got in and parked. We all waited with baited breath to see who would come out of the car. Lo and behold the queen of Sheba herself Maggie, she stepped out wearing the longest high heels, a maxi dress with a bare back and her perky boobs sitting still with a bit of a cleavage, and to top it all off her thirty inch weave was covered by a sun hat that looked more like a mini umbrella.

Zuzu: "There's no way in hell her boobs are real."

Kholiwe: "Please those are fake as fake can be."

Sindiswa: "Last I checked she wasn't working, how can she afford those expensive clothes and weaves?"

Kholiwe: "Papgeld nana. Some women think it's their monthly income."

Zuzu: "I wonder how much she gets a month?" They all turned to look at me, including gogo. I wonder why.

Me: "Why are you looking at me like that?"

Gogo: "You are the one who does Busani's taxes so you do know."

Me: "True but ethics say I'm not allowed to disclose my clients private taxes, but I will tell you this, Maggie hit the jackpot when she conceived Junior. Any normal person would sit back and actually enjoy the luxury but Maggie, well she's like those slay queens on Instagram who live beyond their means, except she has the means but she doesn't know what to do with it."

Kholiwe: "So why is she now busy chasing after my brother if she gets everything she needs when she needs it."

Gogo: "Some women are never

satisfied without the title of Mrs. Maybe she is one of those, and now that Busani's wife is no longer there to stand in the way she wants it all, to the point of seeming desperate."

Zuzu: "Maybe malume would also like to have another wife, he is a man after all."

Gogo: "You can't force a man to want you Sthandwa sam. And marriage is not an achievement, the sooner women learn that the better."

Maggie walked up to us after unloading groceries with the help of the kids.

Maggie: "Ladies, how are you?" We greeted back. "I'm here to see my son, can you show me where he is."

Lando: "He is probably sleeping in that house." I pointed out the house and she clicked her heels and went away. Aunt Kholiwe nudged me with her shoulder. I turned to look at her.

Kholiwe: "Arent you going to accompany her?" I shook my head.

Gogo: "Go, it's the polite thing to do. And then come back and tell us what happened in there, cause we all know she's not going there for Junior." I sighed and got up and followed her. I caught up with

her just before she reached the house.

Me: "Nice dress!"

Maggie: "Oh thanks. It's a David Tlale original, one of only two ever made."

Me: "Nice." I opened the door and walked in, we found Bab'Biyela sitting on the couch busy on his laptop.

Bab'Biyela: "Makoti."

Me: "Hello baba, is Junior here? His mum is here for him." He looked up and saw Maggie behind me and his face changed to an expression I didn't know or understood.

Maggie: "Hello Biyela."

Bab'Biyela: "What are you doing here?"

Maggie: "I'm here to check on my son."

Me: "I will make you something to drink." I left them in the lounge and went to the kitchen to make some tea, as far away as I was, I was still close enough to hear everything being said.

Bab'Biyela: "You do know Junior is not five anymore right? He is quite capable of taking care of himself. And you need to stop showing up to my house uninvited."

Maggie: "About that, I have put the house in Cape Town on the market. I'm selling it."

Bab'Biyela: "You cant do that, not without me signing off on it."

Maggie: "Its my house, I can do whatever I want." Have you ever willed a kettle to boil in slow motion, well I have and it still wouldn't comply.

Bab'Biyela: "That is Junior's house, and since he is still a child I have the rights to it. When he turns 25 then the house will be turned over to him to do as he pleases." She sat down on the couch in disbelief.

Maggie: "You're unbelievable. After everything I have sacrificed for you."

Bab'Biyela: "Maggie we had an affair nineteen years ago. It ended nineteen years ago at some point you have to accept that and move on. The only thing connecting us is our son, either than that, there is nothing and absolutely no reason for you to be here."

Maggie: "So all the time I have spent waiting for you....."

Bab'Biyela: "Your choice not mine. I'll go get Junior." He walked out leaving behind an awkward and tense situation.

I walked to the lounge with the tea and some muffins in a tray. I placed them in front of Maggie and she gave me a faint smile.

Now I really felt bad for her.

Junior walked in and I took that opportunity to walk out.

I found everyone waiting with baited breath to hear the hot gossip but I couldn't find it in my heart to sit there and spill someone's personal business so I lied. Of course my lies weren't as juicy but they had no choice but to believe it.

Maggie's situation made me realise or rather put myself in

Ayanda, Uche and Nokukhanya's shoes. Maybe I didn't do that before because it was a situation that involved personally. I understood at that point how hard it must have been for them to wait for a man they loved to see them again and maybe find the love he used to have for each of them deep in his heart. Sure Uche and Nokukhanya had sabotaged themselves but Ayanda was innocent. She loved Philani and she saw a future with him only to be blind-sided. Her actions after that, well those were her own choices, but she

was hurt. And it's only now that I look at it from someone else's perspective that I can understand that. But it's too late to even say I am sorry.



NARRATED

At Mall of Africa, Nate and Sizwe have just come out of a jewellery shop when they run into Ngcebo.

Ngcebo: "Gentlemen. Getting gifts for the special ladies in your lives I see."

Nate: "What do you want?"

Ngcebo: "Oh come now Dr Samuels, a little professional

courtesy. So wheres the rest of the squad?"

Nate: "No, seriously Ngcebo what do you want?"

Ngcebo: "Come on I'm just being nice." Nates phone rings and he walks away to answer it. Sizwe walks closer to Ngcebo until there is no space between them.

Sizwe: "We know what you did, you might think we are stupid and we don't know but we do."

Ngcebo: "I have absolutely no idea what you are talking about."

Sizwe: "Act stupid all you want but we are watching you. Every move you make, we know about it."

When you get up to pee in the middle of the night we know about it. What you, when you eat and how you eat, we know. And one of these good days when you least expect it, we will send you to meet your maker."

Ngcebo: "Are you threatening me Mr Ziqubu?"

Sizwe: "Tske it whichever way you want. But know this, I haven't used my sniper rifle in a while. And it's just itching to be let out to get some fresh air. Who knows, maybe you'll be my first target practice." He bumps him

with his shoulder before walking away.

INSERT 94

The funny thing about watching a skrrr skrrr in the rural areas is the wake up call they get once they realise the difference between city life and rural life, and watching Junior try to catch a chicken has been nothing short of hilarious. And I even have the videos to prove it. These will make great family home videos one day.

I realized Lando was right, Junior wasn't so bad after all, he is a cool kid. Even Sihle and Banele have started warming up to him, I guess Lando was right, monkey see, monkey do.

His ceremony went well yesterday, even his slay queen mama was here looking decent for a change. Everyone was happy to welcome him into the family, he even got a piece of land as a welcome gift. My dad says giving his kids land is like giving them a foundation for them to build on.

Today is Christmas day, and the yard is already buzzing and I can

smell the aroma of food all the way from my bed. I cant wait for lunch. I turn over on the bed and Lando is still sleeping, she told me to wake her up at five am to help with the cooking, but the fact that she slept barely five hours ago made me ignore her instructions, even though she'll be mad at me.

I run my finger over her perfect eyebrows and she stirs. I lower my finger down to her lips and she opens her lips a little. I decide to move my finger and replace it with my lips. She responds and

soon she has her hands on my face.

Lando: "Is it morning yet?" She mumbles between kisses.

Me: "No, not yet." I can feel her smile beneath my lips.

Lando: "Okay." She opens her eyes and the light in the room gives me away. She turns to look at the window and soon as she sees its morning she tries to jump of the bed but with my weight on top of her, it's kinda hard to do.

Me: "Where are you going?"

Lando: "Dude I told you to wake me up early."

Me: "I know, but you looked so

peaceful I didn't have the heart to wake you."

Lando: "Okay can you get off of me so I can go help."

Me: "I will but not yet."

Lando: "Philani!"

Me: "Okay." I sigh and move back to my side of the bed. She gets up and rushes to the bathroom. I hear the shower running and in less than five minutes she's out. She rushes to the closet and comes back wearing an A-line skirt with a round neck basic white t-shirt. She puts on a cardigan and a doek covering her weave, I don't know why she does that

when she was told she doesn't have to. She puts on her sandals. Lando: "How do I look?" She asks turning around.

Me: "Like the perfect Makoti. Even your eyebrows didnt wash off in the shower." She looks at me with a frown and her hands on her waist.

Lando: "What do you mean?"

Me: "I meant....." he look is enough to let me know that I should keep some things to myself. "Do you want your gift now or later?" Her smile replaces the frown she had.

Lando: "What did you get me?"

She says rushing to sit on top of me. And here I was thinking she was in a hurry to leave. I laugh and take the little envelope from the side drawer. I hand it to her and she opens it, excitement all over her face. Her face changes though when she sees what's inside. "A credit card?"

Me: "More like a debit card. In that card is all you will need to plan our wedding."

Lando: "You do know we are already married right? Besides that planning a wedding takes time, we need to find the perfect venue, do you want a spring or

winter wedding? Bridesmaids dresses, literally everything needs time."

Me: "I would like a summer wedding."

Lando: "Okay so November or December?"

Me: "More like February. This coming February." The shock on her face is unmissable.

Lando: "That's two months away. You cant plan a wedding in two months."

Me: "People have planned weddings with less time. And dont worry I already hired a wedding planner who will take care of all

the heavy lifting, all we have to do is make the decisions. Nothing more." She takes a deep breath and looks at the card again.

Lando: "Why the rush though." Is she for real right now.

Me: "You know what forget it." I take the card and lift her off of me. I get off the bed and go to the closet, I bring back three Luis Vuitton paper bags and put them on the bed. "Merry Christmas." I go into the bathroom and turn on the shower. I take off my boxers and just let the water run over me to calm me down.

I don't know why Lando is dragging her feet about this. Technically speaking we are already married so what's wrong with wanting to have a big ass celebration. We had our lobola almost a year ago and since then she finds a way to dodge the wedding topic. I thought maybe it was because she didn't have time and all but wedding planners are there for a reason. Maybe I'm just being unreasonable, or maybe I should stop trying to force Lando into doing something she doesn't want to do.

When the water turns cold I get out and wipe myself. I walk out to the bedroom and I find her sitting on the bed. She looks up when the door opens. I decide to ignore her and go into the closet to get dressed. I walk out and she's still here.

Lando: "So you are going to ignore me?"

Me: "I'm not ignoring you and last time I checked you had to be helping somewhere." I say putting on my watch and shoes.

Lando: "Can we atleast talk about this."

Me: "There's nothing to talk

about Lando, you dont want a wedding and that's fine. It was presumptuous of me to think we wanted the same thing." She was about to say something but I just walked out.

I got to the kitchen and Junior was busy taking pictures of his goat wristband, (isphandla), probably to upload the pics on Instagram. I greet him and grab an apple before walking out. I find Sihle and Banele sitting in front of one of the houses drinking traditional beer with our cousins. I guess on Christmas day

theres no timetable for drinking.
I join them.

Some time before lunch a car pulls up to the gate and the kids go running to it. A guy comes out and hands the kids a package and leaves. The kids come running with the package and give it to me. I open it and theres three new cellphones in it. Theres also a card. I take out the card and it says to call Razor using the new phone. I look at the phones and they each have a tag, one is for Lando, another for Sihle and one for me.

I take the package and head back to the house. I take my phone out of the box and switch it on. It's been set up so I don't have to do much. I check the contacts and find numbers written Sbu and Razor but these aren't the usual numbers. I guess they also got new phones. I text Sihle and Lando to come to the house since they also have phones here. They show up together.

Sihle: "What's going on?" I show them the phones.

Me: "These arrived earlier. I figured since they have your names on them I might as well

call Razor so he can explain what's happening." I call Razor and put the call on loudspeaker. He picks up after what seemed like a minute.

Razor: "Bozza yam."

Me: "What's going on Razor? By the way you are on loudspeaker, Sihle and Lando are here."

Razor: "Sure sure mlungu. So our phones have been tapped. I don't know how yet but I found out the Detective has been suspended from the force pending investigation for misconduct.

Some of her team members are trying to prove her innocence so a

contact of mine said the police are looking into us, literally every single person associated with you is under investigation."

Me: "By everyone you mean....."

Razor: "I mean everyone, even Gugu is being looked into. That's why I got everyone new phones."

Lando: "So we get rid of the old ones?"

Razor: "No, we keep the old phones but we use those for business and business only. To ensure this I was thinking of blocking all our numbers from the old phones."

Sihle: "You dont think they will

notice that and start asking questions?"

Razor: "You are right, I guess no blocking then. So we will not be using the old phones for business, we'll keep normal legit conversations on the old phones and for business on the new phones, only and only if necessary."

Me: "Okay. Got it."

Razor: "Also mlungu you cant use your laptop to access the offshore accounts. Just business, legit business."

Lando: "How long do you think this will last, this manhunt, its getting tired."

Razor: "I know what you mean, and if it was up to me we would just put an end to this the best way we know how, but there's too many eyes on us so we need to tread carefully."

Me: "Okay man, thanks for the heads up."

Razor: "Sure thing. Merry Christmas." We hang up.

Sihle: "I think maybe it's time you file that lawsuit against the police. If they are working this hard to protect one of their own then we can forget about them taking accountability for framing you."

Me: "I think you are right. I'll call Lindani." He grabs his new phone and walks out leaving me with my wife. I turn around to leave.

Lando: "We can get married." I turn around to look at her.

Me: "Why? You are not in a hurry mosi."

Lando: "Look I know that I have been dragging my feet with this but I guess I've never seen it as important cause we are already married."

Me: "Landokuhle we got married at home affairs, what I want is for our marriage to be recognized even by our ancestors, why nis

that so hard for you to grasp. I know we are married and I paid lobola, twice, but you haven't been welcomed into the family the right way."

Lando: "I know, that's why I said I'll do it."

Me: "Dont do me any favors Landokuhle." I turn to leave and she rushes to block my way. She stands by the door. "Please move." She locks the door and puts the key in her bra. "I don't have time for games Lando."

Lando: "This isnt a game either. I know my reaction earlier wasn't what you were expecting but I've

had time to think about this and we can have the wedding in two months."

Me: "Fine, now can i go, the food will be finished by the time i get there."

Lando: "Fine. But you have to kiss me first." She says sulking. I'm the one who is supposed to be mad but now she's the one who is sulking. Women.

I walk over to her and wrap my arms around her waist, pulling her close to me.

Me: "You are crazy." She smiles.

Lando: "I know, and you love me anyway." I smile before planting a

kiss on her lips. The kiss gets intense and I lift her up, she wraps her legs around my waist and I lift her skirt up. She unzips my pants while I move her underwear aside and play with her clit. She moans and I shut her up with a kiss. I enter her and she almost screams but her lips are on mine so that helps. I love in and out of her and it feels so good.

We hear someone try to open the door and we freeze. They fiddle with the door for a few seconds before walking away. Lando buries her head on my shoulder and

laughs. I breath a sigh of relief and continue where I left off. I thrust into her a few more times before we heard voices coming. I could tell it was Sihle and Junior. Someone tries to open the door.

Junior: "I told you it was locked."

Sihle: "Find Lando or Philani, I'm sure one of them has the key."

Junior: "Okay." I hear one set of footsteps walking away. I decide to finish what I started before I open the door. My phone rings in my pocket.

Sihle: "Philani?" He knocks on the door. I thrust a few more times and I release, I thrust some

more and Lando cums too. My job here is done. I let her down and she rushes to the bedroom. Sihle knocks a few more times.

Me: "Yeah yeah dont break the door." I remember the key is in Lando's bra so I rush to the bedroom. "The key." She throws the key at me and I go back and open the door.

Sihle: "What's going on?"

Me: "What do you mean?"

Sihle: "Why is the door locked?"

Me: "I dont know." I whistle and walk out leaving him there.

Maybe it will be a Merry Christmas afterall.



NARRATED

In Johannesburg, Faith is in her house when she gets a text from Ngcebo telling her she is outside the gate. She excuses herself and walks to where her brother is.

She finds him standing next to his car on the side of the road.

Faith: "What's going on? You can't come in anymore?" She asks giving him a hug.

Ngcebo: "Of course not, I just didn't want to disturb your family lunch. Why didn't you go down to KZN?"

Faith: "It's a long story. What

are you doing here?"

Ngcebo: "I need a favour?"

Faith: "As long as it wont get me behind bars." He laughs.

Ngcebo: "Of course not. When last did you go to Lando and Philani's place?"

Faith: "Last night. I had to water some of her plants since she's away."

Ngcebo: "When are you going back again?"

Faith: "In two days. Why?"

Ngcebo: "I can water the plants for you if you dont mind."

Faith: "Why?" Her phone beeps. She takes it out and it's a

message from Razor.

Ngcebo: "You bought a new phone?"

Faith: "Uhm..... no..... its Mbuso's. I think he is cheating so I kept the phone to see when his girlfriend calls so I can tell her where to get off. So why do you want to go to Lando's house? I'm sure you are up to something. So what is it?"

Ngcebo: "I'd rather not involve you in this."

Faith: "Fine, then you can jump the fence or find a way to sneak in."

Ngcebo: "Please. This is

important."

Faith: "I don't care. You want me to hand you the keys to the house of your worst enemy? You must be out of your mind."

Ngcebo: "Sis wam ngyacela. Okay, I'm looking for something, it's not illegal or anything. I just want to find out where in the US my daughter is."

Faith: "Didn't Philani tell you that?"

Ngcebo: "No and it's the festive season I just want to talk to her or maybe even fly there." She sighs.

Faith: "Fine, come get the keys

tomorrow."

Ngcebo: "Thank you. And please dont tell them about this." She nods her head. He hugs her then gets into his car and drives off. She takes her phone out and makes a call.

Faith: "He fell for it."

Bab'Dlamini: "Good."

Faith: "Baba, are you sure this will work?"

Bab'Dlamni: "It has to. If I dont do this then I will end up burying my son. I'd rather he was behind bars than for him to be in a grave."

Faith: "Did you speak to

Bab'Biyela?"

Bab'Dlamini: "I did. And he gave me a choice. Either he puts a bullet in your brothers head or I find a way to put a leash on him. And this is the only way I know how since he wont listen."

Faith: "Okay. Even though this is putting me in an awkward position."

Bab'Dlamini: "I know. But his friends know about this so we are good. Plus he'll probably try to disconnect the cameras in the house before he goes in."

Faith: "So how will you prove he was there if the cameras arent

working?"

Bab'Dlamini: "Philani's friends already installed more cameras that will be under a different system than the ones there right now. So he will disable the cameras but there will be more watching him. Hopefully he shows up with that Detective."

Faith: "Okay. I guess it's better to have a brother in jail than one in a grave."

Bab'Dlamini: "Yeah. I'm just glad they came to me first before doing anything drastic. Anyways I'll call you later on your old phone to wish my grandbabies a Merry

Christmas. I love you babygirl.
And I'm sorry for dragging you
into this."

Faith: "I love you too dad. Bye."

She hangs up and walks back into
the house.

INSERT 95

They say revenge is a dish best
served cold, but what happens
when you look away even for just
one second and when you turn
around, the dish you left on the
table now has your name on it,
now you are the one that has to

eat what was meant to be someone else's meal.

That's the one constant thought that keeps popping up in Ngcebo's head. It's been twelve hours since he has been in this cold cell, and to make matters even worse Detective Maswanganyi is in a cell right next to him. This is not the plan they had, this is not how things were supposed to be.

Philani is the one who was supposed to be here, he's the one who is supposed to be paying for his crimes. But no, he is here.

A police officer stands before Ngcebo's cell looking at him while he bites into his apple.

Dladla: "Hhay kodwa Dlamini awulaleli man. (You dont listen.)

Bheka manje ukuphi. (Look at where you are now.)"

Ngcebo: "What do you want Dladla?"

Dladla: "What do I want? I want KFC for lunch."

Ngcebo: "Mxm. And you want it from me?"

Dladla: "Oh heck no. I can buy my own food. I just wanted to see for myself. When they told me you were here I couldn't believe it. So

I came to see for myself."

Ngcebo: "Great you have seen me now leave." Dladla laughs and moves to the next cell.

Dladla: "Precious Maswanganyi. You followed in your father's footsteps, every single step. I had hoped you would be a better cop honestly but no, you had to be daddy's little girl." Maswanganyi gets up from the cold concrete bench and walks over to the bars.

Detective: "Your day will come Dladla, you think we don't know about you? We know you work for Biyela and you've been taking bribes from him."

Dladla: "Even if that were true, you are the one inside a cell not me. You are the one facing charges not me, if I were you I would focus on finding a damn good lawyer because you will need one." He turns and walks away leaving these two alone.

Detective: "How did we get here Ngcebo? How did the cops know we would be at Biyela's house?"

Ngcebo: "How the fuck am I supposed to know?"

Detective: "Your sister! She's the only one who knew you would be at the house, she's the one who did this." Ngcebo shakes his head.

Ngcebo: "No! No! No! My sister would never do that."

Detective: "You do remember she is their friend right? And if you think blood is thicker than water then you are possibly really stupid."

Ngcebo: "My sister would never betray me like that. She wouldn't." Just then Ngcebo's father walks in. "Dad! What are you doing here?"

Bab'Dlamini: "I should be asking you that. What are you doing in a jail cell Ngcebo?"

Ngcebo: "I'll explain everything at home please get me out of here."

Bab'Dlamini: "I'm not getting you out Ngcebo, I think it's time you paid for all the things you have done."

Ngcebo: "You cant be serious right now. You have to get me out of here."

Bab'Dlamini: "I'm done saving you Ngcebo, this time you are on your own." He turns around and leaves while Ngcebo calls out to him.

He goes back and sits on the cold bench with his head buried in his hands, crying.



LANDO

Remember when I said this family deserves a reality show? Well I still stick by that. There is never ending drama in this family and that's part of the reason why I was so reluctant when Philani said we should get married officially, I can't help thinking about the drama that will happen at our wedding.

I woke up to countless texts and calls, apparently someone got into our house and planted drugs. I had a mild suspicion it was Ngcebo and sure enough Philani said it was him. Luckily the police got there in time and apprehended

him and the detective. I can't believe the lengths people go to for their own selfish self-serving needs.

I finished packing our stuff since we are going back to Joburg today. We've never celebrated New Years this side and this year is no different. Gogo wanted us to leave the kids behind but Philani would hear none of that. We said our goodbyes and got into the car and drove off.

Me: "Can I ask you something?"

Philani: "Sure."

Me: "How did Ngcebo get into the house. There's security all over

the place."

Philani: "He had a key and the access codes." He says with no care in the world.

Me: "How did he get the keys and the access codes. The only person we gave the keys to was Faith!"

Philani: "I know."

Me: "No! Faith wouldn't do that. She wouldn't."

Philani: "Any other day she wouldn't but we needed to catch Ngcebo in the act and lucky for us we also got Detective Maswanganyi too. Talk about killing two birds with one stone."

Me: "So she knew about all of

this?"

Philani: "Of course. So you can relax. Your friend did not betray you." I took a deep breath and looked out the window.

Me: "So what happens now?"

Philani: "Nothing. We let the cops handle it. And since IPID is now involved they will take care of everything."

Me: "And what makes you think they will go to jail?"

Philani: "Trust me it will be a long time before they see the light of day. Even Zama and that journalist will be charged as accessories."

I don't know what's more scary, there's been a whole lot of shit that's happened since I married Philani, but the one constant thing has been fighting threats from every corner. If it wasn't Rafael, then it was Ayanda and her human trafficking then Uche and her seduction tricks, then Buli's dad and his stupidity. We've been through a whole lot of stuff and the fact that we got through all that and we are still standing, maybe making this official in every way will not be such a bad thing. I drifted off to sleep with a smile on my face.

I woke up to the sound of Philani talking to someone, it was already dark outside. This is not our house. I looked at Philani's side and he was busy filling in some forms. When he was done he handed them back to the security. The gates opened and we drove in, and right at the top was a big sign that said welcome to Kambaku River Lodge. I guess we wont be spending new years at home.

Me: "What are we doing here? And where are we?" He smiled, a naughty and satisfied smile. He

was clearly satisfied with himself.

Philani: "We are in Mpumalanga.

We are spending new years eve this side."

Me: "Okay."

We drove into the place and it looked amazing, and seeing it at night might just be the lights playing tricks on me but it's beautiful. Hopefully it's not underwhelming in daylight.

We checked in and we were shown to our suite. It was overlooking the river and there was a pool that looked like an invite to swim. I think I'll enjoy being here. I looked around the suite and found

a room that had been turned into a nursery for the babies and another spare room for Gugu.

Gugu went straight to her room and locked herself in. Teenagers!

I'm pretty sure this nursery wasn't here before today but Philani being the person he is I'm sure went all out to make sure it was here. Good for us cause we can get our freak on without the kids watching, that would just be traumatic for them.

I decided to take a shower while Philani gave the kids a bath.

When I was done I helped him get the kids dressed and ready

for bed. The road had tired them out so we put them in their makeshift bedroom and it was lights out soon as their heads hit the pillow. We went back to our bedroom cause Philani wanted to take a shower too.

Me: "I think I'll order some food."

Philani: "Already done. It should be here any moment now."

Me: "Okay Mr Biyela, you sure do know how to do this husband thing right." I said as I wrapped my arms around his waist and looked up at him, he had a smirk on his face and the stubble on his chin made him a little more sexy,

more than he usually is, come to think of it maybe I should encourage him to grow his beard. Philani: "Well you make it easy." He planted a kiss on my lips and parted my lips with his tongue. The kiss got deeper as he pushed me backwards till I fell on the bed. He parted my legs with his knees as he got on top of me. He opened my gown and almost jumped for joy when he found nothing under it. I lifted my legs and rested them on the bed as he went from my lips down to my neck planting kisses. He went further down sending all types of

sensations all over my body. He got to his destination and Lord have mercy this man knows how to use his mouth and tongue.

Me: "Oh.....Oh..... Yes.....oh Lord." We heard a knock on the door and we flat out ignored it. His phone rang and he replaced his tongue with his fingers.

Philani: "Hello..... Yes..... please come in and leave it in the lounge.....Thank you."

He threw his phone on the bed and went back to what he was doing. I felt every type of tingling and warmth make it's way to the center of my legs causing an

explosion. I hoped to God whoever was delivering our food had left because I would hate for them to have heard me scream like that. And I prayed Gugu had her headphones on too.

When my body had calmed down he stood up and took off his pants while staring at me, with his little stubble gleaming from the natural moisturizer it just got. Soon as I saw his dick pop out of the pants I dragged myself up and got off the bed. My knees and legs weren't really ready to stand on their own which worked for me. I got down on my knees and

wrapped my hands around his manhood and moved them up and down while looking straight in his eyes. I put his tip into my mouth and tasted the precum. I lifted him up and ran my tongue down the bottom of his dick all the way down to his balls. I cupped his balls in my hands before taking them into my mouth. I looked up at him and I swear his eyes rolled to the back of his head.

After a while I went back and put his dick in my mouth and gently moved it in and out of me. I felt his hands grab the back of my hand as he fucked my mouth

like never before. I felt him deep in my throat and thank God for my impressive gag reflexes, if it weren't for those I probably would have thrown up a few times. I felt him vibrate before spilling his cum deep in my throat. He pulled me up soon as he was done and kissed me before turning me around and bending me over the bed and burying himself deep into me. Five minutes later we were laying on the bed panting and trying to catch our breath. Me: "I think the food is cold." He laughed and got up. Philani: "Let me go check." He

went to the lounge and came back with the trolley filled with food. We ate and when we were done we took a shower together before falling asleep.

I woke up to a few sloppy kisses and little hands all over my face. I looked up and my babies smiled at me, even Lakhiwe with her little teeth coming out thought it was funny to slobber all over my face, but I wouldn't trade this for anything in the entire world. I looked at them and they weren't wearing pajamas. In fact they were fully dressed and ready for

the day. Philani came in from the lounge also dressed and ready. When did he get time to bath and dress the kids and himself too. Am I married to superman?

Philani: "Hey, you weren't supposed to wake mummy up." He said picking up Theo and tickling him.

Me: "When did you wake up?"

Philani: "About an hour and a half ago. The kids and I are ready we are just waiting for you so we can go and have breakfast."

Me: "Okay." I kissed him before heading to the bathroom. I took a quick shower and went back to

the bedroom. I lotioned and dressed while he played with the kids.

I finished dressing up and we took the kids and left. We got to the lounge and Gugu was already waiting. Soon as we walked in she stood up and helped us put the kids in the stroller and we walked out. I didnt even know they had a restaurant in this place. We made it to another area of the lodge that had a huge pool and a deck. On the deck there was a restaurant like set up. I guess I was wrong, they do have a restaurant. I stood by the

balcony and looked over to the other side of the river and watched the wildlife, there was giraffes and elephants. It was beautiful honestly.

I was about to turn back when I felt someone's hands cover my face. I touched the hands and they were male but definitely not Philani's.

Voice: "Guess who?" I swear I almost had a heart attack. I removed the hands and threw myself at my dad. "Hi babygirl." He said soon as I pulled myself away from him.

Me: "What are you doing here?"

Philani: "Well I figured we spent Christmas with my family so it's only fair we do New years this side." I threw myself at him and just kissed the daylights out of him.

Dad: "Okay that's enough." He said separating us. I heard laughter erupt behind us and when I looked over my whole family was here. Even my mother was here together with Ntombi. One thing I've always dreamed about is to be a part of a family. I've always wanted to belong, and now I do, not just to one family but both sides of my family and

my in-laws. And this is something else that has become a constant reminder in my life for the past two years, a family that loves me with all my flaws. I pray that the end of this year can also signal the beginning of not just another new year but a year free from all that has been thrown our way and the beginning of the good times part for our marriage, I mean we have been through the worst already, so it should be smooth sailing from now on.

INSERT 96

It's a new year, and I won't bore you with the whole new year new me shit. We drove back to Joburg last night after spending almost a week in Mpumalanga. Spending time with my family was amazing, and my mum and I are slowly rebuilding our relationship. Slowly but surely, who knows, maybe we'll end up having the kind of bond that most mother's and daughters have, that would be amazing, but I have decided to take each day as it comes.

I woke up early to make breakfast for my mini family. I was busy humming and frying

eggs when I felt someone watching me. I turned around and found Gugu sitting on the highchair looking at me with a smile on her face. My baby is growing up, but the most important thing is that she is being a kid again.

Me: "What's with the smile on your face?"

Gugu: "Nothing. It's just nice to see you happy."

Me: "Well I was just thinking the same thing about you. So where are you off to this early?"

Gugu: "I'm going jogging."

Me: "You know where the gym is."

Gugu: "I was actually thinking of going out to jog."

Me: "Let's see, last year I went jogging and I didn't come back, I'm not taking that chance. You can jog on the treadmill. Besides why do you need to get in shape, you are fifteen."

Gugu: "And I'm be sixteen in just a few months, besides Its never too late to take care of yourself."

Me: "What's his name?"

Gugu: "Whose name? I have no idea what you are talking about."

She says grabbing an apple and running off.

I continued cooking and I was just finishing up when I felt Philani wrap his arms around me and kiss my neck.

Philani: "Why weren't you in bed when I woke up? I needed a pick me up."

Me: "Well we have kids in this house and they need to eat. And so do you. Have a seat." He takes a seat and I dish up for him and give him his food. "I think Gugu has a crush on someone."

Philani: "Who?"

Me: "That's the thing, she won't tell me. Probably someone she goes to school with."

Philani: "I'll get Sbu on it."

Me: "Okay hold up. I didnt mean you have to go psycho about it."

Philani: "If she has a crush on someone then I need to find out who and break his bones and if he is cute maybe leave a scar on his face."

Gugu: "Really! I dont have a crush on anyone." She says coming into the kitchen and sitting down to eat.

Me: "Okay then why the sudden need to exercise all of a sudden?"

Gugu: "I play netball, and since I over indulged during the festive season i figured I should get in

shape before school starts."

Philani: "See! I told you there was a perfectly good example and there was no need to break some poor guys bones." Just like that he turned on me. He's the one who was dead set on breaking some bones but now I'm the bad guy. And now they are busy discussing God knows what completely ignoring me. Mxm.

I leave them there and head upstairs to get the babies. I change Lakiwe's diaper first before moving to Theo. Once I am done I carry them downstairs

and place them in their high chairs and feed them.

After breakfast I take a bath and get ready for brunch with the girls. Soon as I am done I find Gugu waiting for me downstairs.

Me: "Where are you going?"

Gugu: "To the mall. Can I get a lift."

Me: "You'll be at the mall by yourself?"

Gugu: "No I am meeting some friends."

Me: "Okay as long as there are no boys."

Gugu: "You need to relax." We get

into the car and drive off.

Me: "So how was it like being with your mum."

Gugu: "Okay I guess. She's trying."

Me: "I guess."

I drop her off at the mall and then head to LaCuna Bistro to meet the girls. I find Taki already there. We hug and I sit down and pour a glass of wine.

Me: "Where are the others?"

Taki: "Late. As usual. So how was your festive?"

Me: "Good. Great actually."

Taki: "Okay, the smile on your face says it was a memorable

one."

Me: "Definitely. And yours?"

Taki: "So so. Lindani's family is full of drama queens and even worse drama kings. I had to wake up at 4 am every day I was there to make breakfast for the whole village, and to make matters worse, they all want different things at different times. One old lady wants Mabele porridge another wants scones, his sister wants bacon, another wants sausages. By the time we start on lunch my feet are two times their original size."

Me: "What did Lindani say?"

Taki: "He thought it was cute that his family likes my food until he realized he wont be getting any for the next few months cause I will be tired as fuck so he put a stop to the torture quick quick."

Me: "The power of the pussy."

Taki: "Exactly." We clicked our glasses and laughed. Buli and Faith finally joined us.

Buli: "Ladies, happy new year."

Me: "Hey." We make our order and wait for our food.

Me: "Did you tell Nate about the baby."

Buli: "Yep, he called the news the

best Christmas gift ever."

Taki: "So you were freaking out for nothing?"

Buli: "Pretty much yeah. And his family is over the moon too. So we are good."

Me: "So you really didnt go to KZN for Christmas this year?"

Faith: "No! I still dont trust that place. And Mbuso's mother has been trying to worm her way back into the family so I did not want to risk it."

Me: "I'm pretty sure that is not the only reason you look like the world is resting on your shoulder. What's going on?"

Faith: "Well my brother is in jail and I helped put him there. I know it was the right thing to do but I cant help feeling guilty about it."

Me: "I'm sorry friend."

Faith: "Dont be, somebody had to put a stop to him."

As much as I am happy that Ngcebo is out of our lives I understand Faith's pain. No matter how bad things are between siblings I don't think anyone wants to be responsible for putting their sibling in jail.



PHILANI

I drove to the Kgosi Mampuru 11 correctional center in Pretoria where Ngcebo is being held, dont ask why cause I also dont know. But I have this crazy urge to look at him in the eyes and ask him why? why he wont let me be. He keeps coming for me and honestly I am tired of ducking and diving because of him.

I drove into the prison and told them who I was here to see, I was told he is still with his lawyer so I had to wait. My phone rang just before I was ushered into the waiting area. The warden was looking at me funny so I just

put my phone away. I decided to put it on silence. I sat down and waited for him to be brought in. Ten minutes later he was still not here. An officer came in from where Ngcebo is supposed to come in and asked me to stand up. I did and he went on to search me again. How many times am I supposed to be searched?

Officer: "Whatever you do or say to him dont say anything that will implicate you in anything, play the victim and deny everything." He said and walked away after searching me. And while I was still confused by that Ngcebo

walked in with handcuffs in his legs and arms. He sat down on the seat across from me.

Ngcebo: "What did I do to deserve a visit from you?"

Me: "I need answers. Why did you do it? Why would you try and plant drugs in my house? What did I do to you?" He looks at me and smiles.

Ngcebo: "Biyela there is absolutely no need to pretend. We both know what you did to me, first you took my girlfriend and then you killed Maswanganyi because he came to your office looking for drugs."

Me: "Maswanganyi did not find any

drugs in my office."

Ngcebo: "Because you took them and hid them, then you fed them to Palesa and Simamkele."

Me: "I knew something wasn't right with you but I didn't realise you were that delusional. I think you need to have yourself checked out. Something is not right with you."

Ngcebo: "Dude you and I know what you are capable of stop playing games with me."

Me: "Ngcebo firstly Lando was never your girlfriend, Palesa and Simamkele are in the States, you know that, and as for

Maswanganyi I know nothing about him and his death. All I want from you is answers, what gives you the right to come into my house with drugs, why Ngcebo?"

Ngcebo: "This has to be a joke right? It has to be?" I stand up and look at him.

Me: "Clearly you wont give me the answers I need, I just hope while you are in there you find Jesus because you need him." I left him there with his mouth wide open and walked out to my car.

I took my phone out of my pocket and I found a few missed calls

from Dladla. I decided to call him back while I drove out of the prison.

Dladla: "Ntshangase why weren't you picking up my calls."

Me: "My phone was on silent. What's going on?"

Dladla: "Why would you go to see Dlamini, you know the cops are watching you."

Me: "Because I needed to look the idiot in the eyes when he told me what his problem is."

Dladla: "I hope you didnt threaten him or anything like that."

Me: "I didnt, some guy told me

not to implicate myself."

Dladla: "Good, that's one of my contacts on the inside. Ngcebo is still maintaining his innocence so he had a wire or some recording device on him. His lawyer found out you were there so she encouraged him to get a confession out of you."

Me: "How do you know all of this?"

Dladla: "You pay me to know these things Ntshangase."

Me: "Nx. Ngcebo doesn't know when to stop."

Dladla: "Say the word and I'll have him wheeled to the morgue by morning."

Me: "Do it."

Dladla: "Are you sure?"

Me: "I'm tired of Ngcebo and his stupidity. This year I am removing any obstacles standing in my way. And Ngcebo is a start."

Dladla: "Finally. He's lucky he is on the inside, I would have loved to put the bullet in his head myself."

Me: "You and me both. But now we'll have to let someone else do the honors."

Dladla: "I will let you know once it's done."

I hung up and focused on the road ahead. Even though I have been out of this business for a

while now there will always be someone thinking they can come for me. And Ngcebo is one of the people who never give up. And if getting him out of the way is my only option then so be it. I'm done playing nice.

INSERT 97

One thing I've never been able to do, plan something that involves more than ten people. A braai, I can handle, dinner, piece of cake but a wedding, well that's just a whole different ball game. And planning a wedding that has to have at least two hundred guests

would be giving me anxiety at this point but lucky me my husband hired a wedding planner for us so I can rest easy and just enjoy this moment. Damn I am getting married, this time for real.

I have a meeting with the wedding planner, I haven't met her yet and Philani wouldn't tell me who it is so this will just be a huge surprise. And lucky for me this meeting is happening before I go back to work so I'll have time to day dream about my big day.

I set the snacks and drinks on the table and wait, impatiently

so. I keep peeking out the window to see if she's there or not. I don't know why I keep doing that cause I would have to buzz her in first before she even drives in and I can't even see the gate. I'm nervous and I don't know why. It's not like I'm the one who is planning her wedding, she is planning mine so it's me she has to impress not the other way round. I pour a glass of whiskey from Philani's mini bar in the lounge and my nerves calm down a bit.

After what seemed like an eternity she finally shows up. I

buzz her in and wait for her by the door. I wait for her as she parks the car and I can see a glimpse of her. I cross my fingers and hope its who I think it is. She gets out of the car and my heart does a somersault coupled with a few backflips but I have to keep myself composed. Even though I have an entire disco going on inside me, I try to pull myself together. This is the one and only Mandy Mayiza of Mandy's Dream Celebrations. This woman does the most exquisite weddings, traditional, destination, you name it she has done it, and I am yet

to hear someone complain about her services. How did Philani even get her because she is booked months in advance, sometimes even a year in advance and she is standing right in front of me, about to plan my wedding in less than two months. She walks up the stairs with her folder in her hand and a smile on her face.

Mandy: "Mrs Biyela, how are you."
She says holding out her hand for a handshake.

Me: "Hi, I'm good how are you?"

Mandy: "I'm good, are you ready to plan your wedding?"

Me: "I am. Please come in." I lead

her into the house and show her where to sit. Gugu comes running down the stairs with her own notebook and sits down next to Mandy. "I don't remember inviting you."

Gugu: "You are my sister, you never have to ask." Mandy smiles and looks at her. "I'm Gugu by the way, the maid of honor."

Mandy: "I'm Mandy, the wedding planner."

Gugu: "Actually you should call yourself a wedding Coordinator. What you do with weddings is more than just plan, you literally bring dreams to reality." I take a

seat across from them and watch this exchange. How did Gugu even know she's the one who'll be planning the wedding?

Mandy: "So you know my work,"

Gugu: "Who doesn't? You are like a legend, I'm sure you have a waiting list the size of my arm."

I clear my throat and they both turn to look at me before laughing.

Mandy: "I'm sorry let's get down to work. So first things first, ceremony venue. I have narrowed it down to my top three, if you don't like any of those I have a few more to look at." She puts

three pictures on the table in front of me. One is a vineyard location, another is an old charming church and the last one is what looks like a garden venue at a hotel. I'm not sure which one to choose because they all look amazing.

Gugu: "We'll take the vineyard."

Me: "Okay Miss Assistant hold your horses. I have a question, can we also plan a traditional wedding too?"

Mandy: "With the amount of money your husband is paying me, we could plan a wedding for every day of the week. All you have to

do is say the word." She says smiling.

Me: "Speaking of my husband, how did he convince you to do this, I'm pretty sure you have people who booked you way before he did."

Mandy: "Well your husband is very persistent and he doesn't really take no for an answer. As for my other clients I have a very capable team." Yep I knew he had to have done some serious convincing to get her here.

The planning session takes longer than usual and Gugu is dead set on having her opinion heard.

Seeing her laugh and be so

involved makes me happy, I wish I could take her happiness right now and bottle it up, so whenever she feels down i can give her even the smallest shot and make her happy all the time.

After making a whole lot of decisions we came to the conclusion that I want a traditional wedding. Not the contemporary traditional version but the proper traditional and since I am not clued up much on Swati traditions I have to recruit my family to help me out, especially my dad since I'll be leaving from there.

After the meeting Gugu disappeared into her room like she didn't just make decisions for me for almost two hours. I decided to start on dinner soon as Mandy left. I was busy cooking when I my phone beeped. I took it and powered it up and it was a text from Faith. I called her back cause I didn't understand what her text meant and she told me Ngcebo was stabbed in jail and he was rushed to hospital and she was going there. I told her to pass by my house and pick me up. I hung up and switched off the stove, I put the meat back in

the fridge and rushed up to Gugu's room. I found her laying on the bed with headsets on.

Me: "Hey."

Gugu: "What's up?"

Me: "Can you watch the kids for me, I have to go to Pretoria. And Philani should be home soon."

Gugu: "No problem. What's wrong?"

Me: "I dont know, I'll let you know when I get back." I turned and walked out.

I changed my dress to a pair of Jean's and a sweatshirt with sneakers. I took my phone and rushed out. I waited for Faith

outside the gate. She showed up and I got into the passenger seat and we drove to Pretoria.

Me: "What happened? Like for real what happened?"

Faith: "I don't know. All I do know is that I helped put my brother in jail and now he might die."

Me: "Babe it's not your fault. You can't blame yourself for this."

Faith: "Who am I supposed to blame then? I helped put him in jail and now he is in hospital. Who am I supposed to blame?" I couldn't give her an answer because no matter what I said she wouldn't believe me.

We drove to Steve Biko Academic Hospital. We parked the car and rushed in. We asked the nurse at reception and she told us to go to the emergency area. When we got there there were two correctional officers in the waiting area together with another lady.

Faith: "Hi. My brother was brought in earlier, are you perhaps with him?"

Lady: "You must be Faith. I'm advocate Mayiza, Ngcebo's lawyer." She extends her hand for a handshake.

Faith: "Yeah, this is Lando my friend. Hows my brother."

Advocate: "We are still waiting for the doctor to update us."

Me: "How serious were his injuries."

Advocate: "Its hard to tell honestly but most of them were on his abdomen, I'm just hoping that no vital organs were affected."

We sat down on the benches and began our virgil, praying that he comes out alive. Ngcebo is no saint I know that but no one deserves this.



PHILANI

I left Lando at home busy prepping for her meeting with the wedding planner, the way she was so nervous you would think she was meeting the president of the country. I decided to go to the lounge for a late new years party with my boys.

I got there and the place was already busy since we were also hosting a new years party for the lounge employees, they didn't get to celebrate new years eve because the lounge was packed so they had to work. And today they get to relax and be served. We brought in an outside catering and

serving company. There was booze galore and we even said they could invite their friends and families too. And that is how the lounge ended up being packed full. I got in and found the guys upstairs in the office.

Me: "Gentlemen."

Lindani: "Finally. We were thinking you are not coming anymore."

Me: "Never brother." I poured myself a drink and sat down. "I see the place is packed."

Sihle: "If only all those people were paying for their drinks." We laughed. One thing Sihle loves more than anything in the world

is money.

Nate: "Dude, it's just one day, the business won't fail just because we didn't make money for one day."

Sihle: "I'm just saying."

Sizwe: "Stop saying and drink."

Banele and Junior walk in and greet. Junior sits down while Banele pours their drinks. I watch him pour two glasses of whiskey. He is over eighteen so legally he can drink but I wonder whose going to drink the second glass. He takes both glasses and sits down next to Junior. He hands him the other glass. And just as Junior is about to put the

glass to his lips Sizwe reaches over and takes the glass.

Junior: "And now?"

Me: "How old are you?"

Junior: "Almost eighteen."

Us: "Almost doesn't count." We sang together.

Me: "There's juice over there."

Junior: "Really?"

Me: "Yes really. Until you are eighteen years old, alcohol is off limits to you." He mumbled something and got up to pour himself juice. We sat there for hours just drinking and laughing and having fun.

I got up and went to the toilet to pee. I got in and did what I came here to do. While I was washing my hands my phone rang. I pulled out a paper towel and wiped my hands before taking my phone out and answering.

Me: "Hello!"

Dladla: "Ntshangase."

Me: "Dladla? What's going on?"

Dladla: "Amadlozi akini asebenza ivertime, amaweekends nama holiday. (Your ancestors are working hard.)"

Me: "Why? What happened."

Dladla: "Dlamini is laying in a hospital bed as we speak, he is

halfway dead."

Me: "You guy did it?"

Dladla: "Actually that's where your ancestors come in. Dlamini got into a fight with someone who's territory he stole when he started dealing a few years ago. The guy was set up, cops found him with two million rands worth of coke, he was sentenced to twenty five years behind bars, but the fun part, the drugs dissapeared from the police station after he was sentenced."

Me: "So Ngcebo used his product to set up this guy then took it back after."

Dladla: "Yep. Smart right?"

Me: "You know if that man used half his brain he would be the best dealer in town. And if he used his full brain he would be the best surgeon in this country."

Dladla: "Maybe if his ancestors work as hard as yours he will live and hopefully change."

Me: "I doubt that. Thanks for letting me know." I hung up.

Maybe Dladla is right. I need to slaughter a cow for abantu abadala.

I left the toilet and went back to the office. I texted Lando and she didnt reply. I tried to call her

and still no answer. I decided to text Gugu and she replied within seconds. She told me Lando had gone to Pretoria but she wouldn't say what she went to do there. I asked her if she was okay with the kids and she said she was fine. But she was too lazy to cook. I ordered food from uber eats to be delivered to the house. I wonder what Lando was doing in Pretoria. It's almost eight o'clock and she is still not home.

I stayed a couple more hours but my mind was no longer here. I tried calling Lando again but she still wouldn't pick up. I decided to

leave the guys and head back home. By the time I got there the kids were asleep, Gugu was watching a movie and Lando was nowhere to be found. I tried calling her but her phone kept sending me to voicemail over and over again. I sat in the lounge with Gugu and tried to watch the movie.

At something to twelve she finally showed up. Lucky for me Gugu had gone to bed so when she walked in it was just me in the lounge.

Lando: "Hey!"

Me: "Where have you been?"

Lando: "Uhm, I went to Pretoria."

Me: "I know you went to Pretoria. What were you doing in Pretoria?"

Lando: "I went to see Ngcebo, she was stabbed in jail." I chuckled and got up from the couch to look at her.

Me: "So you left two little kids with a teenager to go see your boyfriend?"

Lando: "I went to support my best friend whose brother was stabbed, is fighting for his life. Why is that so hard to believe."

Me: "I dont know Lando you left our kids alone and stayed the whole night in some hospital

forgetting that you left the kids without food."

Lando: "For heavens sake there's food in this house. Why are you like this."

Me: "The fact that you even have to ask me that is appalling." I leave her there and walk upstairs.

Maybe I am overreacting, maybe I'm not. U dont know anymore. A part of me knows Lando is always there for her friends, but the thought of her holding a virgil next to her exes bed waiting for him to wake up makes my blood boil. I stripped and got under the

shower just to calm myself down. I got out of the shower and found Lando sitting on the bed. Lando: "I'm sorry." I ignored her and just got into bed. I switched the side lamp off and got under the covers. "So you wont talk to me?" I know I am probably being petty but if this was any other person she had gone to see then maybe I would be a little more understanding but this is Ngcebo we are talking about, her ex and the guy who has been working overtime to get his revenge on me. Maybe if I say a prayer tonight he'll be gone by morning

and maybe that would be the end of my problems.

INSERT 98

You know that song that says "my mind is telling me no, but my body, my body is telling me yesss?" Its true, the body has a mind of its own, always. Even though we went to bed with Philani upset with me, by morning I was snuggled up in his arms. I chose not to disturb him even though I needed to pee. I felt him stir behind me, I thought he'd wake up instead he wrapped his arms tighter around me.

I don't know when he woke up but I knew he was up when I felt him kiss me on the top of my head.

Me: "I'm sorry." He keeps quiet.

"I know I should have let you know that I was going to Pretoria, but I didn't go there for Ngcebo, I went to support Faith. You know if the tables were turned Faith would have done the same for me."

Philani: "I know. I'm sorry I overreacted." I turn around to look at him. "So how is Faith holding up?"

Me: "She's okay. Ngcebo is critical

but stable." He laughs.

Philani: "What the hell does that even mean?"

Me: "I don't know, that's what the doctor said."

Philani: "Hhaya these doctors need to come up with new terms, these ones are just confusing. So he'll live?"

Me: "We'll have to wait and see."

Philani: "Forget about Ngcebo, how did your meeting with the planner go?" I smile.

Me: "Firstly, how did you get Mandy to do this, that woman has a waiting list the size of my arm." He smiles.

Philani: "Well I have my ways."

Me: "I hope your ways dont include sleeping with her." He laughs.

Philani: "You are so cute when you're jealous but no, I did not sleep with her. So what kind of wedding are we having?"

Me: "A Traditional wedding." He seems shocked.

Philani: "Traditional? I thought all women want a white wedding."

Me: "Maybe for our tenth wedding anniversary. For now I want to leave my home in my traditional attire and enter your home with inyongo on my head." I swear if he

smiles any harder I'll see his molars.

Philani: "I never thought I'd see the day. But ke I am happy." He says and plants a kiss on my lips. The kiss deepens and I feel his hand go down my pants. He grabs my ass and as if she knows we are up Lakiwe starts crying. I get up and go to their room. I knew it wasn't time for her to be up yet. Theo decided to sneak out of his cot, God only knows how, but to make matters worse, He climbed onto Lakiwe's crib and woke her up. Asking him would be a useless exercise so I just pick

them both up and go downstairs to start breakfast. I place them on their high chairs and give them some pretzels to keep them busy.

My phone rings while I am setting the table. It's a private number. I pick it up.

Me: "Hello!"

Caller: "Hello Landokuhle?"

Me: "Yes this is she?"

Caller: "I am Doctor Moagi from Steve Biko Academic Hospital, I am calling on behalf of Ngcebo Dlamini, he would like for you to come see him."

Me: "He's up? When? How?" I

ask, last night he was critical and today he's up? How does that work?

Caller: "Yes, he woke up in the early hours of the morning. But I'll explain everything when you get here." I didnt even say I was coming.

Me: "I'm not sure if I'll be able to make it."

Caller: "Please make time, he says it's really important."

Me: "Okay! I'll see what I can do."

Caller: "Thank you." She hangs up before I can even reply. I wonder what Ngcebo wants, but most

importantly if I do decide to go see him, how will I explain that to Philani.

Once the table is set I call Philani to come down and text Gugu since she's probably busy on her phone with headsets on. They come down and we sit down and have breakfast but my mind is not really there.

After breakfast Gugu offers to clean up the kitchen while I bath the kids. I make the decision to go and see Ngcebo and find out what it is he wants to say, now I just need to find a way to make sure my husband doesn't find out.

When I finish bathing the kids I take them to our bedroom, I find Philani getting dressed. I place the kids on the bed.

Me: "You are going somewhere?"

Philani: "Yeah I'm going to see my dad, I'm taking the kids too." One problem solved. "You wanna come?"

Me: "No thank you. Your dad will feed them all the sweet things he can find and then I'll be running after them the whole day, so no thank you." He laughs.

Philani: "Okay, I'll tell him you said hi."

Me: "I'll pack the kids bag." I leave him and go back to the

nursery. I pack all that the kids will need, diapers, wipes, toys and a change of clothes. I go downstairs and pack some bottles to last the whole day.

Philani comes down with the kids in both his arms and Gugu behind him. Gugu took the bag and they left.

I rushed upstairs soon as I heard the car drive out. I took a quick shower and put on some Jean's and a tshirt. I knew they wouldn't be back anytime soon so I needed to make sure I am back from Pretoria before they come back. I texted Buli and told her if

Philani calls, she should tell him I am with her. I know if he doesn't get hold of me he will try to call her or Faith soni needed to cover all my bases.

I arrived in Pretoria fifty minutes later and hurried in to see Ngcebo. When I walked into the ward he had an oxygen mask on his face and his eyes were closed. I thought they said he woke up. I walked closer to him, one arm was handcuffed to the bed. How do you even handcuff someone who cant even stand up by himself.

I sat on the chair next to his bed, I tried placing my bag on the stand next to his bed and I accidentally knocked a glass over. I looked at him and his eyes were open. I smiled.

Me: "Hi!" He struggled to move his hand up to his mask and I didn't know if I should help him or stop him. He moved the mask with his one free hand.

Ngcebo: "Hey, thank you for coming." He said struggling to even utter the words.

Me: "The doctor said it was important so here I am."

Ngcebo: "It is, at least to me. I

wanted to say I am sorry, for everything, I know I should be apologizing to Philani but I don't think I have the heart to face him." He said taking almost forever to say the words. I gave him a glass of water before he continued. "I've been too much of an idiot, I thought all I was doing was fighting for you but truth is you were never mine to begin with, you probably would have been though if I hadn't dragged my feet." He coughed again and I gave him water. I tried to say something but he held up his hand to stop me from

talking. "I don't need you to say anything, I just wanted to say I'm sorry, and tell Philani I said sorry too."

Me: "You sound like someone saying their last words. Are you planning on dying?" He tried to laugh but his injuries wouldn't let him.

Ngcebo: "No, I guess when you come close to dying you just try to make amends where possible."

We talked a bit more before I had to go back home.

I got home and found that Philani was still not back, I sighed and decided to prep for dinner. I figured a mini braai

would do so i took out the meat from the freezer. I took a deep breath and said a little prayer, hopefully Ngcebo wasnt just bluffing. I hope he really means what he said.



PHILANI

My dad called me and asked me to come to see him cause he had something to talk to me about. I figured this would also be the right time to tell him about the wedding.

I dropped Gugu off at the mall and gave her my card. I drove to

Dainfern and my dad was happy to see the kids and they seemed happy to see him. The maid gave the kids some cupcakes and all Lakhiwe did was smash it all over her face. My dad seemed to be enjoying this, he even took a couple of pictures. The maid took the kids to the playroom and my dad and I went to his study.

Me: "So I have news."

Dad: "Yeah."

Me: "Lando and I are getting married."

Dad: "Arent you already married?"

He asks with a smirk on his face.

Me: "You know what I mean."

We've set a date for the official wedding. Its next month."

Dad: "Okay, so we must prepare our suits?"

Me: "More like prepare Ibheshu. She wants a traditional wedding." And that was enough to put a smile on his face.

Dad: "I'll let the family know. I cant wait."

Me: "Okay, your turn."

Dad: "Right." He gets up and walks to the painting on the wall, he takes it down and opens the safe behind it. He comes back with a black box and places it in front of me. "Open it." I open it

and its full of jewellery, mums jewellery.

Me: "This is mum's jewellery."

Dad: "I know, and now it's yours."

I laugh.

Me: "Yeah dad I dont think....." I pick up a diamond necklace with a cross pendant on it "this will look good on me." He laughs.

Dad: "No but it might look good on your wife." He takes the necklace and opens the pendant and hands it back. Inside the pendant is a USB drive. "In there is everything you'll need to run the cartel."

Me: "I'm sorry what?"

Dad: "I am stepping down from the cartel. And you will be taking over."

Me: "I thought you dismantled the cartel?"

Dad: "I did, and then put it back together again with people I chose and trust."

Me: "So people you can control basically."

Dad: "If you want to call it that." He picks up a watch and opens it at the back and takes out a memory card. "In here you will find all the passwords and accounts to the offshore accounts."

Me: "Okay."

Dad: "I should warn you though, whatever you do never ever mix BH with the cartel, the cartel will open doors for you when it comes to BH but never mix the two, ever. Biyela Holdings stays legit, that is a legacy you will pass on to your kids one day so it stays clean."

Me: "I know. But didnt you say we should leave the business?"

Dad: "The business you are in is the little league, the cartel is a whole different level. More organized and tou delegate a lot, so even if people dont know who

you are you can still run it from the shadows. Just put one person you trust and make them the face."

Me: "Wait so who was the face of the cartel when Rodriguez was running it?"

Dad: "Rodriguez was the face. He took over ten years ago after killing the person I had put in charge. He started stealing soon after that, I came out of the shadows and made him think he was in charge, so killing him and taking all he owns was just sweet revenge."

Me: "So it took you ten years to do

that."

Dad: "Son, you don't catch flies with vinegar, you need honey and a bucket load of patience." There is a small knock on the door before it opens and a lady walks in. She looks familiar.

Lady: "Oh Ntshangae, I didn't know you had a meeting, I'll come back later." She smiles and walks out. I look at my dad and he has a smile plastered all over his face.

Me: "Who was that?"

Dad: "My girlfriend."

Me: "She looks familiar, do I know her?"

Dad: "I don't think so." He says

looking away, and then it clicks, she is Lando's aunt.

Me: "Wait a minute, that's aunt Norah, that's Lando's aunt."

Dad: "I didnt know that." He wont even look at me.

Me: "Baba!"

Dad: "Okay okay, it is. Dont look at me like that I am a man and I have needs." Okay that was my cue.

Me: "Bye!" I picked up the box and walked out and he was busy laughing. Mxm.

I decided to leave, and I left the kids behind. And just when I was

driving into my house I got a call from my dad. I picked up.

Me: "Hello!"

Dad: "You forgot your kids." I chuckled.

Me: "I didnt forget them, I left them with their grandpa." I could smell the frustration.

Dad: "How am I supposed to get my freak on with them around."

Me: "You are too old to be getting your freak on. Have fun."

Dad: "Stop being a cockblocker come get your kids."

Me: "I cant hear you I think the network is bad this side. Have a nice night."

Dad: "I KNOW WHERE YOU LIVE!" I just laughed and hung up then switched my phone off. I got into the house and went straight to my office to put the box in the safe and lock it away. I went back to the kitchen and found Lando busy cooking. I wrapped my arms around her waist.

Me: "Hey, want to go out to dinner?"

Lando: "I just made dinner."

Me: "We'll eat it tomorrow. Go get changed I'll finish up here." She turned around to look at me.

Lando: "Where are my kids?"

Me: "Sleeping over at grandpa's. Go get changed." I kissed her on the cheek and she left and went to change. I switched the stove off. She came down after ten minutes and we headed out to our impromptu dinner.

PS unedited ❤️❤️

INSERT 98-(2)

Why is it that when you are planning something time seems to go fast, or maybe it's my excitement taking over. Oh well I can't really turn back the hands of time now even if I wanted to.

My wedding is a two weeks away and I need to go home, mostly because I need to practice traditional dance. I am Swati yes but I've never done any traditional dancing and that time I want a traditional wedding. I don't know why anyone didnt try to stop me. I should have just had a white wedding like most normal people.

Today I have to go home, my dad guilt tripped me into coming home early even though he used the practice excuse he knew that wasnt really the reason. But I agreed so now I have to go. I

packed my clothes and the kids clothes, Philani tried to convince me to leave the kids behind but I just couldn't, two weeks without them, I won't survive.

I was in the bedroom packing my last bag when Philani walked in. He stopped by the door and looked at all the luggage in shock.

Philani: "Are you leaving me?" I chuckled.

Me: "For two weeks yes, I'll be back."

Philani: "Babe there's three suitcases on the floor."

Me: "I know, this one has dresses and skirts, this one has pants

and, top and jerseys, and this one has shoes, then finally my make up and cosmetics." I say pointing them out.

Philani: "Okay so which one has the kids clothes?"

Me: "Oh the kids have their own luggage." He looks at me like I am crazy. "Dont look at me like that, i will need everything in here."

Philani: "I know better than to argue that fact."

Me: "Thank you, now come here, we need to talk." I sit down on the bed wait for him to come join me. He jumps over the suitcases,

the drama.

Philani: "I hope you are not going to tell me that you are not coming back." I laugh.

Me: "Definitely not that. Have you heard anything about Ngcebo?"

Philani: "He was discharged from hospital, he went back to prison, that's all i know."

Me: "I went to see him a few weeks back."

Philani: "I know."

Me: "You know? Are you spying on me?"

Philani: "Nope, but it's my job to know. I'll take the bags down to the car."

Me: "So just like that we'll pretend it never happened?"

Philani: "No, it happened, you didn't tell me about it, and that's that. Getting mad about it seems like a waste of time when you'll just go back and do the same thing again."

Me: "I'm sorry I didn't tell you."

Philani: "It doesn't matter. You are not a child Landokuhle, and I can't keep telling you what to do. If you feel that keeping secrets works for you then that's fine. I'll take the bags down." He gets up and grabs two bags and he leaves. How did he even find out?

Mxm, this is not how I wanted us to part. I need to make things right before I leave.

I take more bags and take them out. I meet Nate and Buli coming up the stairs. We greet, Nate takes the bags from me and takes them down and I go back to the bedroom with Buli behind me.

Buli: "Why do you look like someone took your favourite toy?" She asks throwing herself on to the bed.

Me: "Did you tell Nate I went to see Ngcebo a few weeks back?"

Buli: "Nope, why what happened?"

Me: "He knows, I don't know how?"

Buli: "I did tell you to be honest with him but you are too stubborn for your own good. You know how he feels about Ngcebo and you going to see him after he told you not to must have hurt. What did he say?"

Me: "That's the thing. He is way too calm about it."

Buli: "You need to make things right before you leave."

Me: "I know, but how?"

Buli: "You are a woman find a way." Nate and Philani walk in and take the rest of the bags down.

We follow them down and even the kids are ready and waiting. Nate and Buli take the kids out to the car while Philani goes to the kitchen to get the cooler box with food. I'm not planning on stopping anywhere except maybe to change diapers and feed the kids.

Me: "Hey."

Philani: "Hey."

Me: "Can we talk?"

Philani: "Sure."

Me: "I'm sorry. I know I should have told you about Ngcebo's call and me going to see him."

Philani: "Its fine Lando it's done."

Me: "Dont be like that, be mad at

me, shout or scream whatever but dont be like this."

Philani: "I shout I scream and then what? I shouted when you went to see him the previous night and you still went ahead knowing about my reservations. If shouting didnt work then how will it work now?"

Me: "I'm sorry."

Philani: "Another thing stop saying you are sorry, it's annoying." He takes the cooler. "You need to go before it gets dark." He walks out. I take a deep breath and follow him.

Buli: "The kids are falling asleep."

Me: "Hopefully they will sleep the rest of the way. I'll see you in a week?"

Buli: "Yep."

Nate: "Drive safe okay."

Me: "I will." They give me hugs and then get into their car and leave. "So I will see you in two weeks."

Philani: "Yeah, be careful on the road." I wrap my hands around his waist and put my forehead on his chest.

Me: "Please dont be mad at me."

Philani: "I'm not mad at you I'm just disappointed." I feel a tear

drop from my eyes.

Me: "That's even worse."

Philani: "You have to go. I don't want you driving in the middle of the night." I wipe my tears and pull away from him. He opens the door for me and I get in. He closes the door making sure the kids don't wake up. I drive out and leave him standing there watching us.

I realise this is probably one dumb thing that I keep doing where Ngcebo is concerned, and all the time Philani is the one who ends up getting hurt and it's all my fault. Even though I haven't

seen or spoken to Ngcebo for weeks and he is still messing up my life. I am such an idiot.

I got home around seven in the evening after receiving endless calls and texts everyone wanting to know where I was and if I was safe. By the time I pulled up to the gate my dad was already pacing up and down the yard. He opened the gate soon as I pulled up and I drove in. He opened my door soon as I parked the car and gave me the biggest hug.

Dad: "You are late, you should have been here hours ago."

Me: "I know but I'm here now."

Dad: "You almost gave me a heart attack." He opens the backseat and unbuckled the kids. "Let's go in."

Me: "My bags."

Dad: "I'll come get them later."

Okay then. I follow him and find the family in the lounge. There's screams and hugs soon as I walk in, although the best hugs are reserved for the kids. I take a seat next to aunt Norah.

Me: "Hello maketala (Mother-in-law)" I whisper to her and she

blushes.

Norah: "Shut up." I chuckle.

Me: "How many times have you come to Joburg and not even come to see me?"

Norah: "Too many times to count." I clutch my invisible Pearl's in shock.

Me: "And I thought you loved me."

Norah: "Of course I do. But I'm human too and I have needs." Oh God, I should not have asked.

Gogo: "What are you two talking about?"

Us: "Nothing."

Norah: "I'll go get you something

to eat." She leaves. I get up and walk to the bedroom to call Philani. He picks up.

Philani: "Hey, how was your trip?"

Me: "Okay, the kids are okay, lucky for me they slept most of the way."

Philani: "That's good, a driver would have been better though."

Me: "I know, but I'm here now. Look I was hoping we can talk about the whole Ngcebo thing."

Philani: "There's nothing to talk about."

Me: "You dont have to talk, just listen. I'm an idiot I know that, I've known Ngcebo for a very long

time, and a part of me still wants to believe there is some good left in him. But I also realise that I haven't taken your feelings into consideration knowing all that he has done to you and as your wife I should be on your side always."

Philani: "Lando....."

Me: "Please dont say it's fine cause it's not, I fucked up and I know I keep making the same mistake and I'm sorry. I promise you from now on Ngcebo will not be a part of our lives ever again."

Silence, even though i can hear him breathing on the other side. I decide to keep quiet too. The

silence goes on for a while until I get tired of it. "Please say something."

Philani: "I said its fine, Ngcebo is the least of my worries right now, I have bigger fish to fry."

Me: "But you are still disappointed in me."

Philani: "A little bit, but I'll show you how disappointed I am when I see you again."

Me: "Really, and how are you going to do that?"

Philani: "You'll have to wait and see." Aunt Norah pokes her head into the door.

Norah: "Your food is ready come

and eat." She says before closing the door again.

Philani: "Who was that?"

Me: "Your stepmother." He laughs.

Philani: "Her boyfriend is here sulking cause he wont see her for two weeks."

Me: "Werent you sulking too?" He laughs.

Philani: "That's different, we are young and they are old, they should be doing old people things."

Me: "Apparently old people have needs too, let me go eat. I love you."

Philani: "I love you too. Kiss the kids for me."

Me: "I will. Bye." I hung up and took a deep breath. Its nice to actually be on good terms with him again. The trip here wasnt as fun knowing he was disappointed in me. I preferred it when he was mad. I got up and went to the lounge to have my dinner with my family, now I can enjoy my dinner and the time with my family without any worries.



PHILANI

My dad is acting like a lovestruck teenager. He came here a few hours after Lando left sulking cause his girlfriend went home. I

wonder what happened to Maggie.

I finished braaiing the meat while the guys got the salads and pap ready. This felt like back when we had no girlfriends or wives and we did everything ourselves. Sizwe and Nate set up the table while my dad was busy snacking on the meat.

Me: "You do know we all have to eat that meat right?"

Dad: "Well you are slow and I am hungry." He said biting into a drumstick.

Nate and Sizwe finished setting up the table and we sat down to have dinner. After dinner we cleaned up and my dad told me to get the usb drive and the memory card he gave me. I brought my laptop and sat down. I opened it and put the usb drive in. There was about a zillion numbers going through the screen.

Dad: "Those are encrypted codes." He presses a couple of buttons on the laptop and the numbers turn into different files with different names of countries.

"Every country file has the name and address of everyone who is a

valuable member of this organization. The ones on the red file are those who owe us favours, but those can only be used for real emergencies, like if you need to relocate your family to a country with no extradition laws, the blue file has people in the FBI, CIA, Interpol and a whole lot of other people. The day to day running of it is on the green file. And the memory card is for the money."

Nate: "So what the hell have we been doing all along."

Sizwe: "Playing games obviously."

Dad: "Word of advice, You're

playing in the big leagues now, no more impulsive decisions, whatever decision you make has to be calculated down to the t. Do that and you'll be just fine." I guess I am officially a cartel leader. Now the question is who do I put in the light while I run in the shadows?

P.S: Unedited ❤️❤️

INSERT 99

This is not what I had in mind when I said I wanted to do this. My body hurts. I thought I knew how to dance but it turns out I

have two left feet. Well I was mediocre when it came to dancing but I swear I need a certificate for all the dancing I've been doing for the past two weeks. If I was younger I would have attended the Reed dance just to show off my new skills. Gugu, Ntombi, Buli, Faith and Taki came a week ago and they've also been learning how to dance.

We are leaving tomorrow morning just to make sure we get to Mandawe in time, rest a bit before going to KwaBiyela. We have chosen a blue Lihiya for the first day Friday, red for the

second day which is Saturday and yellow for the last day, Sunday. I have my sidvwaba which my dad bought me and sidziya which the Biyela's had to buy. I feel almost ready to do this.

I woke up about an hour ago and I am still laying in bed. I dont have the energy to even move one muscle. And lucky for me I haven't had to do much to take care of the kids since everyone wants a piece of them and they seem to be enjoying the attention, Lakhiwe doesn't even cry for me anymore when she sees me. I hear a knock on the door.

Me: "Come in." My dad walks in and I sit up on the bed with my back on the headboard.

Dad: "Hey, how did you sleep?"

Me: "Like a baby, although my body hurts." He chuckles.

Dad: "Okay I can help with that."

He goes to the door and calls someone in. A lady walks in with something that looks like a foldable table. "This is Zethu, she is a massage something something and she is here to make sure you relax and just not think too much about tomorrow."

I get off the bed with the biggest smile on my face and give

him a big hug. Having a dad is nice hey.

Me: "Thank you."

Dad: "Okay then now that that is sorted, I need to monitor the slaughter of the cow."

Me: "I thought the cow would be slaughtered tomorrow."

Dad: "Well you are leaving early in the morning so inkhomo yekususa umtsimba (the cow to set forth the bridal party) needs to be slaughtered and cooked tonight."

Me: "Okay. Let me get my muscles relaxed. You wont need me right."

Dad: "Not yet. Maybe later. Dont worry about the kids they are

fine. Just relax." I gave him a kiss on the cheek and he left.

I quickly went to the bathroom and took a shower and brushed my teeth. I came back and Zethu was ready and waiting for me. I took my gown off and got on the table, I hope I dont fall. I laid down with my face buried in the little round hole on the head of the table. She poured some oils on my back and worked her magic.

I dont know when I fell asleep but I woke up and I was facing up with Zethu still working her

magic. I swear her hands were touched by God himself. I feel like I have been reborn. Soon as she was done I went and got dressed and went to the lounge. I found gogo and my aunts were already in the kitchen cooking. I sat down next to gogo and just took all this in. I look out the window and Gugu and Ntombi are already with the other girls dancing. Buli comes in from the kitchen and gives me food to eat.

Buli: "Makoti, how was your massage?" She says sitting down next to me.

Me: "The best thing since sliced

bread. I needed that."

Gogo: "Good thing Norah took the kids with her."

Me: "Where is she vele."

Gogo: "She and Faith went to pick up the grass mats from the lady making them."

Buli: "Arent those supposed to be made by us?" What the fuck is she on about? I don't even know how to make those.

Gogo: "Do you know how to make them." We both looked at each other and burst out laughing.

"Thought as much."

Aunt Norah and Faith came back after a while with a van full of

grass mats. Everything was stored in the 'Gift' room which was technically my grandmother's room and she kept the key in her bra. She said she did that to make sure no one steals the gifts. I called Philani just to check up on what's happening on his side and he assured me they were ready for us. Everything was set up and ready which made me even more nervous.

In the evening we danced a bit more which was just to make sure everyone got the steps right.

After supper we all went to sleep and those who lived farther away

slept at home. It was a full house. My friends and I shared a room together with Gugu and Ntombi and I couldn't sleep so they indulged me by talking to me the whole night until we fell asleep around three.

At exactly five o'clock my grandmother knocked, well more like banged on the bedroom door waking us up. I got up and got dressed. When I was done I got dressed and packed my bags. When everyone had taken a bath and packed their attire and loaded it onto the bus I had to go to endlini kaGogo and joined the rest

of the family in there. Impepho was burnt and ancestors were told about my departure. It was emotional for me because it felt final, although I knew at the back of my mind that I was getting married not dying but still, it felt emotional. My uncle took the inyongo from the cow and sprinkled some drops into my mouth before sprinkling it on my forehead, the centre of my face and down my right arm and right leg to strengthen and give me luck. When he was done, he inflated the little bile sack and tied it to my head above my

forehead which was a sign that I am leaving home with the full blessing and consent from my father.

When we were done the men went out and I was left with the old women who advised me on how to be a proper wife and stuff, which I probably zoned out of when the third woman told me about bekezelarling, cause I knew I am not doing that shit. My peace of mind is way more important than putting up with BS from a man. When they were done they walked out and I just sat there for a while. The first time I walked

into this room I was being introduced to my ancestors and that was barely two years ago and now I am sitting here saying my goodbyes again. My dad walked in and sat down on the grass mat next to me and I just put my head on his shoulder.

Me: "I should have just had a white wedding." He laughs

Dad: "That would have been easier but this is more special."

Me: "I know."

Dad: "Everyone is ready to go. Are you?"

Me: "I am but I dont think you are."

Dad: "I'm not but I know I have to let you go."

Me: "You know I'll be just a four hour drive away." He takes a deep breath.

Dad: "I know. Come on, let's go before they think you've changed your mind." He got up and helped me stand up. We walked out and everyone was singing.

"Uphuma uyedvwa kabo

Uye

Yeka lomdzimba lokhashane

etiveni

Bambiz izwe lonkhe

Nangoke asaphuma

Siyamsunduzela

Sebangangebenkhomo

Uye

Yeka lomdzimba lokhashane
etiveni

Bambiz izwe konkhe

Nangoke asaphuma

Siyamsunduzela

Uye uyedvwa kabo

Uye

Yeka lomdzimba lokhashane
etiveni

Bambiz izwe lonkhe

Nangoke asaphuma

Siyamsunduzela"

I said goodbye to gogo and my
dad. I hugged my brother Andile
who was staying behind, he would

only be joining us tomorrow since he will be driving down with the truck that will be carrying the gifts together with a couple of other guys. We all got into the bus while my cousins and brother's drove our cars.

The trip to Mandawe seemed rather short. Or maybe it was the constant singing and dancing that distracted me. We got to Mandawe just before eight in the evening. We got off the bus a few meters away from the Biyela home in what looked like a soccer field. I was covered in a blanket

and then we proceeded to the Biyela home singing with the girls leading the pack. Gugu was at the front with a grass mat and blanket on her head. I was so proud of her.

We got to the gate and the singing continued and dancing while my praise names were being sung. It felt surreal but beautiful at the same time.

We sang and danced for about thirty minutes before the Biyela girls came down dancing to welcome us. They opened the gate and we walked in. A boy came to lead me and a few girls to my

mother in law. But since I technically don't have a mother in law I was led to gogo Biyela. I kneeled down and placed a string of white beads in front of her.

Me: "Ngtocela inkhonto (I come to pay allegiance.)" I said.

Gogo: "Uphumaphi (where are you from)"

Me: "Ngtfunywe ngubabe (I was sent by my father.)"

We were led out to the room we would be using. We got in and continued singing and dancing. We ate the food we came with before falling asleep. I guess my wedding is officially under way.



NARRATED

In Pretoria prison Ngcebo is in the bathroom getting ready to take a shower when someone walks in. He tries to ignore them but they walk straight up to him.

Guy: "Dr Dlamini." He turns around to look at him.

Ngcebo: "Do we know each other?"

Guy: "No, but we have a somewhat common enemy."

Ngcebo: "I dont think so."

Guy: "You dont even know who I'm talking about."

Ngcebo: "I dont need to know. I dont have enemies."

Guy: "Not even Philani Biyela?"

Ngcebo keeps quiet and looks at him. "I thought that would get your attention. Now, Philani might not be my enemy precisely but one of his friends is, and if we can band together I'm sure we can reach an agreement that we would both like."

Ngcebo: "Look I'm not sure what you are on about but Philani is not my enemy and whatever plans you have up your sleeve, I want nothing to do with them."

Guy: "You dont want revenge?"

Ngcebo: "No. Why are you in jail?"

Guy: "Philani and his crew put me

here."

Ngcebo: "And you want to go after them from in here?"

Guy: "Why not? I've had time to think and formulate a proper plan of action." Ngcebo chuckles.

Ngcebo: "The fact that you think you can take on him is laughable. That man is untouchable."

Guy: "No one is untouchable Dr Dlamini. Everyone has a weakness and those guys have a brotherhood that is steeped in family. There is nothing they value more than family and that's where we start, their families until we get them on their knees

begging for mercy." Ngcebo laughs again. "Is something funny Dr Dlamini?"

Ngcebo: "Everything that just came out of your mouth is funny. Those guys do not joke around when it comes to their families. You think their families are their weakness, you are wrong, their families are their strength, you mess with any of them and this place will look like Disneyland."

Guy: "We are in jail, they have no say anymore. They put us here."

Ngcebo: "And they can take you out. You think their reach ends at the gates of this prison? My guy,

their reach is way farther than you will ever know, go after them if you want and you will be lucky if you make it out alive. Count me out of whatever plans you have. I want to get out of here so I can see my daughter and I will not do anything to jeopardize that."

Guy: "Stop being a sissy, be a man."

Ngcebo: "I am being a man, a man who still wants to see his family, a man who still wants to live.

Word of advice, quit while you're still ahead." He takes his stuff and walks out.

Guy: "I knew you were weak I just didn't realize how much." He shouts to Ngcebo as he walks away.

INSERT 99 - (2)

I didn't think this whole traditional wedding thing would work out like this but I am glad Lando wanted it. Even though I didn't get to see her last night when they arrived, knowing that she is here makes me happy. I couldn't even talk to her because Buli wouldn't give her the phone. Mxm, I'll get her for this.

We woke up early to get everything ready for the day but lucky for me I have younger brothers and cousins so I sent them out to do all the work while my friends and I sat in the lounge watching TV and discussing the business.

Nate: "So I was thinking about who will run the cartel."

Me: "Yeah."

Nate: "Razor. Sbu can run the local operation and Razor can run the cartel."

Sizwe: "I think he would be perfect, plus he can fit in anywhere. You put him in a room

with Presidents and he fits right in, you put him in a room with thugs...."

Us: "He fits right in."

Lindani: "That motherfucker is perfect. Plus he has a girlfriend so anywhere he goes he wont draw any attention to himself."

Me: "Works for me."

My phone rang in my pocket and I took it out. It was a private number, a part of me felt like not picking it up but what if it was important. I answered and waited for the person on the other side to speak first.

Him: "Hello."

Me: "Yes."

Him: "Philani?"

Me: "Who wants to know."

Him: "Philani, its Ngcebo." Huh.

Why would he be calling me?

Me: "What do you want?"

Ngcebo: "Look I know I am the last person you want to hear from, but I have something to tell you."

Me: "I'm really busy right now so please make it quick."

Ngcebo: "Right, someone is coming after you, I dont know his name but last night he tried to recruit me into his plans, he said he

wanted to make you pay for whatever you did to him."

Me: "Okay, so who is it?"

Ngcebo: "I dont know his name but I'll find out." I dont even know why he is helping me by telling me this, what is he up to?

Me: "Okay so what is it to you?"

I hear him take a deep breath.

Ngcebo: "I know that you dont trust me, rightly so but I'm done coming after you. Plus this person wants to come after you and your families." And now it makes sense. This isnt about me but about Lando.

Me: "Thank you. But I need tou

to find out who this person is and what it is that they want and who they are working with."

Ngcebo: "Look I just wanted to let you know what was happening I dont want to get involved."

Me: "You got involved the moment you picked up that phone. Find out who all you can about this. If you really want to help me you cant come with bits and pieces and expect me to piece it all together. All I want is this person's name, will that be hard for you to do?"

Ngcebo: "Okay I'll find out."

Me: "Thank you." I hung up.

Nate: "What's happening?"

Me: "That was Ngcebo, apparently there is someone who is after us, he doesn't know who but he said he'd find out."

Sizwe: "So he plays for our team now?"

Nate: "Near death experiences can change a person hey, I see it all the time at work." My dad walks in and looks at us.

Dad: "You should be out there helping."

Me: "Yeah I am the groom so I need to rest. The boys can take care of everything."

Dad: "And what will you do? Sit here and drink?"

Me: "Pretty much, yes."

Dad: "If you aren't out there in five minutes you will be a dead groom with dead groomsmen." He says and turns to walk out. We decide to get up and go before we get killed.



LANDO

There is nothing I hate more than waking up at the crack of dawn, but I wanted a traditional wedding so this is my punishment. We were woken up at four o'clock in the morning and we went down to the river to bath and get ready for the wedding. We got

there and the first thing I did was put a grass mat down and continued my sleep.

I woke up when the sun was out and ate since my entourage had cooked meat and pap. Who eats pap in the morning anyway. Oh well I'm hungry so what can I do. We got dressed at noon and waited for someone to come get us so the wedding can begin and I can go back to my life. Finally just after one a little boy came down and told us we can come, they are ready for us.

I put on my blanket and adorned my feather crown and we began our walk towards the Biyela home singing. I was surrounded by my brothers and cousins who hid me with their large shields. The sun was out and the blanket just made me hot.

We got there and started our dancing. My brothers and cousins covered me with their shields as I danced towards gogo with my head down and covered in the blanket. I got to her and kneeled down before taking out the blanket and wrapping it around her. Soon as I was done I went

back to the group and the festivities began.

Towards the end of the dancing Philani joined me and we danced together. I was impressed mainly because he could keep up with me. I'm beginning to think he was busy practicing too while I was away. When we were done my family handed over a cow to the Biyela's called umganu.

Another cow was slaughtered which meant we as the bride's family we can officially eat at the groom's home. Part of the meat was to be sent to my mother and the rest would be shared between

both families, with the groom's family getting the left side and the bride's family getting the right side. After everything is done we go back to our designated room and my feet hurt like hell.

While we are sitting and chatting my phone beeps and I get it from under the pillow and check. It's a message from a number I don't know. All it says is 'tell Philani it's Nqoba Mdoda.' I don't know who this is but why would Philani care about Nqoba? I decide to forward the message to Philani. He calls me immediately after.

Me: "Hello."

Philani: "Where did you get that message?"

Me: "I don't know the number. What's going on?"

Philani: "Nothing for you to worry yourself about Mrs Biyela." I know he is trying to distract me and I will let him just for today, because I am too tired for a fight.

Me: "We not done yet so you can't call me that."

Philani: "This is just a formality you've been Mrs Biyela."

Me: "Whatever. I want my babies."

Philani: "You had two weeks with them, it's my turn now."

Me: "Mxm whatever. So what did you get me?"

Philani: "For what?"

Me: "For our wedding, you need to buy me a gift."

Philani: "Udakiwe, your aunt told me you would be bringing me gifts so shem forget." I laugh, he still cant say step-mom, it's going to be so much fun watching him adjust.

Me: "You mean you step-mom?"

Philani: "Mxm leave me alone, I can't believe I am getting a step mother at my big age."

Me: "Is there an age limit for it."

Philani: "No."

Me: "Plus atleast its not Maggie."

Philani: "You can say that again.

He seems happy though so maybe your aunt isnt so bad."

Me: "Of course she isnt. Shongwe women are bad ass." He laughs.

Philani: "My dads a copy cat. You looked beautiful today in your attire. I cant wait to see you in Zulu attire."

Me: "Patience bhuti. So where is the honeymoon?"

Philani: "You love gifts way too much. You will find out tomorrow. Let me go check on the kids. I

love you Okay."

Me: "I love you too." He hung up just as Zuzu and the other girls come in to bring us more food to eat before we go to sleep.

We were woken up around four in the morning by some of the Biyela's shouting for me to come out because I was now married. I actually didn't think we'd do this even though gogo had explained it to me. U think I was more impressed by Philani and his family actually learning and educating themselves in what needs to be done and when. And this was an unexpected surprise.

We woke up together with my girls and we were led to the cattle byre and all I had on was Sidrwaba with nothing else on top. I was more concerned with my scar being shown to everyone than my boobs being on display. I was handed a spear and led to the centre of the cattle byre while my girls moved slowly from East to West at the edge of the cattle byre. There was singing and shouting but nothing a joyous way, I guess kumekeza is a sad occasion. Well mostly because the songs being sung were all about

the hardships of marriage and family.

After about an hour and a half of standing in the middle of cow dung and inhaling that smell I had to call for my 'brothers' to come 'rescue' me. They came and we went back to our room. The Biyela's came and offered a cow which is called insulamnyembeti which was meant to be given to my mother. I think they forgot they already gave this cow during the lobola ceremony, oh well, I guess Nelsiwe gets a cow too now since the first one went to MamBusi.

We got dressed and got ready for the gift giving part of the ceremony. We walked out and my brother had sorted out the gifts and put stickers with names on them. We started with the extended family and cousins even though technically we are supposed to be giving the gifts to close family only. When all the distant relatives had got their blankets we moved to the immediate family, Philani's aunts and uncles and then his father, then his brothers and sisters before moving to gogo and then finally Philani.

Once the gifting was done I was taken to the main house and changed into a Zulu attire and given bile to drink and smear me with which was a symbol to say I am now officially a Biyela, in every way. I was given the rules on how to conduct myself as a Biyela and what was expected of me. When I was done I walked out and found Philani and his groomsmen waiting by the door. Even though my eyes were covered with beads I could still see the smile on his face. And he looked handsome in his attire.

He held my hand as we walked down to the gate. I thought we were doing some symbolic tradition but instead we walked out of the gate and down to the soccer field where a huge tent was erected. We got in and I guess this is where the 'reception' would be. It was quite impressive to say the least. From the inside you would not even think you were standing in a soccer field, it was beautifully decorated with traditional ornaments, even the cake had traditional elements to it. Even my babies looked so cute in their traditional attire.

Me: "So when did you get time to do this?" I asked Philani as we sat down at our designated table.

Philani: "Actually I didnt, Gugu did."

Me: "What? When? How? She was at school."

Philani: "She was at school but that's what phones and facetime are for. She was giving instructions to Mandy even during her breaks, I think she might just be a wedding planner one day." I looked around the tent and she was with Mandy at the back doing God knows what. But all in all I was impressed, I

hadn't planned on having this part of the wedding but she thought different. She's really something else.

Speakers came up one by one and spoke very sweetly. We danced late into the night. And I wondered when my family would get home because they were supposed to have left hours ago. We left them there and went home. I got to our room and just threw myself on the bed because I was tired.

Philani: "You are tired?"

Me: "Yes."

Philani: "Come on let's go take a

shower first." He said while taking off my shoes. He took off the rest of my attire and we took a shower and the water was enough to revive my body. We got out and went back to the bedroom. I was getting ready to get into bed when I felt my husband, yes I can fully say MY HUSBAND now and actually not feel like a fraud. I felt him wrap his hands around my waist and planting kisses on my neck.

Me: "You did hear me say I am tired right?"

Philani: "Consider this the final step of our wedding. Our

ancestors need to hear you
scream the Biyela clan names." I
laughed.

Me: "You are an idiot."

Philani: "And you love me anyway."

He said as he turned me around
and ripped the towel off of me
before pushing me onto the bed
and getting on top of me. Its
gonna be a long night.

PS Unedited ♥

INSERT 100

Time flies when you are having
fun, atleast that's what
everybody says, and they are

right. Sometimes we get caught up in the negativity going on in our lives that we even forget that there is good happening in our lives too. And the good is what I have chosen to focus on. It's been five full years since Philani and I got married officially, although unofficially it's been seven years. Lucky for me my husband has taken the straight and narrow path, at least that's what it seems like to people on the outside, but I know him and his friends have been doing their dealings in the shadows. So much so that someone tried to go after

the cartel thinking Razor was some weakling who was all bark and no bite, but unfortunately for them they didn't count on the other Bulldogs coming out from the shadows.

It turns out the SMS I got about a Nqaba, it was about Buli's brother, and he had some crazy plan to avenge himself, but those plans were squashed when he ended up hanging himself, the cops ruled it as a suicide but I know better. Ngcebo was released two years ago and he decided to move back home and work full time as a doctor again. And last

year he performed what the medical world calls a history making surgery, I dont even know what it was about but it was enough to propel him to the world. I knew if he put that brain to good use he could do so much more with his life. Philani still doesn't like him much but he tolerates him for the sake of peace.

Buli and Nate had their baby boy Nathan Junior, who is now three and a half years old, according to him, you have to include that half when you say his age otherwise it doesn't count. And now he is about

to be a big brother since Buli is pregnant again. The birth of their son brought Nate and his father even closer, apparently there is something about babies, especially boys that bring sons and fathers together.

Faith and Mbusi partially moved back to KZN since Mbusi had to take over from his father. I say partially because Faith still lives here and only goes down to KZN on weekends. She went and enrolled the twins in some fancy pre school and then claimed they cant go to KZN until they graduate pre school, and then they can start

school in KZN. If you ask me I think she's just postponing the inevitable. Two years ago she gave birth to her triplets, yep three babies in one go. Mbusi thinks he is superman because of it, but if you ask me, I think its God and her ancestors trying to make up for all the tears she shed because of that woman.

Lindani and Taki had the mother off all weddings a year after ours. And then she enrolled at UNISA for her teaching degree and she is now officially a teacher in a private school right here in Joburg, and she has a baby on

the way. And Lindani treats her like a little fragile egg which pisses her off, it's funny to watch.

Qhawekazi and Sizwe decided to travel the world, moving from one place to the next, he even proposed to her on top of Mount Everest, we weren't there obviously but the photos they brought back were epic. They were planning on going to Las Vegas to tie the knot until Bab'Biyela put a stop to all that, so they had to come home, get married and now we don't know which part of Europe they are in.

As long as they keep in contact and we know they are safe, we've learned not to even bother asking when they are coming home.

Gugu is finally done with high school and is having the time of her life studying medicine at Wits. And Philani was right about her planning abilities, she runs a mini events company on the side and is making some good money. I'm super proud of her. Ntombi also graduated Cum Laude and got her BCOM degree and now she is doing her honours. My relationship with my mum has improved a lot. She's even come to visit a few

times, and last year we had Christmas at her place, well our home, and for the first time in a long time it felt good to be there and not have to worry about someone touching me in the middle of the night, well Philani did do some touching but that's different.

Mr Biyela and my aunt are married. Yep, my aunt became my stepmother-in-law. These days I'm not sure what to call her so we alternate between Aunty and mamazala. The Biyela kids were welcoming to her, more than they were with Maggie and I am glad,

I know it would have been awkward for me if there was ever any bad blood between them. Me, well life has been kind. Theo is seven years old and in grade two, my first born is a smart boy who makes the best big brother to his sisters. Yes sisters. Three years ago I had another babygirl, Anothe Avuye Biyela. Lakhiwe is five and a diva of note. She has her dad wrapped around her tiny fingers and she knows the power she has over him and she is not afraid to use it. And now that Anothe is here they make a tag team of note. And now I am

pregnant with my last one. I don't know what this one is but I'm crossing fingers it's a boy, just to balance the scales. I didn't want to find out the sex because I want it to be a surprise. Philani thinks we are going to have another one after this but it ain't happening. Soon as I pop this one out I'm tying my tubes and once I'm done breastfeeding I am having breast augmentation and liposuction on my tummy, I want my body back, I'm going to be the hot mommy for my kids.

Today is Anothe's birthday, my babygirl is turning three, and not only that I am turning thirty years in three days time. Yep Anothe's birthday and mine are three days apart and I have learnt not to celebrate my birthday because babygirl gets all the attention anyway.

I am seven months pregnant and any other day I would be running around trying to get all things done but the advantages of having a planner for a sister means almost everything is taken care off, all I have to do is show up with my babygirl.

I woke up in the morning and took my shower and got dressed in a simple maxi dress, I needed to take my bath now so that later I can just wear my party outfit. I walked downstairs and it's already buzzing, there are people setting up a tent outside and doing the decor and of course Gugu is giving instructions with the help of her friend Asenathi. I stood outside the sliding door going into the garden and just watched in awe as she got things done. Another loves princess Sophia so most of the decor was pink and purple. Gugu turns around and

sees me standing there with the biggest smile on my face.

Gugu: "Hey sis, what do you think?"

Me: "Its perfect. You really are good at this."

Gugu: "I learnt from the best."

Mandy: "Of course you did." Where did she come from? "Hi ladies, this looks amazing." She says giving us hugs.

Gugu: "When did you get here?"

Mandy: "I landed about an hour ago. I am jetlagged but I had to see your work."

Me: "She is doing amazing, and it's all thanks to you. You are a great

teacher."

Mandy: "All I did was mould a diamond. This girl is a planner by blood." She says looking at Gugu who takes a bow. "I'm going to have breakfast, the caterers have set up."

Me: "I think I'll come with you, good thing the kids are with their grandparents."

Gugu: "I'll check on Ntombi and see how far she is with mum, I still dont understand why they had to drive all.the way from Mpumalanga today."

Me: "I will see them when they get here. I'm not stressing

myself today." We walk into the house and dish up from the breakfast buffet that's been set up.

As soon as we were done with breakfast I went back upstairs and took out the kids outfits for the party. I know when they get here they will have already taken a bath so all they have to do is change into the party outfits and we are good to go.

I was in Theo's room trying to choose between two outfits laid out on the bed when I felt hands circling around me and resting on my big tummy.

Me: "Hey baby."

Philani: "Hey, why didnt you wake me up?"

Me: "You looked so peaceful babe, I just wanted you to rest a bit."

Philani: "Thank you, but I didnt get my morning glory so what do we do now." He asked already kissing my neck and moving down to my bare shoulder. And my hormones being what they are I'm already wet and he hasn't even done much. I swear all he has to do is touch my boobs and I'll have an orgasm.

Me; "We have guests coming babe."

Philani: "They are not here yet."
He says letting go of me to go
lock door. There is one bed here
and I am not having sex on my
sons bed. Not now, not ever.

Me: "We are not having sex on our
sons bed Philani." He chuckles.

Philani: We dont have to. It's not
like we'll be doing missionary. Come
here." He holds out his hand and
he leads me to the rocking chair
on the corner and he sits down. I
lift my dress up and sit on top of
him. He pops one boob out of the
dress and sucks on it. He puts his
hand inside my underwear and
rubs my clit and boy this feels like

heaven. He lifts me up and when he puts me back down his dick is making it's way inside my already moist haven. I dont even know how he is not phased by the big tummy between us but I dont care cause this feels amazing. I ride him till I feel myself cum all over him. He lifts me up and places me on the floor then turns me around and bends me over the bed and enters me from behind. He pumps into me till I cum again and he also releases. He pulls out and takes his vest off and wipes me down before wiping himself. I need another shower.

As soon as people start coming in for the party there is chaos all over the place. Aunt Norah and Bab'Biyela come in with the kids and we rush upstairs to get them ready. Anothe looks so pretty in her princess dress, Lakhiwe wanted the same dress but I had to remind her that this was Ano's day so she has to be the princess, of course she cried and went straight to Philani who also wouldn't change his mind so she had to do with her original outfit. Our friends walked through the door at the same time and the noise that followed soon as the

little people came in was deafening. Birthdays are a great reminder of how blessed we are. I am truly grateful that I get to live this life with the most important people in my life and we get to raise our children together. After the party was done and everyone had left I put the kids to sleep. I went to our bedroom hoping to just put my feet up and rest, instead I was met with suitcases at the door. Philani walked out from the closet with another bag.

Me: "Are you leaving me?" He laughed and came over to me and

hugged me.

Philani: "The only way I will leave you is if I die, until then I am yours." He kisses me but I still need answers so I pull out.

Me: "So what's with the bags?"

Philani: "You and I are going away on a babymoon."

Me: "Really? Where?"

Philani: "That's a surprise. Let's go."

There is no point arguing so I just follow him. The grandparents are in the lounge, I guess they will be babysitting. Philani gets the bags in the car and we drive off. We get to the airport and

the jet is ready and waiting. Soon as we get in and strap ourselves in we take off and I doze off. When I wake up we are still in the air, I look at the time and from the looks of it I've been sleeping for almost ten hours, where the fuck are we even going. We land after what seems like forever but this place is cold, so we must be somewhere in the northern hemisphere, question is where? We get into a car that's waiting for us and driving to a lodge and there is snow all over the place. We get to our room and

its warm and beautiful. I take a shower and get into bed.

Philani woke me up after a while and said we have to be somewhere. We got dressed and headed out.

Me: "Where are we?"

Philani: "Finland." He says as the car parks in some place that is eerily white, the ground is covered in snow but its beautiful.

Me: "Okay what are we doing here?"

Philani: "Look up." I look up and this is the most beautiful sight I've ever seen. I swear I can feel tears on the corner of my

eyes. He wraps his arms around me and I rest my head on his chest.

Me: "This is beautiful."

Philani: "Remember the first time we met?"

Me: "You were watching the lights from your office."

Philani: "And you do that all the time, especially when you are stressed, so I figured let me show you the most beautiful natural lights in the world."

Me: "The northern lights."

Philani: "Yep. They are almost as beautiful as you." The tears made

their way down my face. I told you I was lucky.



PHILANI

One of the best gifts I've ever gotten in my life is my family. My kids are the best thing to ever happen to me, but I also know that I wouldn't have all of that if it wasn't for my wife. I swear everytime I look at her I wonder what I ever did for God to bless me with her.

She is ready to have our baby anytime now, and I swear that baby is driving her nuts. She will

send me out to get her wings and by the time I get back she wants Mogodu, and she has developed a liking for Mopani worms, I don't know why anyone would eat worms but ke what can we do, baby wants so baby gets. She woke me up in the middle of the night screaming cause her water broke. I got up and got dressed and helped her change to new PJs. I called the nanny to let her know we are leaving. I took the bag and put it in the car and came back to find Lando struggling down the stairs. A part of me wanted to pick her up

but I know she hates being treated like an invalid so I just hold her hand and help her down the stairs. I get her into the car and we drive off to the hospital. We get to the hospital and we are taken straight to the labour ward. Crazy how just a month ago we were in this same room when Taki gave birth to her baby boy, and now we are back here again.

The doctor comes in and checks on her while she screams in agony. I've seen her in pain before when she gave birth to Ano but I still

wish I can take this pain from her.

After hours of screaming in pain, the doctor says it's time for her to push. She does as she is told and in fifteen minutes she pops out our baby.

Dr: "It's a boy. Congratulations guys." She says and then gives me the scissors to cut the umbilical cord. The nurses take the baby away to clean him up. I look at Lando and she is still in pain.

Me: "Baby what's wrong?"

Lando: "I don't know, something is not right, I feel like I should push again." The doctor comes

over again to check on her.

Dr: "Okay, I think you should push, let's see what comes out."

Lando: "What if my womb comes out?"

Dr: "It wont. But to ease your mind, let me check." She puts her fingers inside her and the look on her face tells me something is wrong."

Me: "Dr what's wrong?"

Dr: "Mrs Biyela, please push."

Lando pushes and I swear if this is God playing a joke on us, it's not funny. There is a head coming out of her. She pushes again and a full blown baby comes out.

"Congratulations guys, looks like you have twins." I cut the umbilical cord again and they took the new baby away to be cleaned. The doctor finished helping Lando and then moved her to another room. The nurses come in with the babies and the Dr behind them. They hand the babies over to us and leave us with the doctor.

Dr: "Babies are perfectly healthy, even surprise is healthy as a horse." Surprise huh, maybe we should name him that.

Lando: "Thank you doc, but how come the sonogram always

showed one baby?"

Dr: "Well my guess is he was hiding towards the spine, that's why we couldn't detect him."

Me: "Oh well he is here now, it's not like there is a return policy."

The Dr laughs and leaves.

Soon as he leave the door opens and the whole gang come in with balloons and gifts. The shock on their faces when they see us with two babies, I wish I had taken a video.

Buli: "You had twins?"

Lando: "Yep. This one was hiding."

Nate: "So what did you name them. Lando and I look at each

other and smile. We had already decided on the one baby's name. Me: "Well since we didn't know the sex of the baby we decided on Lisakhanya Olwethu Biyela cause those are unisex names." All we here are the ncoohs and aahs.

Faith: "And the hide and seek champion?"

Lando: "Liyema Elethu Biyela." Perfect.

Our friends and family stay for a while just admiring the kids. The nurses bring in the cots for the babies and we lay them down soon as they finish sucking the life out of Lando. I get into bed next to

her and she rests her head on my chest.

Me: "Thank you baby."

Lando: "For what?"

Me: "For everything. You know if there was one good thing my dad ever did for me, it was bringing you into my life. I love you Landokuhle Biyela."

Lando: "I love you too Bab'Biyele. But I'm done having kids." I chuckle and kiss her forehead as she dozes off to sleep.

I guess we are now officially parents to five babies. Life neh, is unpredictable. You make plans and God laughs. But for once I am

glad things turned out this way.
These are my blessings, and I'll do
whatever it takes to protect
them.

THE END