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PREFACE

A past remembered , a past that will always live in me , a past I see each and every week of my life. A past that will always live on to the future. I look at the news paper Infront of me and I smile. I run my fingers on the picture and a small smile crept up on my face.

“Mrs Ndlovu your husband is here to see you” I look up to the nurse and I put the news paper away.

“You have a handsome son there” she says and I smile.

“He has grown” I say

My heart started warming up and loving more than I thought. I have yearned so much of many things yet fear is holding me back.

“Should I open the tv for you so you can watch when you come back ?” she asks

“Yes”

We walk out of my room and she is escorting me as we are chatting. We get to the garden and I see him standing in a distance. He has his back facing me, I know that he is having his cigarette to calm his nerves. He always said smoking calms him down especially when he is around me. The nurse walks off and I walk towards him. I stand behind him for a little while and he turns to look at me. He throws his cigarette away ruining this beautiful garden but he doesn't care. He is a Ndlovu after all. I wrapped my arms around him and he does the same he heaves yet another heavy sigh that always follows.

“It has been 30 years Khethiwe” he says

“I know ” I say He breaks the hug.

“I have missed his whole life. It's best I stay here ” I say , he places his hands in his pockets. He is aging so very fine.

“I love you Dali wami” I smile and shy off.

“Wangishalazela (Why are you being shy?)”

“I love you too” I kiss his lips. I break the kiss

I know he is a man of needs. I know that emotionally I wasn't there for him. He did well by grooming the kids on his own.

“Come let's sit down ” I pull him by his hand and we sit down.

“How is everything?” I ask.

“I miss you everyday” he says softly.

“I miss you too Gatsheni. ”

“Come back home. I know 30 years have been missed but I need my wife back”

I look down.

“I fear ” I say.

“Fear what Khethiwe?”

“Rejection. I have been absent in their lives for too long”

“They are grown. They will warm up to the idea ”

I shake my head slowly.

“I can't” he sighs defeated.

“I don't want to have a meltdown ” I smile.

“How is the taxi industry going ?” I ask him. I pray every night that they are safe.

“Good. We have got alot of routes over the years in Kzn and Now Ntozakhona has trucks that Transport fuel, he got married as well ”

“That's nice” I smile, he pulls me to his chest.

He lets out a sigh. The smell of Nicotine on him smells wonderful with his perfume all together. It's not irritating. He kisses my forehead as I listen to his heart beat. He chuckled softly.

“You remember when....

CHAPTER 1

My aunt waves everywhere as the donkey is carrying her , people are ululating while it was a very big thing. It's a Zulu wedding of my aunt and she looked wonderful in Isdwaba , I was there too looking good in my Zulu attire. Nothing on top and so as my aunt. My boobs were upright and perky. We were walking to the Khoza house hold where my aunt will be a bride to. We were singing our lungs out while at that.

The whole village was around here for this very wonderful festive. My cousins either side of me and so as the other virgin maidens next to us escorting my aunt to her new family. She was really beautiful and I one day dreamed of having such a wonderful wedding. I was only 16 and seen that I am old enough to wed if the time comes.

“Pss” I listened

“Pss” there it is again. Someone whistled and I turned around. My cousin stopped as well.

“Khethiwe kwenzenjani ? (What is wrong ?)”

“Someone is calling me ” I say

“Come let's go ” she pulled me by my hand and we turned.

Someone whistled and I turned. My cousin already left me and so as the people who I was walking with. I could hear the singing from far.

“Nkosazane ” I jumped a bit and he was standing in front of me holding a stick. He looks like header but young as well.

“Umuhle Ntokazi(You are beautiful)” he said and I was mesmerised by how deep his voice is yet he looks like he is my age.

“Thank you ” I look at the direction everyone went. I will be late.

“Isidwaba singakufanela (isdwaba will suite you)” I ran my fingers on my beaded traditional skirt. It was pure white .

“Really ?” I smiled and he did too while nodding.

“So much ”

I saw myself waving like my aunt as everyone looks at me while I get married.

“Qaphile !” He turned and one who looked like him but older was standing there.

“Ngizoziletha inkomo ukuze ufake isdwaba (I will bring Lobolo so you can wear isdwaba)” I blushed.

“Ok” I say

“Ndlovu” he said

“Cele ” he nods and walks off to where his friend is. I watched them disappear before I rushed to where the singing is.

I did turn back to see where the guy disappeared to and he was gone. I ran down to where the singing was and they have arrived at the Khoza household. I pushed through the crowd and stood next to my mother, we were waiting to be let in.

“Where are you coming from?”,she asked me.

“I was looking for my earring”, she focuses on what is Infront of her.

We were let inside the Khoza house hold and the festivity was wonderful, I wanted this as well when growing up and yearned for it's beauty that is displayed here.

“Thina maCele asibazumi abantu !...”

We were singing while preparing for our sleep, I am going to miss my aunt. She is my father's only Sister. We had to collect water tomorrow morning as well and I am too tired . I lay myself on the floor and my cousin joined me , Nombukelo that is.

“Everything was so beautiful”, she says.

“Very beautiful. Cabanga sengishada kuyoba njani (imagine when I get married how it will be)”, I say looking up already seeing everything.

That herder I saw yesterday suddenly flashed in my mind and so as his words leaving my lips curved into a smile.

“What are you thinking off ? ”, Nombukelo asks.

“Nothing” I sit up and look at her then somewhere else.

Marriage is something important for a woman. She is to take care and love and be submissive to her husband. I haven't had a man court me enough to actually want to marry me. That herder , I have never seen him before. I have lived here for so long but I have never encountered anything with him.

“Khethiwe! ”, my mother shouts.

I jumped off the bed.

“Mah ! ”, I shout back rushing out of my hut and find her making the fire.

“Go and feed the chickens then fetch some water ”, she instructs me.

“Yes Mah ”

I go and feed the chickens while singing the songs from my aunt's wedding. I am sure she is happy and felt very important yesterday. I would too as well feel important. Her husband is rich in live stock and that's what my father wants for me when I get married. Is for me to also marry into a rich family like the Khoza's. They are very known that is why everyone was there at their wedding.

“Khethiwe go and fetch water ! ”, my mother's shouting snaps me out of my thoughts.

“Ok”, I place the chicken food down and I rush to take the bucket. Nombukelo is a bit lazy.

She is not a bit lazy but she is lazy and my mother let's her do anything. Whether she helps or not it is all well. I make my way to the river while singing some songs.

“Pss”, there it is again.

I stop my tracks and listen attentively.

“Pss”, I turn around looking everywhere and I see a figure by the tree.

I am scared but he comes out in the open holding the stick in his hand. I place my hand on my chest.

“MaCele”, his deep raspy voice says.

I smile.

“Boyabenyathi”, he places a hand on his chest.

“Aw' kodwa mama wangibiza kahle (Oh you call me so well)”, I blush.

“I have to go ”, I say slowly creating a distance between us.

“Zizohlangana inkomo mama, ngizokunika umshado omukhulu ngiyathembisa (Everything will come together so I can give you a big wedding. I promise)”, I blush.

“You promise?”, he nods.

“I promise”, I smile.

“Bye”, I rush off to where the river is while smiling.

I couldn't help myself. He said he will give me a wedding of my dreams. Is he rich ? Where is his household ? I need to know that but with the way he said it he is determined to give me what he had promised and will. I got the water and go back home, I am singing as I am making my journey back home

reminiscing of all good times I had in my life and to pass some time as I am walking back home.

I got home and my mother was on her knees blowing under the pot as she is making fire. She sees me approaching and gets on her feet and took the bucket from my head.

“Yini leh ekubambezile (Why did you take your time ?)”, she asked

“Ukuthwala ”, I lied.

I couldn't tell my mother that I was standing with a boy. I had just received my period 2 years ago but in her eyes I am still a child and won't be fit for marriage anytime soon.

“Go and take the chicken inside. Your father came back with it from your aunt's house”, I nod and make my way inside the kitchen

There were plastics on the table and I opened them. The food inside was a lot. My aunt is very lucky to marry in such a wealthy family in the village. My father also wishes that for me as well. It must be nice as you could have anything in the village easily. I took the full chicken that has been slaughtered and went out to give it to my mother. I am sure Nombukelo is asleep where she is. She is always tired and always complains about being hungry.

“Mmh, this taste nice MaMtshali”, my father compliments the boiled chicken as he picks his fingers.

My mother smiles and looks down shying away from his face.

“Ngiyabonga Baba(Thank you)”, I helped as well.

My mother wouldn't include me in this compliment moment. Nombukelo and I are eating in silence. My father takes the steam bread and moulds it's in his hand and pops it in his mouth.

“I'm tired”

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Nombukelo says first.

We all look at her. I am as well and would love to rest but my father is a bit strict but since Nombukelo is here he is a bit nicer.

“You can go and sleep girls”, I am relieved. We both stand up as I collect the dishes that I will wash in the morning.

I put them in a bowl and I make my way to the room we are sleeping in.

“I am glad I am leaving tomorrow”, Nombukelo says while throwing herself on the bed.

“I will miss you ”, I honestly say.

I sit on the bed as she changes and I take off my clothes as well.

“Kelo”, she stops and looks at me.

I want to ask if she knows any Ndlovu household around but I stop myself. What if she tells my father that I have been asking about this and I get in trouble.

“Mmh ?”, she replies.

“Nothing”, I fake a smile and she turns her back on me.

I get lost in thoughts as I think of this Ndlovu boy who has a deep voice of an adult. That herder who has been nice to me and made promises. I touch my stomach as I feel something I have never felt. Excitement that is

“Stop smiling and sleep”, Nombukelo says and gets in the bed.

I throw myself inside and I rest while looking the other side as I look at the wall and close my eyes waiting for sleep to consume me.

QAPHILE

I look into the dark sky everynight. It has become my peace and relaxes me after a long day of herding the Khoza Cows, it helps

in the family and my father is into planting as well. There are a lot of us in this household. 16 of us. 13 of us and some are even as young as 1 year old. It's hard at times as there are a lot of mouths to feed, the little ones are our priority the most and that's why we seek jobs where we can find them.

"You have been standing here for some time", Gatsa approaches me.

We are a year apart from him and myself. I am 19 years old of age and considered a man in my father's eyes.

"I am just looking", he nods as we look into the darkness.

He heaves a heavy sigh.

"It's going to be a lot more difficult now that Mbewuyesizwe is born", I know.

I turn to him with hands in my pants.

"That's our nephew. We should provide for him as well", I say.

Khulisiwe dropped him last week in my mother's hands and fled away. I have never seen my father livid for Phuthuma having a son we didn't know of. Phuthuma works at people's fields and Khulisiwe is one of those girls who come from a very well off family around Msinga. Her father has many cows. Since Phuthuma couldn't pay for impregnating her the child was dumped on us. She said she can't take care of her child. He will

hold her back in life and we shouldn't ever contact her about the child or even mention who his mother is in future. My mother named him Mbewuyesizwe “For he shall plant greatness in this world”, she said.

“I know. I just wish we were in a better space Qaphile”, the frustration can't be hidden from his voice.

“Lets go and rest. We have to wake up early”, I say softly.

He turns and walks away. I stay rooted where I am and I look at the direction he had left. I could see the light from inside the hut, the light that lights up our only home and space. I look down as the baby cries pierce through my ears not knowing if it's Sizwe or Nokuthula.

KHETHIWE

I woke up early today and I was onto my duties that needed to be done. Nombukelo also woke up very early for her departure. We were standing by the stop waiting for any taxi to come and collect her. A part of me is very glad that she is leaving and she is going to her home. I would have my own peace at last but a part of me will miss her than I would think that I know. Being the only child comes with it's disadvantages at times especially when you are a girl.

“Peep peep!”

The taxi comes our way and she raises her finger in order to stop it and it does. She opens the taxi door and I hold onto her plastic bag.

“I will miss you”, I know those are lies .

I know she wouldn't be happier than leaving the village at the moment.

“I will miss you too. Visit soon”, I hope not

“I will”, she hops inside the taxi and I hand her her bag.

She takes it and I wave while standing still. I move away from the taxi and make my way home while singing. I cut through the bush so I could take a longer way home as I don't want to get there as fast.

“Baba Mnumzane , uyehe sivulele singene...”

I clap my hands.

“Pss”, I stop my tracks and look around.

“Pss pss”, I turn around and meet him

I smile automatically and rush Infront of him. His gaze move from my eyes and he looks down while placing his hands in his pants. I notice a big hole there.

“Gatsheni”, he looks up to me.

“MaCele”, he says in his matured voice.

“Where is your home?”, that's what I have been wanting to know.

He is silent for a moment and looks away for a while then back at me.

“Zithunwa is waiting for me I have to go”, he turns around.

“Ima!”, he stops.

“Ngabe ngikuphathe kabi?(Did I say something bad?)”, I ask concerned.

He doesn't turn to face me. His pants are blown by the wind and the hole is not hiding but on full display.

“Cha MaCele... Awungiphathanga kabi(You didn't say anything bad)”, he says and I nod.

“Bengicabanga Ngawe(I was thinking about you)”, I smile.

I honestly don't want to go home. I still want to hear his matured voice saying something. When he calls me MaCele it sounds very nice. He doesn't turn still nor speaks.

“Khethiwe”, I say my name.

He chuckles softly.

“Abakwa Gatsheni bakuKhethile Ukube ...(the Gatsheni Ancestors chose you to be ...)” he stops.

“To be what ?”

He turns around and looks at me. He is handsome and very dark skinned in complexion. I am a bit lighter than he is.

“Qaphile”, We are getting somewhere.

“Khethiwe ! Khethiwe!”, I hear my name being called

“I have to go. I will see you ”, I turn and run away from him before he could say anything.

CHAPTER 2

School has opened and I didn't want to go back because I enjoyed staying at home, I went out more to see or find Qaphile maybe but I haven't seen him since well a long time. I have a friend and her name is Zijabule. She is part of the Khoza family and is very nice as well. Since her uncle and my aunt have gotten married we are now family I guess. She doesn't fail to make me know that. I am more close with her than anyone here in the village.

“I brought some Beef for you”, she hands me her lunch box and I thank her.

I start stuffing my face while at it. We are sitting under a tree inside our school premises. I love food very much and I don't

shy away from it. That is maybe why I am have a big body but I love myself regardless.

“Are you going kwa Langa this year?”, it's the Reed dance.

“I am!”, I say.

I always go every year since I started my periods. My father saw it fit that I join the other maidens who pride themselves in keeping themselves pure until they are chosen to get married. If you are lucky you can get married to Induna. Even luckier if the chief chooses you to be his wife. That is what Zijabule always say Everytime we go to Kwa Langa.

We sit there and talk more about anything and how our holidays have been before we part ways and go to our classes.

Zijabule was fetched by her brother and we parted ways bidding each other good byes. I was walking alone and I greeted Bab'Ngubane who was sitting under a tree as I was passing by.

“Uziphathe kahle mntanami!(Behave yourself my child)”, he shouts after me.

“Yebo baba ngizokwenza njalo!(I will do so)”, I reply while promising.

As I take more steps away from him. He fades from my vision and I starts singing as I make my journey home just to fill the

void of being alone and the journey back home. I got home and my mother was outside throwing water out from her bathing dish. She stood by the stoop and placed her hand on her hips waiting for me to reach her. I greet her and she nods as I walk inside the house. I place my bag on the table and she walks in placing the bathing dish behind the kitchen door.

“Go and change then fetch water”, I nod.

I walk out and go to my rondaval and change into a long dress that my grandmother made for me. I want to visit her soon. Maybe when school closes once again I can go and visit her before Nombukelo's mother tries to throw her child this side so she can bother us. I take the bucket and rush out before it gets any late. I get to the river and I collect some water and pull the bucket out of the river when I am done.

“Nkosazane”, I turn around pulling the bucket out of the river.

I dust my hands wiping sweat from my forehead as I am feeling hit yet my feet are experiencing some coolness from the flowing river.

“Sawubona(Hello)”, I greet.

He smiles and looks at me. There are cows scattered by the river having a drink. He is carrying a stick again. He is a herder then. That I have concluded.

“How are you?”, his deep voice echos through my ears.

My father doesn't have a voice that is as deep as this person Infront of me. Even my uncle's nor my grandfather and Everytime I hear him speak I still get a bit shocked. He is still in the same pants that he wore the last time I saw him and a vest.

“I am well.”, I reply.

“I haven't seen you in a while”, he says yet he is the one who disappeared on me.

“You don't want to tell me where you live”, I say.

He looks away again

“Uyosala kahle Ntokazi(Stay well)”, he turns around.

“Wait Qaphile!”, he doesn't stop but carries on walking.

I don't know what I did wrong in this matter. I take my bucket and out it over my head before I make my journey back home.

QAPHILE

I moved away from the river but I saw her leaving as well. I went back to get the cows and went kwaMdluli to put them back in the kraal. I close the small gate and look at them placing hands in my pocket. I feel a tap on my shoulder and I look at Bab'Mdluli as he stands next to me.

“Baba”, I bow my head.

“They are beautiful isn't it?”, I nod my head.

“I worked hard for them, not every family is meant to have cows like these”, he smiles with pride.

“We will have them too”, I say

I move away from the kraal make my journey home. One day amagceke akwaNdlovu will have its own Livestock. One day my father would be a respected man and one day our situation wouldn't be in this manner but even better than any house hold here in Msinga. I kick the stones and pass by kaButhelezi field where Nqobimpi and Zabanyathi are working on the fields. They change days with Busani and Fezihle. I stand by the fence and watch as they work hard in the Field ploughing. Zaba stands a bit catching a break while wiping his sweat and looks over to me and leave his plough.

“You should get back to work before Buthelezi starts with you”, I say

“He can do all he wants. I don't care !”, he spits.

At the age of 16 he sure has a loose tongue. He knows this is our way to feed everyone.

“Zabanyathi!”, Nqobi calls out for him.

He is look at us in a disapproving look that he is stopping his work.

“I will see you at home”, I say to him.

“Ask Nokwenkosi to sew your pants for you”, I look at them.

“We have to buy material to sew back and you know we can't afford at the moment”, he nods.

“Bye”, he rushes back to his job and Nqobi resumes with him as well.

I look at them one more time before I make my journey back home. I find my sister's preparing the fire and potatoes are next to Kwenkosi. Thulisile walks out of the rondaval with small dish and looks at me.

“You came back early”,Kwenkosi gets up and dusts her hands.

“I got done early. I took out the Khoza cattle yesterday”, I say

“What did Mdluli give you this time?”,Thuli asks.

The little ones are heard and seen as they are playing around the yard.

“Nothing.” ,I place myself on the little hump outside the house and Kwenkosi sits next to me.

“We should steal one of his cows one day!”,Thulisile spits.

“Thulisile!” It's my mother. She walks out holding Sizwe and Nokuthula on her back

It wouldn't be a bad idea as he is ungrateful for all the work I put in. It's time I showed him who Qaphile is.

“God doesn't bless those who steal”, My mother looks at me

“I won't”, I say softly.

“Good. Take him to Phuthuma. I am sure he is awake now”, she hands Sizwe to me.

I stand up and make my way to the second Rondaval. There are only 2 mud made rondavals's. One is shared by the little ones and our parents. The other by the older children of which is us. I get in and Phuthuma is staring at the roof. He turns his head to me and sits up. I hand Sizwe to him and he sighs.

“I am thinking Qaphile”, he says. I sit myself down

“About?”, I ask

“Going to the City and working”, he says

“You see the situation here and some households don't pay”, he is right.

“I am coming with then ”, I say

“No, I would like to go alone first before I bring any of you down there”, he quickly says.

“How is Khulisile?”, I ask.

He sighs.

“Her father chased me away”, it is expected.

He looks at his son.

“Wena ? What is going on with you? These days you are off . Phela wena ave uthetha kabi kulama Langa uthule (You shout too much but these days you are quiet)”, I look down and start smirking.

“Intokazi yakwa Cele(A Cele Maiden)”, I say fiddling with my fingers.

He laughs a bit.

“Ayi , iyasebenza le Ntokazi. Uze uyazithoba (This girl is working. You are even soundng humble)”, I click my tongue and he chuckles.

“Tell me about her”, he says

“Yinhle..Kakhulu(She is beautiful, very beautiful)”, I say thinking about Khethiwe.

“I would want to marry her one day but I don't deserve her look how I am. We are poor Phuthuma”, I say

“We are Ndlovu's. We get any woman we want no matter what”,Dumisani says walking in.

“Washo wayibeka bafo(You took words out of my mouth)”

Phuthuma says

He stands over us.

“MaCele is yours and no one would tell you otherwise”, I look at him and nod.

Khethiwe is mine and no one else's. I will marry her one day as my wish. I will keep my promise to her.

KHETHIWE

I woke up quiet early and prepared for my departure before I headed to school. My father left at the same time as I did. He works at the chiefs house and I am not sure as what but he does work there from what I have been told. I met Zijabule and we walked together with her brother. He later on left and Zijabule told me about how she is going to Greytown this weekend with my aunt and Uncle. I was happy for her and wished her a great trip ahead.

The day seemed longer than I had anticipated but I was glad when we had got out of the school premises. They accompanied home with her brother. He is protective of her and doesn't want any boy near her even by sniffing her hair. I

get home and bid them goodbye. I quickly change and grab my grass mat I was gifted with by my grandmother and my bag filled with all my beads.

“Ngiyabuya mama!(I am coming back Mama)” , I shout as I run out of the yard.

I didn't wait for her to even reply to me but I knew I had to be back on time home. A girl is not supposed to stay out late. I rushed to my usual spot where I do my beads and place the grass mat on the floor and sit down. I scatter my things and start with my work.

“Khethiwe!”, I look up and it's Wandile. He is babu'Mdluli's son.

They are also one of the greatest families here in the place. His father has alot of cows but the Khoza's have cattle the most. Bafuyile kuloya mndeni. He comes and Sits next to me on my grass mat.

“Wandile”, he looks at me.

“How are you?”

“I am well, how are you?”

“I am good. I saw you running here”, he says

“I wanted to start my beads right away”, I say

“Unguzime lah endaweni (You are the most beautiful girl around here)”, I shy away.

“Ngiyabonga(Thank you)”, he takes one of my beads and he places the unfinished bracelet on my wrist.

“I want to buy it once it is done”, I nod.

“Ok”, We hear someone whistling

I lift my head and see him passing as he whistles while the cows are walking Infront of him. He looks sweaty and like the sun hasn't been having any mercy on his already dark skin. The same pants are on and still have the same problem as I had seen them yesterday.

“Khethiwe...”, I look at Wandile.

He looks at where I am looking and we look at him whistling while steering the cows. Wandile starts laughing and I look at him.

“Why are you laughing?”, I frown looking at him.

“His butt cheeks are there Khethiwe”, he keeps on laughing.

I look at him and pack my beads and stand up.

“I need to leave”, he stops and looks at me.

“We are still seated nje Khethiwe”,he says.

“Get off my mat Wandile before I tell my father!”, he stands up confused.

I grab my grass mat and roll it leaving him there. I don't know why but I am angry at him. How could he do what he did! He had just disgusted me very much. I ran in the direction that he went in and he was smacking some cows on their behind with his stick while kicking some stones. I catch my breath before I walk behind him. He stops when he hears my footsteps.

“Hello”, I say softly

He is silent for a moment before he walks a bit further and stops. The cows keep on going. He turns to me.

“MaCele”, his deep voice echos.

I rush next to him.

“Where are you going?”

I ask and we start walking together.

“Around”, he says.

I look down and then at him.

“I can fix that”, I say softly referring to his pants.

He looks away from me.

“That won't be necessary. Bye”, he walks further than me.

“Qaphile wait!”, I run after him.

“I am sorry if I upset you I am just trying to help”, I say

“I don't need your help Khethiwe!”, I jump a bit and he scratches his face.

“I am fine”, his voice is more lower now.

“Please”, I say.

He looks away from me and places his one hand in his pocket before he walks behind me and carries on. I turn and look at him. He stops and looks back at me for a moment then.

The water splashes on his back and I am watching when I shouldn't be. I promised not to watch and carry on with what I am doing but here I am pausing for a while and just watching this brown creature Infront of me taking a cooling bath in the river while the cows are drinking from in there. He sinks in a bit and after a while comes back up shaking his head lightly.

We are by the other side of the river. Where people don't usually come and do their necessity. I get back to what I am doing and I get done in just a bit. I pick the clothing up and look at how I did and I am happy with the result. I stand up from the grass mat.

“I am done!”, I say.

He turns and looks at me. I swallow.

“Ok”, he walks towards the bank.

It means he is getting out. I turn my back on him and look over the whole area.

“I am done”, he says and I turn around.

I look at him and the pants are now patched up from my sewing.

“Thank you”, he places his hands in his pocket.

“Pleasure”, I pick up my things. It is late for me.

“I will see you tomorrow” he says

I am happy to see him tomorrow.

“Ok, bye Gatsheni!”, I shout as I run away leaving him there.

I get home just in time and I went to put my things away before I went to my mother. We dished up some food and my mother placed some for my father as well when he comes back home. I am sitting on the floor while in thoughts while playing with my food. I am a bit worried about Qaphile and wonder why he has always avoided telling me where his home is. I want to ask my mother if she knows any Ndlovu household but then again I rethink the idea and save myself from getting into any trouble.

“I can't wait for you to go to Kwa Langa”, my mother says.

I smile.

“Me too”, I am quiet excited of going.

“If uziphatha kahle mntanami. Uzothola uMkhwenyana okahle ezinkomweni. Ziphathe kahle Khethiwe ka baba(If you keep yourself pure my child you will find a good husband who comes from a great family. Please keep yourself)”, my mother says.

“Yebo mah(yes mom)”, I nod at that and take a spoon full before shoving it in my mouth.

My father's live stock stays at my grandmother's place as she has a bigger piece of land and my father is avoiding paying anyone who will take care of them so it's better with my grandmother as there is my cousin who can do that for free.

We eat and get done. I wash the dishes while my mother goes to her room. I quickly dish some of the food and run out when I am done. I get in my room and I lay down on my bed as soon as I get on it.

I have been waiting here for some time. I don't know what time it is but when I left home it was about 7 am. It's a Saturday today and I haven't seen him in 3 days. I haven't had time to go and fetch water and my father was home early most of the time. I look at my dress and wait as I hear the river flowing. I ended up sitting there throwing stones into the water. I heard

people shouting from where I am and it sounded like there was fighting. I stood up and went to the direction of where the noise is coming from. It was by the open field and there was a group of people. Mostly men to be specific. I peaked and I saw Wandile and some of his friends and they were carrying some sticks hitting the other person. I rushed there and saw who it was.

“Myekeni!(leave him alone!)”, I went on my knees Infront of him and a hard bash landed on my back.

“Khethiwe”, he groans in pain as he says my name softly before he passes out.

“Qaphile!”, I say trying to wake him up.

“Khethiwe move "Wandile says while trying to pull me away but I yank myself.

“No! Ngyiyeke wena! Gatsheni vuka ngyiakucela (Leave me alone! Wake up Gatsheni I am begging you)”, my voice is breaking.

“Qaphile! Gatsheni!”, a group of men came and there were alot of them so as the ladies.

“Oh Nkosi yami bakwenzeni?(Oh my god what have they done to you)”, one lady says and pushes me aside roughly attending to him.

The brothers are holding wandile's friends and the one who seems older than the rest is pinning him down throwing punches on his face.

“You will kill him”, I softly say and the man shoots a look at me and I swallow.

“We need to take him home quickly”, one of them carries him and the lady stands up and gives me an evil look.

“Stay away from my brother”, she says before she rushes behind the one carrying Qaphile. I sit my bum there with my back aching as I swallow my saliva.

I made my way home taking stops and I would flinch with every move. I reached home and threw myself Infront of my mother who is sitting on a bench while having a mango. I start crying at that moment and she attends to me.

“What is wrong Khethiwe?”, she asks.

I don't say anything but I cry. She sees my back and touches it while I flinch.

“Your back is purple. What happened? and it's swollen”, she asks.

“I fell on a rock”, I say

She doesn't seem to believe me but she takes my hand and leads me to my room. She undresses me and lays me on the bed.

“Ngizokuthoba ngiyabuya(I will treat you. I will be back)”, I nod as she walks out to get some cold water and towel.

I hold onto my pillow and wonder why Wandile would do such a thing to Qaphile. What has he ever done to him to do such a thing to him?

QAPHILE

I look at my mother who is sitting on the floor while breast feeding Nokuthula who is in her arms. I groan as Kwenkosi presses on my painful areas. I close my eyes and take in a sharp breath.

“I am sorry”, she says softly.

Sizile walks in with a bowl in her hands. We are just 10 months apart from each other. She joins next to my mother and they both look at me.

“You should stop working kwaMdluli”, Sizile suggests.

“But we need the money and food”, I groan when Kwenkosi gets back at it.

“They don't pay you sometimes Qaphile so what are you talking about ?”, She says.

“I am fine.”, I quickly say

“Lenkani kaBaba wakho angizwani nayo(your father's stubbornness is what I don't like)”, my mother says taking out her nipple from Nokuthula's mouth.

If that boy thinks I am going to let go of her then he has something else coming.

“Mfana wami(my boy)”, my father says standing by the door.

I try to sit up and Nokwenkosi moves back. He walks in and looks at the women. They stand up and walk out of the rondaval leaving us.

“Stand up”, I do just that with a bit of a struggle.

He throws a punch at me and I stumble back and hit the floor.

“Get up!”, I do just that and he throws in another.

“Usuhlulwa abafana wena? Usuyashawa manje wena?(you are being beaten up by boys now? You are getting beaten now?)”, he says calmly

“No baba”, I say

“Get up”, I get up again.

He places one hand in his pocket and points the other on my chest.

“If ever I hear someone beat you up I will hit you Qaphile uyangizwa?(you hear me?)”, he pokes my chest.

“Yebo Gatsheni (yes)”, I say

“This better be the last time you loose a fight and tomorrow you are going to work. Indoda ayilali (a man doesn't sleep)”, he says and walks out. I look at the floor where there is drops of my blood. I grab my vest that already has some of my blood from earlier and I wipe my blood.

KHETHIWE

My mother rested with me the period that I had to recover. I couldn't sleep with my back and I had to sleep with my stomach. I was worried about Qaphile. Is he still alive or not? I have asked myself those questions the past month. I haven't went to school because of my back problems but now I am fine. Better if I should say. I could help my mother around the house better now.

I am heading back to school today and Zijabule fetched me so we could walk together. We talked about a lot of things and I touched a bit on my injury but assured her that I am fine. She told me about her trip to Greytown and I was listening the whole day about it. At least she bought some sweets for me and I love that about my friend. She remembers that her friend loves things. The day was long back at school and a lot of work was given to me to catch up on.

After school arrived and we parted our ways going home. I started singing while occupying myself with the walk. I passed a group of boys sitting by the tree on my way home.

“Pss”, there it is again.

I stop my singing and my tracks all at once. I turn around and see him behind me with hands in his pockets. The pants looking great since the time I fixed them.

“Nkosazane”, he says

“Sawubona (Hello)”, he stands next to me and I move back.

“You are ok?”, I ask

“Very ok”, I nod and walk away.

“Khethiwe!”, I try to shut out his calling.

I hear his footsteps behind me and he grabs my arm turning me to face him.

“We are still talking nje”, he says

“Your family said I should stay away from you Qaphile. I don't want to defy their wishes”, he gives me a frown.

“Come ”, he says walking off.

I follow after him as we walk to the river in silence. We stand there and I sit down as I got tired. He looks down on me.

“Khethiwe”, he heaves a sigh.

“There are 13 of us at home ...my siblings and I”, oh how I wish I had a sibling. He is telling me a bit about his family.

“It must be nice. I am alone at home”, I say

He looks towards the river.

“We will have alot of children together don't worry”,he says

I shy away for a moment and look back at him. He turns to me.

“I will see you tomorrow after school ”, I nod.

“Ok”, I stand up and leave him there.

I couldn't stop thinking of what he said at the river about us having alot of children. He always takes me by surprise when he speaks. I look down and kick some stones as I am walking.

Energy to sing on my way home has left me but now I am stuck in this good world for a moment. A world that is created by me for temporary visits.

He kept his promise and waited for me! I didn't think he would and I had prepared myself for disappointment. My mother wouldn't be happy to learn that seeing a boy makes me happy. My father would weigh the options of where his household is and how many cows they have and would make me gone in a instant if it pleases his heart as much.

I reach him and he turns to just look at me and I look away from his gaze.

“Nkosazane”, he says

“Gatsheni”, I reply softly.

He smiles. Relaxes more than before I came here.

“The reason why I wanted to see you was because...”, He pauses for a moment and slips his hands in his pockets.

“I am leaving Msinga”, I look at him and hold onto my bag.

“Why?”, I ask

“I have to”, I nod and look at him.

I don't understand. My head is trying to wrap around what he is saying to me.

“You have to ?”, I am trying to process this.

“Yes”

I am silent for a moment then I speak.

“Bye then Gatsheni. Uhambe kahle (Travel well)”, I say turning my heels and preventing myself from crying.

”Bye Nkosazane”, I nod and walk away from him.

I have grew fond of him over the time. I didn't expect him to leave so soon. What about all that he has been saying? Did he lie to me? He is not an honorable person after all but I wish him luck where ever he is going.

“Khethiwe!”, it's Wandile Mdluli.

I run as fast as I could away from him before he could stop me.

“Khethiwe! Khethiwe!”, he keeps on shouting my name but I ignore him.

The tears drop and I stop my tracks after a long distance and wipe them vigorously from my face and keep on walking with a heavy heart.

CHAPTER 3

The girls kept on singing. Nothing has filled my heart than being here amongst other pure maidens each year to celebrate with each other and be together. The look on my mother shows how proud I am of still keeping myself and my father can't wait to hand me away to any family he sees fit for me. He is scouting by the looks but I am not here for that. I am here for myself and my enjoyment of being Kwa Langa. It has been two years ever since that day. I couldn't seem him depart and I told myself that he is gone and would never come back here in Msinga. For what exactly ? He never mentioned where he is going but just said that he is leaving Msinga and that was it.

I see my father talking with my aunt's husband for some brief time before joining Bab'Buthelezi and they have a lengthy conversation.

“Wezintombi anibophelele!•••”,we start singing once again and boys start whistling as we dance.

They stand up from where they are cheering for us and we dance even more as our mother's are also joining in on them. It didn't stop us but gave us more reason to go on.

“We were beautiful today”, Zijabule says while running her fingers on her skirt.

“Alot. I can't wait to go back again next year”, she is silent for a moment.

“My uncle found a husband for me Khethiwe”, I look at her and she seems happy.

“Is he old?”, that's the first thing I ask.

“Its the chief. He chose me ”, she says excitedly.

I wouldn't be. He is old enough to be my father but with my friend it's all about the money and status that is all.

“I am happy for you”, I mask a smile.

She hums away in her own world as we are walking together. She waves at me as soon as we get near her home and says her good byes and I carry on with my journey home. I get home and change out of my outfit. My mother asks me to go and fetch some water or I will fetch it the next day if I am tired and I opted for the next day. I had finally finished the bracelet Wandile wanted and no I didn't sell it to him but decided to keep it to myself. He still chases around me and I don't like it but he doesn't give up that is for sure. He said he will never give up until I am his bride one day. We shall see then.

I woke up in the morning and did some of my chores before I made my way to the river to collect water. I have finished school now and all I do is help out Mama with anything around the house and she teaches me how to take care of my home one day when I get married. It's all about that now with my father it's never a different story. I wish I could go back to yesterday and have to go through that day once again. It was an amazing one for that fact.

“Inkomo Zababa aziphelele namuhla..”, I sing on my way to the river.

I get to the river and take off my shoes. I dip my feet in and start collecting some water as I am singing while holding my dress from getting wet as I am bending. The bucket gets filled and I try to pull it from the river when manly hands touch my bucket and I get frightened letting the bucket go.

“Nkosazane”, he places the bucket out of the river.

I turn to face this voice.

“Qaphile”, I gasp a little in shock of seeing him.

“Yebo Nkosazane”, I get closer to him.

He looks different now from when I last saw him. In different clothes than what he usually wore and more of the handsome dark man he is. He even has a watch on his wrist.

“You are back”, I say trying to tell myself he is here.

He nods.

“You are here”, I say the last statement as I wrap my arms around him.

He does the same. He smells good as well.

“You left me”, I softly say.

“Ayidle iyishiyele MaCele (I am sorry)”, he says in his deep voice.

That voice that always took me by surprise Everytime he spoke and interested me into listening to him more. He sighs as he is holding me. I never thought it would feel this good to have a man hold you in this manner. I am still enjoying and I don't want to let him go.

“Khethiwe..”, he says

“Gatsheni”

“Qaphile!”, I let go of him and we look back.

I assume it his brother who is looking at us. I move back from him and take my bucket. He comes to assist me.

“I will see you tomorrow”, I nod before the bucket is placed on my head.

I thank him and he places his hands in his pocket before I walk away. I pass his brother and greeted.

“Sawubona (Hello)”, he nods and I walk away from there.

I make my journey home and for some reason I am just happy. Very happy than I was yesterday. I make my way home and help my mother as soon as I get there. We get done with work and sit outside occupying ourselves but my mind is occupied by Qaphile. I smile on my own just by thinking of him. That hug left me stuck in this world of my own that no one could enter but me. My father came back home just in time and he seemed happy as well. He got seated and so as us with our food. He looks at me.

“Khethiwe kaBaba”, he says.

“Baba”

“The Mdluli's want to pay for your hand in marriage”, my mother closes her eyes.

That's Wandile's family.

“What? Baba I don't love Wandile”

“You will learn”

“But•••”

“Are you defying me?”, my father says

“Ngiyaxolisa baba(I am sorry)”, we carry on eating.

I wasn't in the mood anymore as my father is raving about his kraal is expanding now. I excused myself when I was done and went to my room and cried myself on my pillow. What is Wandile doing with my life ?

I throw the next stone in the river and it bounces on top before it sinks in the water. I take another one and throw it in the water and it skips before it sinks in again. I pick up another one and one is thrown on the river and it skips more than mine. I look beside me and he looks concerned as he sees my tears. I quickly wipe them while I look away.

“What made your cry?”, his voice sounds bitter.

“Nothing”, I softly say and stand up.

“I don't like how you are right now Khethiwe”

“I can't see you anymore”, I say

He looks at me with hands in his pocket and I could smell a bit of smoke mixed with his perfume. Does he smoke?its not irritating though.

“Why can't you see me anymore?”, he asks.

“Qaphile please understand.”, he frowns

“Give me a reason to understand”, oh he is making this harder than I thought.

“I am getting married...KwaMdluli”, he chuckles as he steps Infront of me and I lift my head to look up to him.

“You are mine Khethiwe”, I find myself nodding at his command.

I swallow at that moment and he holds my face with his one hand. It's rough,shows that he is a person of hard labour. He takes my hand into his.

“But you left me”, I say with more heaviness from my chest.

“I said I will marry you”, I nod.

He remembers that? I thought he had forgotten about that. He places his lips on mine and I gasp giving him a chance to kiss my lips. My heart is beating fast. I am kissing a boy! I am kissing a boy! He doesn't let go of my hand but holds it tightly. I am even enjoying as our lips move to please each other. As I feel flutters in my stomach in an instant. As I feel every kind of good feeling that pulls me back into my own world that we both get stuck in. We pull out from the kiss when we are fully satisfied with each other.

“Tell your father you are going to marry Qaphile Ndlovu. whether he likes it or not. Uyezwa?(You hear me?)”,I nod my head.

“Yebo Gatsheni”

He pulls me in that hug once again and I don't want him to let me go. I love him. I love Qaphile and I would rather be with him than anyone else.

QAPHILE

That boy is starting with me again and he thinks I would just let him be with my Khethiwe. After spending some time with her by the river I made my way back home. I am leaving in two days time. I work in Durban with Some of my brothers. Phuthuma and I got a job as conductors at the taxi rank. We got to do our licenses so we can also be drivers. It brings in better money than what we used to get here while working for people who pay us when they felt like it.

“I will kill that boy!”, I hiss as I walk in.

“Whats with the noise?”, my mother asks.

She is feeding Nokuthula and Sizwe some porridge. The rest are outside of which are the little ones rolling wherever they are rolling and messing themselves.

“That Mdluli boy”, I say.

Gatsa pulls me out of the house quickly before I say anything further and so as the rest follow. We stand in a circle outside and my mother looks at us with a frown before she went back to feeding the little ones.

“Calm down”, Nqobi says.

I breath in and out.

“What happened?”, Zaba asks.

“He is taking MaCele away from me ”

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I say

“I knew we should've killed him that day!”, Zaba says.

“Calm down Gatsheni”, Phuthuma quickly says.

He places his hands in his pocket.

“He won't take her”, he says

“But Bhuti he has everything that I don't have”, I say

“Yeyi, you are a Ndlovu. We don't care you will have MaCele one way or another”, Nqobi says.

“I wish it was easy.”, I wish I could take her hand in marriage very easily but I have nothing to offer.

“It is.”, Gatsa says.

“If she loves you she will stay”, he says.

“He is right”, Zaba says

“But I am leaving in two days. Who knows when I will be back”, they are all silent.

I sigh and move away from them. This is frustrating me. I don't want to let go of Khethiwe, I really don't.

KHETHIWE

I couldn't stop thinking about the kiss. I was more eager on seeing Qaphile today. I decided today that I want to dress nicely for when I see him. I don't want to marry Wandile but I want to be with Qaphile.

“Mama ngiyabuya(I am coming back)”, I say rushing out.

I don't wait for her reply but run on my way to where we usually meet.

“Khethiwe!”, I stop my tracks and dust is there.

I look behind me and Wandile approaches me.

“How are you?”, He smiles.

“I am good”, I say

“Did you hear the news?”

“I did... I”

“Nkosazane”, I look behind me and it's Qaphile.

I automatically blush and look away. Wandile looks annoyed with him being here.

“What are you doing here?”, he says.

Qaphile looks at him. I walk away from Wandile.

“Khethiwe!”, he shouts. I ignore him and walk away with Qaphile.

“I got you something”, he pulls out some chocolate.

I smile and thank him.

“Thank you”, he holds my hand into his as we are walking.

I love holding his rough hands. Everything about him I just love. He is silent for a moment before he speaks.

“I am leaving tomorrow Khethiwe”, he drops a bomb.

I stop my tracks and he does the same.

“Uyangishiya futhi?(you are leaving me again?)”, he looks at me.

“Ngiyaxolisa(I am sorry)”, tears stream down my cheek.

I drop the chocolate and run away from him while he shouts for me. He runs after me and catches up to me holding me. He pulls me to his chest and I cry on it.

“Dali wami”, he says

I keep on crying.

“I will come back. I don't know when”, he says

I look at him.

“Leave with me then”, I say

“Khethiwe”, he heaves a sigh.

“Did I do something wrong to you?”, I ask

“No, you didn't. You wouldn't”, He wipes my tears and kisses my lips. He breaks it off. I look at this handsome person Infront of me as my heart pulses just from sesing him.

“Come let's go”, He takes my hand into his and we walk away.

One thing I am grateful for is having a room inside the house and outside the house if I want to. Usually I sleep inside when Nombukelo is around because she is scared of sleeping in the rondaval but I am not. His lips on mine and kissing me as passionately. My hands are on his back. He is calming me down and helping me forget of the pain that I am feeling at the

moment. They have never told me how painful it is. He breaks the kiss and wipes my little tears and says

“Ngiyabonga MaCele(Thank you)”, I nod.

He thrusts in and goes back to my lips when I feel the pain again. He is being gentle at the same time , threading carefully with my first time. He took me out of being a girl and made me a woman.

I don't think he cares that his family knows where he is at this time of the night and his kisses help muffle my cries as well.

“I love you”, he says while breathing by my ear.

I wrap my arms around him. I love him too. God knows how much I love him. I find myself crying at the thought of him leaving me tomorrow. Just tomorrow but I am not regretting my decision of me giving him my pride.

“Qaphile”, I gasp softly.

He kisses my neck and I start to enjoy as well while meeting his thrusts.

He holds me from behind. There is silence between us, soft kisses on the shoulder that awaken unknown things in me.

“I am happy”, I quickly say before he starts regretting it.

“I may not have it all for now Khethiwe but I love you and I will keep my promises”, he says

I turn to look at him.

“I love you and I will wait until you return”, I say

He perks my lips and pulls me to his naked body. I worm my way closer to him just to feel his touch on me.

CHAPTER 4

It has been a month since Qaphile left. I miss him but I hold on to his words of coming back once again.

“Khethiwe ka Gogo”, I rush towards my grandmother and hug her.

She gives me kisses and I sit next to her on the bench. We both watch as my parents are approaching the yard.

“Go and get some juice and biscuits Khethiwe”, I stood up and made my way inside the house.

I got what my grandmother needed and made my way outside serving them.

“You have disappointed me Khethiwe”, my grandmother says.

“Gogo?”, she shakes her head and my parents eager to know on what she is saying.

“I thought you would keep yourself pure until you get married”, I look away. She sips on her juice.

“But she is still pure Mah”, I am shaking a bit.

“Are you Khethiwe?”, I couldn't lie.

I can't lie even if I tried about something this big.

"No", I softly say.

My father tries to pounce on me but my mother comes between us giving me a chance to run away. It's a shock to them but my father is more angry.

"Who is that boy who has the nerve ukungena esibayeni Sami Khethiwe and you let him?!", He is shouting.

"I am sorry baba ", I quickly say

"Sorry?", he rushes after me and my mother shouts after him.

"Cele wait !", She shouts.

My grandmother's big mouth. Couldn't she keep it to her self if she saw I wasn't one anymore.

I ran away but he caught me and gave me the hardest slaps I have ever recieved.

"I am sorry", I keep on begging.

He is livid, my mother rushes to us and stands Infront of her husband. I am now a crying mess.

"Khethiwe", My grandmother picks me up from the floor.

"Lets sit down and talk", as much as my mother is calm but I know she is angry as well.

"I am sorry", I keep on saying.

“Who is he?”, my father asks. I feel dizzy from that slap already.

“He..he”, I throw up on the floor that moment.

My mother gasps and my grandmother brushes my back.

“Awu Jesus. Khethiwe umithi!?(Khethiwe are you pregnant?)” She says.

“Mah?”

“Are you pregnant?”, I shake my head quickly and look at my grandmother. My father clicks his tongue and walks away.

I am not pregnant.

My grandmother brings in some warm sugared water and sits next to me. She holds my hand and brushes it making me drink the water.

“Is it that Mdluli boy who is going to marry you?”, I thought of Wandile.

“No”, I quickly say.

“He is a Ndlovu”, she is silent for a moment.

“That big family leh ngaphesheya?”, where?

I just nod because I know he once told me they are a big family as it is.

"Kodwa Khethiwe. You know your father is livid. It's bad now that you are pregnant", I swallow.

"I didn't mean to", she sighs.

"I have to tell your father", she stands up and walks out leaving me laying on the bed.

This is a mess a big one and for a moment I am all alone. He is not here to comfort me and help me through this situation. I know he wouldn't be able to pay inhlawulo as he is trying to feed his family and now this baby decided to come along.

A baby. Something in me that is a part of him as well is growing inside of me. I find myself fearing. How can I be a mother when I am just 18 years old. How can I be a mother when I need to be mothered as well?

I could hear the shouting from where I am and I know it's my father. He is angry but mostly disappointed in me but I don't regret that night with Qaphile. I don't regret giving him my pride at all.

I insert the coin into the machine and I take the piece of paper and I look at it. This old man who is having amageu is looking at me listening to the Maskandi music coming from the shop. I dial the number and wait a second placing the phone on my ear. I am nervous and scared at the same time.

"Hello", A woman answers.

I look at the number on the paper that I have dialed and it seems like I dialed the correct one.

"Uhm Hello sisi .I am looking for Qaphile Ndlovu", I say.

"Oh, he just went outside. Who are you?", She asks.

"Khethiwe", I say

"Oh ok. I will let him know you called", I thank her and place the phone down and folded the paper and leaned against the telephone while sighing.

QAPHILE

I take a puff and release it one more time before I throw away my stud. The warm air is what I love about this place and the ocean intrigued me when I first came here. I didn't think I would love living here and I couldn't imagine myself anywhere else. I am sitting with Phuthuma and he is having a plate of pap and Livers that are sold by Joyce here at the taxi rank.

"Qaphile!",she calls out for me from her stall and I get up.

"I am coming back", Phuthuma nods as I walk away.

I reach her and she hands me my phone.

"Someone called. Her name is Khethiwe", she says

I look at my phone.

"What did she say ?"

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I ask rather quickly and concerned.

"Nothing. She just mentioned her name", she turns and walks away.

I try to call back the same number and it rings a few times. I walk away from where I am and place one hand in my pocket before the call gets through.

"Khethiwe"

"Qaphile", I smile for a moment.

I have missed her so very much over the weeks I have been away.

"How are you?", I ask

"I am.. I am hanging there", I frown.

"Whats wrong Dali wami?", I ask.

"Kuningi Ndlovu(it's alot)".

"Tell me ", I say

She sighs for a moment.

“Ngizthwele(I am pregnant)”, I pause for a moment.

I am silent for a moment.

“Qaphile are you still there?”, I hang up and run my fingers on my face.

I walk to where Phuthuma is and my phone rings but I don't answer but shove it in my pocket.

“What's wrong?", He asks.

“Nothing”, I will see you.

I climb in the already full taxi and start it before driving off.

KHETHIWE

He didn't say anything. He just left me like that. I couldn't help myself but cry. My journey back home was a sour one after that call.

I get home and my mother ignores me. She doesn't want to talk to me and said she doesn't have a child anymore. It really hurts how we used to get along and now we don't. It's clear that I am all alone in this and doing it on my own.

“Mah I'm sorry”, I say

She looks at me the carries on with what she was doing anyway. I sigh and I make my way inside.

I go to my rondaval and I lay down while crying for a little while before I dozed off. I didn't have the appetite to eat anything.

I was woken up by the sound of soft knocks onto my window. I sat upright and they kept on coming making me get off my bed and go and look on what is happening. I see a figure and I am a bit frightened a bit until I hear a soft “Khethiwe”, I quickly attend to opening the window and I look at him while stepping aside. My heart yelps.

“When did you arrive?”, I ask.

“As soon as I could”, he says.

He jumps inside and looks at me placing his hands in his pockets.

“I am sorry”, he utters those words.

It seems like he was contemplating with himself whether to say it or not.

I am happy that he is here. I wrap my arms around him and he holds me close to him.

"Ngonile. Akumele ngibe lay'kaya ngingahlawulile(I did some damage and I am not supposed to be here without paying the damages)", he says

I don't care. He is here with me.

"I love you", he kisses my lips and I am taken.

His hand moves to my butt and he squeezes it a bit and I giggle. He chuckles while breaking the kiss.

"Why are you laughing?", I shrug.

Silence falls into the room.

"I don't have it all Khethiwe but I won't abandon you and our child.", he says

"I don't care about what you have Qaphile.", he kisses my lips and then forehead.

The love we share is all I care about.

"Come and rest", he must be tired.

"Are you hungry?", I ask

"No, I am fine"

I pull him in while closing the window. He undresses himself before slipping into the blanket. I join him and he wraps his arms around me and heaves a sigh. Soon enough I slip back into sleep again.

I woke up in the morning and he wasn't there anymore. The sounds of the chicken served that the sun has risen and it's time that I wake up. I kick the blankets and wake up. I clean up my room before making my way out wondering where he had disappeared off to. I found my mother already making soft porridge by the fire. I greeted and she didn't acknowledge the greeting at all. I kept my silence there after and went on my duties.

QAPHILE

It felt like I didn't have an ounce of sleep when I did get to sleep. It's stress that is making me feel tense through my body and tired. I don't know how to go about this situation that has come before me. That I would later on be a father at my age. I don't know how I will include my child into the money I get from the city but I am determined and deemed to take care of Khethiwe and our child. I have to do right by her at the moment.

My mother was surprised to see me arrive this morning and so as my father and siblings. He had a bit of suspicions and my sisters were asking questions of where I am coming from and

what did I arrive with but I didn't answer their questions fully as I hitch hiked my way here and the rest of the journey I walked. There wasn't any transport available anymore for me to take as I arrived late in the area.

I am seated down now. The little one looking between my mother and I while she dishes up some porridge for me. I have taken a warm bath and changed in some of my old clothes. The trouser that Khethiwe sewed back is worn. She places the dish in front of me and I thank her before eating. She looks at me with a smile and she drags stumbling Sizwe followed by her son and they walk out. I get done with eating and place my dish where it is supposed to be before I leave the main rondaval.

I find myself sitting by the front hump and looking over the view in front of me. The cows and Chickens not to be heard by a bit near by. My father sits next to me and keeps his silence for a while before he starts talking.

“What are you doing here so early Qaphile. Where are your brothers?”, I keep quiet for a moment before sighing.

“I left them”, I say.

“Ngonile Gatsheni(I did something)”, I don't wait for him to talk.

“Wenzi?(What did you do?)”, he looks at me.

I keep quiet for a moment trying to piece what I am going to say.

“Ngone intokazi yakwaCele(I impregnated a girl from the Cele house hold)”, he closes his eyes defeated.

“Didn't you learn with Mbewuyesizwe?”, he is a bit angry from his voice.

I don't know how to answer to his question. He shoots his eyes at me and stands up calling my mother. I close my eyes and sigh as he walks away. I rub my head a bit and stand up following him inside the main rondaval. I get in and my mother looks at me. Anger evident on my father's face.

“I want to pay the damages”, I say.

“With what Qaphile?! You know how the situation here is like. Phuthuma didn't do it for Sizwe's mother. Ayi nawe kodwa!”, Thuli says walking out.

Kwenkosi sits silently as she feeds one of our siblings the soft porridge.

“Kodwa Qaphile”, the defeat in my mother's tone is not to be missed.

“I am sorry”, she wipes her face and turns around carrying on with her duty.

KHETHIWE

I sit by the river. I am running away from the foul mood at home and the silent treatment that I could not take at the moment. I throw the stones into the river just to pass time before hand cover my eyes and that deep voice gives away on who it is.

“Gatsheni”, they get removed.

He comes and stands next to me. I stand up from the floor dusting myself and face him. He places his hands in his pockets looking at me.

“Ngiyaxolisa MaCele”, there he is apologizing.

He pulls me to him with his one arm and I wrap both of them around him. We stare at the river in a bit of silence before he speaks.

“Everything will be ok”, I hope everything does.

“I am scared”, I admit.

He is silent for a moment not saying anything.

“Ngiyakuthanda Ngenhliziyo yami yonke sthandwa Sami(I love you with my whole heart my love)”

I smile.

“I love you so much Qaphile”.

CHAPTER 5

“Khethiwe!”, I look up and it's my mother.

I was done with bathing and also the duties of the day. I haven't been feeling well and the vomiting seems to be a problem that I would be facing. My father is still angry and is not talking to me. I ruined the chances of him getting a great deal of cows from the Mdluli family. I don't love Wandile and I would never in my life love him. After what he did to Qaphile I would not see myself with him.

“Mah”, I am a bit shocked.

She is talking to me. Even if it's just calling my name but it's something.

“I got you some herbs for the vomiting. Finish up then come to drink and go and wear proper clothes we are leaving”

I nod and rush to my rondaval and change into something proper and I come out after some time. Qaphile went back to Durban. Yes I know where he is and I would go to the local telephone to give him a call as I don't have a phone of my own. He asks about the baby that is growing. My stomach is getting hard and a bit visible with only just as early as two months or is it because I don't eat alot anymore. I can't seem to keep anything down my throat.

I get in the main house and my mother hands me the drinking herbs and I drink up. It's is bitter and leaves a bitter taste in my mouth.

“Your father and Uncles are taking you to that boy's home”, I look at her.

“Why?”

“Your father didn't impregnant you Khethiwe and that family Is not coming to pay damages!”, she is angry

“I am sorry”, I say

“You disappointed me very much.”, she says

I look down to my feet.

“Go and pack your clothes”

“But Mama I●●●”

“Now Khethiwe! You don't want to anger me ”, I look at the door and it's my father.

I wipe the tears from my face. My mother looks away from me and I walk out. I go to my room and I cry for a moment, what is happening really ? Is my father chasing me away from his house?could it be?

“You should be packing not crying”, it's him by the door.

“Baba Ngiyaxolisa ngiyakucela (Dad I am sorry, please)”, I press my hands together.

“If you don't pack for yourself. I will do it for you”, he says while walking out.

I take the plastic bag I have and I throw in my clothes and also my sewing material and beads. Everything that was mine and I got done. My uncle walked in and he smiled. He takes my bag and we walk out of my room. My aunt's husband Bab'Khoza was here as well. I swallow the lump in my throat and I walk towards them. My aunt is here and so as my mother.

“Get inside”, We get inside my aunt's husband's car and I look back home before the car drove off.

I have never been here. It would be my first time stepping foot onto the Ndlovu homestead. To be honest I am scared and my heart is racing. My father and the uncles went out of the car while I remained with my aunt and my mother. My aunt is being nice to me and has been comforting me and brushing my hair the whole journey.

“They are opening the gate”, my mother says

I look out the car and see some of Qaphile's random brothers. I don't know them but now I know that they are his brothers.

My father signals for my mother to come out and she does. I am left with my aunt in the car. I am scared really.

“Khethiwe Nana”, I look at my aunt.

She takes out a lunch box from her bag and a plastic and hands it to me.

“Put it in your bag ok?”, I nod and I place it there.

“I love you ok?”, I nod.

“I love you too aunty”.

We are told to come out as well and now alot of eyes are on us. I hold onto my plastic bag as we walk inside the yards. It's not much but he wasn't lying that they are a big family. I had my head bowed down the whole time in silence.

“This is Khethiwe”,my father says.

“I see. Qaphile is in Durban for now ”, the man says

“I don't want her anymore. You would see what you do with her”, I shoot my head up hearing my father's words.

“Bhuti•••”, my father gives off a look to my aunt before he can protest further.

“Kwenkosi take her things”, the man says to one girl.

“But Baba•••”

“Don't Thokozile!”, the man interjects.

She huffs and gives me an evil look. I look down. My aunt hugs me

“Take care of yourself ”, she is a teary mess.

I wish I could stay with her but I can't. I nod as my bags get taken away. They leave me , they left me with people I hardly knew.

I have been seated at this corner on my own with my things close to me. I feel scared that I am in a foreign place. It would've been better if Qaphile was here and maybe I would've eased up a bit. I have learnt that this rondaval is shared amongst everyone so there is no privacy in this place.

“Hey, here is some food”, it's the girl from earlier. The one who took my bags.

She sits next to me and places the food down.

“I am Nokwenkosi but you can call me Kwenkosi”, She says with a smile.

“Khe•••Khethiwe”, she smiles.

I look at the food.

“I can't keep things down lately”, I say and she laughs.

“Sorry, Mama also couldn't keep things down with Nokuthula”, she smiles.

“What should I get for you?”, she is sweet

“I am fine”

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I politely say.

Her sister walks in and looks at us.

“Nokwenkosi mom is calling you”, she says

“I will see you just now Khethiwe. Maybe you can go outside”, I nod.

She walks out with the food and her sister stands there who I had learnt is Thokozile.

“Didn't I tell you to stay away from my brother?”, I am silent.

“You think we have money to feed you and your bastard baby”, she says

“My child is not that”, I quickly say

“Eyi shut up. You will regret going after my brother nx”, she walks out.

I swallow and push back the fresh tears. I calm down before I open my plastic that was handed to me by my aunt and it has

money inside. I have never seen so much money in my life. I don't know where I would hide it. I don't trust these people yet.

“MaCele”, I look up and it's one of Qaphile's brothers. He has a baby boy in his arms.

He puts the boy down and the baby stumbles it's way to me and falls before standing up and stumbling to me opening it's arms for me to catch him and I do. He rests his head on my chest and clenches his fist on my dress.

“Sawubona(Hello)”, I say softly

“Abona(Hello)”, I giggle a bit.

“He likes you”, I look up to him.

“I am Phuthuma”,he says

“Khethiwe”

“We know. Qaphile doesn't stop talking about you”, I shy away.

“I love him”, I say

“I am happy to hear that.We have informed him. He said he will call later on”, I nod looking away as embarrassed by my parents behavior.

“Sizwe come”, he calls for the one in my arms but he doesn't move.

He comes to try and take him but he cries and holds on to me tightly.

“I can stay with him it's fine”, I say

“I don't want him bothering you”

“Its fine”, he nods and walks out.

I sigh and run my fingers on this child's face. Even though it's stressful now but I can't wait to have my child in my arms with Qaphile in our lives.

The day went by quickly and I haven't adjusted to my living situation as yet. I spent the whole day with Sizwe and Nokwenkosi. He has a really nice name I should say. I asked Nokwenkosi about his mother and all she mentioned is that she dropped him here and said she never wants to be in his life. Who would want to abounden such a wonderful child? I have encountered moments with her mother but I avoided the father. He is a very intimidating man. This family is very intimidating.

We were now settling to go and rest. Nokwenkosi said I could sleep next to her if I wanted. I did agree because I am starting to feel comfortable around her. Bhuti Phuthuma walked in the room and said“Khethiwe”, he signaled his phone and I went

towards him. I took it as I walked outside into the dark cold night. I stood a bit far so they wouldn't hear what I am saying.

“Hello”, I say

“Dali wami”, I feel happy hearing his voice.

“I am sorry”, I quickly say.

I miss him. I miss him so very much.

“It’s ok. It's ok. I will try and come back as soon as I can ok?”, I nod.

“Ok”

“I love you MaCele”, I smile.

“I love you too Gatsheni”

“Inhliziyo yami ivele igcwale injabulo mangizwa lokho mama(My heart is filled with joy when I hear that)”, I giggle.

“I am happy to hear that”

“I have to go. I will call tomorrow ok?”

“Ok, bye ”

He hangs up. I feel at ease now. I take the phone back to Phuthuma.

It's the next few days. Even though I am new but I can't just sit around and do nothing so I help out wherever I can. Sizile and Thokozile proved to not like me but Nokwenkosi is a sweet one. I like her. Sizwe, oh that child I am so attached to now. He follows me everywhere I go and shouts "Mama!", every chance he gets. I am in the kitchen helping with the cooking and he is on my back asleep from all the following me around he was doing.

"He is really fond of you. He used to follow me around", Qaphile's mother says

"He doesn't want anyone anymore", Nokwenkosi comments.

Thokozile clicks her tongue.

"You are not his mother remember that", she says

"Thokozile!", the mother says.

"Its fine", I say softly.

She clicks her tongue and walks out of the room.

"I am sorry about that.", I nod.

I hope Qaphile comes back as soon as possible.

CHAPTER 6

“Next!”

“Come”, Nokwenkosi pulls my hand and I stand up.

I am scared of being here. I truly appreciate the support I get from Nokwenkosi and her mother. It has been 4 months since I started living with Qaphile's family and he came back for me and checked if I am ok. I really appreciate it. He tries to call as much as he can when one of his brothers are home but sometimes I make the trip to the store and call him from the pay phone.

We are at the mobile clinic. Nokwenkosi jotted down the date of when we should go to check if everything is still well. The stomach is there and very much visible now. I am not getting fat, I haven't gained much weight. It's the stress. From Qaphile's other sisters and the living condition. I am not disputing it but being swore at in corners for being pregnant is something I can't handle. Thokozile hates me with every fiber in her and she doesn't hide it even one bit.

She sits me down on the bed as instructed by the nurse and she moves away holding the little bag we came with. I lie down as instructed and then the nurse starts examining what needs to be done. We get done after that and she tells me to come back

after 2 weeks. We walk out with Nokwenkosi and she tells me to wait a bit she would be quick. She went inside the mobile clinic and came back holding some papers.

“What are those?”, I ask

“Its application forms for a nursing program. 2 lucky people can get a bursary to a nursing School in New castle”, she says.

“You better apply fast”, I say

“I got some for you too”, she says

“I can't Kwenkosi. I have a child on the way and that will take all up my attention but you should go for it”, I say

“Oh ok”

“Are you hungry?”, she asks.

“No I am fine”

“But you don't want to eat Khethiwe. Please”, she takes out a banana

“Ok I will have some ”, she smiles.

We keep on walking home and taking some break along the way. I don't know the gender of the baby but Qaphile's mother thinks it a boy.. She says it's a boy as I am not glowing. She could've said I am ugly and not try to sugar coat anything. I love Sizwe! My god that child is something else. As naughty as he is

but he is such a human you can't get angry at. He sometimes rests on my stomach when he is tired and I let him be. He gives me baby fever very much.

We get back to the Ndlovu yards and Thokozile is standing by the rondaval looking at us. She shakes her head and speaks.

“There is a lot of work waiting for Khethiwe. She can't get special treatment because she is pregnant.”, she says.

“She doesn't need to strain herself”, Nokwenkosi says

“She is not the first person to get pregnant and definitely not the last”, she hisses.

“Thokozile!”, it's Qaphile's father.

“Baba but•••”

“Don't start me Thokozile. Leave the poor child alone”, I am scared of the father.

I have been trying as much as I can to avoid him.

“Yebo baba”, she gives me a look before she walks away.

Nokwenkosi comes to my rescue and pulls me away quickly. I am relieved when we are away from her father.

We place our things and get on to helping inside preparing food for everyone. I have given the money to Qaphile's mother and she insisted I keep it for when the baby comes instead of using

it recklessly. I haven't seen Qaphile in a month and I actually miss him so very much. Nokwenkosi hid the forms away from her siblings eyes. When we are done we serve everyone and I take Sizwe from his sleep so he could eat and Qaphile's mother takes Nokuthula.

“You would be a great mother Khethiwe”, I shy away from the compliment. I hope I become a great mother.

—

“I need to fill these forms quickly and send them quickly before Sizile sees them”, Nokwenkosi whispers to me.

We are preparing to sleep. I look at her sisters and then her.

“You should”, they might not want her succeeding who knows.

Zaba walks into rondaval smelling like nicotine the only people I know who smoke is him. Qaphile and also Nqobi so far. The rest I haven't caught on. Gatsa left last month to go an work in Durban as well.

“Sis Khethiwe”, he is the same age as myself but he calls me that.

“Uhm yes?”, he hands his phone to me and I immediately know who it is.

I go outside and stand where I usually stand when I talk to Qaphile.

“Hello”

“Sthandwa Sam", I blush.

“How are you? Are you ok?", I ask

“Yes I am ok Dali. You shouldn't be worried how are you? How is Gatsheni treating you?”, I smile

“Uyahlupha ebusuku. Ukhahlela into engapheli(He is naughty at night, he kicks non stop)", he chuckles.

“Aw'UBonyabenyathi ngempela", I giggle.

“I will see you soon", I nod

“Ok, I will wait”

“I love you Khethiwe”, he says

“Don't give up on us", he continues

“I wouldn't think of that”

“I have to go Sthandwa Sami”

We say our good byes and hang up. I hold onto the phone and breathe out.

“Hey”, it's Sizile.

There are 6 Girls. The other 3 are young

“Hi”, she sits next to me.

“I heard you are having heart burn problems”, I nod

“From time to time”, I say

“Well I have this. It used to help Mah while she was pregnant with Nokuthula”, she hands me a tinned cup.

Why is she being nice?

“But you don't like me”, I say

“It won't change that you are part of this family now and my brother loves you so true?” she says

“Uhm thank you ”

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she hands the cup to me.

“You can drink it up. You won't feel heart burn ever again.”

I nod and take the cup. I drink up the substance and it tastes bitter. Traditional herbs are like that. I hand the cup to her and she takes it.

“Good night”, she walks off.

I walk inside the rondaval and hand Zaba his phone back and thank him. I go to where I sleep and we speak for a while with Kwenkosi before we retire to slumber.

The wetness I felt woke me up in the night. I didn't know where it came from. I sat up and touched Nokwenkosi and she didn't wake up at first. I shook her and she woke up.

“What is wrong Khethiwe?”, she whispers.

“I am feeling wet”, I say

“Let me go and get mama”, she stands up and quickly walks out.

I feel a cramp in my stomach and I hold onto my belly and breathe in and out.

“What is going on?”, It's Nqobimpi who is asking

All I could see is his figure moving. It's dark.

Nokwenkosi comes back with her mother and they have lights on.

“Its too early for you to go into labour”, the mother says.

She kneels Infront of me and freezes. I feel another cramp and I moan at the pain

“Oh Nkosi yami”, Nokwenkosi gasps while placing her hands on her head.

“Go and get warm water for us quickly Nqobimpi it's urgent. Wake up Zaba and the rest”, the mother instructs.

“Ok, Khethiwe I need you to be calm. You are not going into labour. You are loosing blood”, I look between my legs and there is a pool of blood.

“No•••”, my little voice cries softly

“Calm down Sisi, everything will be alright”, she says.

She pulls the blanket over my thighs and tells me to lift my legs up. She parted them and asked Nokwenkosi to go and get some small blanket from the other rondaval. Everyone was on their feet and I was panicking.

“Calm down Khethiwe”, The mother instructs.

Nokwenkosi comes back and so as Nqobimpi with a bathing basin filled with water.

“Ok, I want everyone out”, she says.

Only her and Nokwenkosi stays.

“What do you wish to be one day Khethiwe?”, Nokwenkosi says trying to distract me but it's not working.

“We have to deliver the baby at this point”, The mother says in distress.

“Mah can't you stop the bleeding?”, She shakes her head.

“Khethiwe sisi I want you to be strong for me and when I say push you push ok?”, I nodded.

The cramps felt more excruciating than before. I cried feeling that pain. Qaphile's mother put her hands inside me and I could feel it as well. She pulled out her hand and it was bloody.

“Ok now I need you to push for me ok?”, I nodded.

“Now push”, I tried pushing.

I did a couple of times before I was relieved. I laid back onto the wall and breathed out.

“Go and call your father”, Nokwenkosi rushes out and to call her father. He walks in quicker than I anticipated.

It was silent within the room, I was too tired from everything and felt weak.

“Don't close your eyes Khethiwe” it's the mother.

“I am tired”, I say

“Don't.”, she says.

I try to keep my eyes open as difficult as it is.

“Can I hold my child?”, I ask.

They look at each other.

“I am afraid you can't”

Qaphile's father walks out of the rondaval that moment.

“What is going on ? Why can't I hold my child?”, I ask. She gets a cloth and I see her wrapping my child.

“I am sorry Khethiwe”

That's all she could say to me. I closed my eyes for a moment.

—

I blame myself, for that I couldn't do one thing and that is protect my child. It was in me and I failed to do so. I failed ! I have never knew losing a person close to you could do so much damage. I was a bit excited and warming up to the idea of me and Qaphile being parents. I disappointed him in an unexplainable way.

We buried my child. We couldn't wait for Qaphile. I am sure he has heard the news of the loss and I am even afraid to face him once he surfaces. Nokwenkosi was there for me and kept on saying she is sorry like she is the one who failed to bring a human into this world. I took the bucket and said I am going to collect water just to clear my head. I embarked on my journey to the river. I couldn't stop crying from then on. I kept on wiping the tears but they kept on coming out. I sat on the rock when I reached the river and I hugged my legs. I held them close to my body. I softly sobbed releasing the heaviness I was feeling in chest. I couldn't cry with them. I had to be the strong one amongst them but now I couldn't hold it in anymore.

I stood up and watched the river flow with power. I remember the time when Qaphile was inside cooling himself from the hot sun. I wonder if it will try and ease the pain I am feeling inside. I take off the shoes and lift my dress walking inside the river. It was cold as I had anticipated. I walk further in despite my inability to swim in the river. I went further and further just to bury my head properly then I would come out and feel much better.

The water was over my shoulder and flowing very fast making my heart pulse a little.

“Khethiwe!”

I look behind me and it was Nokwenkosi walking toward the river.

“Oh Nkosi yami Khethiwe !”, she shouts.

I turn back and walk further.

“Bhuti Bhuti siza !(Help!)”

I feel the water running against my skin. I sobbed, no one will know I was crying if I cry inside the river. It's safer to let out my emotions.

“Khethiwe!”, the footsteps are approaching but that voice I know anywhere.

I turn my body and I slip as I see him approaching, I sink in the water and I try to swim back up but I couldn't properly. I can't swim that's the problem. I can't swim!

I am lifted up from the water just in time and carried to the land. I cough in the process of it all and Nokwenkosi is shaking while looking at me.

“Here is some tea”, she hands it over to me.

I thank her and carry on brushing Sizwe's back with my fingers as he is laying his head on my thighs. She leaves me once she feels that I am warm enough.

“MaCele”, I look up to see him by the door.

I look away from his eyes and swallow the lump in my throat. He walks in the room

“Please look at me ”, he says

“I am sorry I failed you”, I say softly as I pull Sizwe closer to me.

“You didn't fail, Don't think that”

I find myself crying once again.

“I••• I don't know what happened I•••”, I can't even explain everything.

He removes Sizwe from me and pulls me into his arms. I sob right there as he brushes my back slowly.

“I love you ok? And you didn't fail anyone.”

I am happy to hear those words. That he still loves me.

CHAPTER 7

The love I have for Qaphile keeps me going. It keeps on reminding me that I am not all alone. That I have someone who truly loves me the same way I do. Nokwenkosi sent in her application. I do a lot of bead work just to pass time as well when I am bored and take care of Sizwe. A cleansing was done for me as I had lost the baby and I always blamed myself when Qaphile didn't seem to. It haunts me even at night I feel like I killed my own child. It's torture living with Thokozile here and her sister Sizile. When Qaphile is not around she tells me I should pack my things and go back home since there is no baby anymore and I have nothing to do here.

She is making sense but I am scared of going back home after the way my father packed me up and brought me here. I have helped Kwenkosi with the chores today and we went to fetch water together before coming back. Nokuthula and Sizwe are growing very wonderfully. When I watch them giggle and play around with no care in the world I just wish that I was like them once again. A child with no problems at all and doesn't have to worry about tomorrow. They are playing around with the other kids while Kwenkosi and I are seated on the grass as I am teaching her how to do some bead work that I learned from my

grandmother. She taught me this since I was very young and I love doing it.

“I don't know how you can do this Khethiwe”, she says struggling a bit just like yesterday but is getting better.

“It will take some time of practice”, I say

“Look at yours. You are almost done with that necklace”, she says

I give her the packet of beads to take from.

“You should sell those Khethiwe. They look nice”, I look up to Qaphile's mother who comes out of the rondaval carrying little Nokuthula and let's her down before she runs to play with the other kids.

“I don't think people will buy them”, I say

“Ofcause they will! They are beautiful!”, she says

Thokozile comes our way holding a bucket and stands by the door looking at us with a hand on her hip.

“Mmh kazi lento eniyenzayo iyonifikisaphi(I wonder what you are doing will take you where in life)”, she says

“Thokozile”, her mother says firmly. She moves inside the rondaval.

I rummage through my done beads and I take out the necklace and lay it on my thighs.

“Oh this is beautiful Khethiwe”, Kwenkosi leave her art and takes mine in her hands.

She runs her fingers on it and looks up to her mother.

“This is my favourite one of them all”, I say

I take the bead work from Nokwenkosi and stand up dusting myself before I turn to her mother.

“I would like you to have it Mah”, I say

“Haibo Khethiwe into Enhle kanje ngingayi gqokaphi nje?(Where can I wear something this beautiful?)”, she looks at it with admire and awe.

“At Khethiwe and Qaphile's wedding”, Kwenkosi says while giggling.

Her mother joins in as well and I blush while looking away.

“He has to have cows first before that”, Her mother says with a bit of sadness in her voice.

“Are you ok mah?”, she looks at me and brings back the smile.

“Yes. I need to check how they are doing in there. Thank you Khethiwe”, she walks off right after that.

“Come and show me again Khethiwe”, Nokwenkosi says.

I sit back down and take her art work and help her with it.

“Oh now I see”, she says as she grabs it back and looks at me.

“Do you miss him?”

“I do”, I say

“He will come back. Bhuti loves you”, She smiles and I return the gesture.

We hear a cry and she leaves the beadwork quickly. Her father is at the fields working.

“Kwenzenjani?!(What is wrong?!)", It's Sizile shouting from the inside.

“U-Usizwe uwile mama(Sizwe fell mom)", The little girl says rushing towards the rondaval.

Nokwenkosi comes back with Sizwe who is in tears. She wipes his face .

“Ncese fano(Sorry boy)", she says.

She sits down with him and he moves from her lap and comes to mind before resting his head on my chest. I wrap my arms around him after removing my beads away. Kwenkosi smiles and takes her beading.

“Hai uSizwe uyazifela ngawe akasaboni lutho lah kuthina(Sizwe is head over heels with you. He doesn't even look at us anymore)”, She says. I laugh and look at him rubbing his back. She carries on with what she is doing and shortly Sizwe falls into sleep.

It's at night and everyone is preparing to rest after such a long day. Some of the brothers are still here and they work at the farm. I don't think they have gathered enough courage to go to the city. I don't sleep well at night. I just think back to the night where I lost my child. The bleeding and excruciating pain that I felt.

“How will the people of the nursing thing contact you?”, I ask

“I left Bhuti Phuthuma's number and where they can drop the letter off”

“I hope you really get it”, she smiles.

“Into engingayi jabula yoh(I would be so happy)”, she giggled and I joined in.

“Stop making noise”, It's Thokozile. She looks at us.

“Thokozile cela ume kancane namhlanje(Thokozile pleas stop)”, It's Fezihle.

She looks at me and takes the blanket then lays next to Sizile.
We lay down with Nokwenkosi.

We are on our journey to the river. I was forbidden for some time to go there by Qaphile and also his father. They are scared I might drown myself in there of at times I wish I could do if I had the courage. We get to the river and Kwenkosi stops her tracks.

“Wandile Mdluli is here”, she has fear over her.

I don't want to see Wandile but we need to get some water.

“Let’s go”, we hold each other's hands and walk towards the river.

He is with his friends and some of the Buthelezi brothers as well. They are very close as they are always together when we see them. One of them pats Wandile as we get to the river. We collect the water that we need and pull the buckets out of the river.

“Khethiwe”, I turn to look at Wandile.

“How are you?”, he asks

“I am fine”, I say

I help Nokwenkosi with her bucket.

“I heard you were pregnant for that Ndlovu boy”, he says with much disgust.

I ignore him and he holds my arm.

“You should be my wife right now. I can take you back if you leave him and that child”, I yank my arm off his grip.

“I don't love you. I love Qaphile and I wouldn't want to marry you but him!”, I say

“You want to stay hungry? Just because he works at the city doesn't mean anything. I still have more wealth than him”, He says with arrogance.

“I don't care about your wealth or stupid cows Wandile leave me alone”

“You will regret this Khethiwe. You will regret wanting that boy when you suffer just like his family”

“Khethiwe let's go”, Kwenkosi says.

I click my tongue and carry my bucket. We walk away from him.

“He is right Khethiwe. We have nothing. All we live off is dad's vegetables that hardly lasts us some time. Yes obhuti are working at the city but there are alot of mouths to feed and there is also them to feed at the city”, she says with a much heavy heart and breaking voice.

“Everything will be ok.I love your big family and Qaphile.”, I say

She looks at me.

“So as Mbewuyesizwe”, I laugh.

“I love him too much!”, she giggles

“Qaphile wouldn't be happy to hear that”

“Well tough. You are going to accompany me when I go and call him?”, she nods.

“Ok,let's hurry back so we can go quickly before it gets dark”

We make our journey back to the Ndlovu house hold. The yard here is big and that seems to be a bit of an advantage to Babu’Ndlovu because of how big the land is despite their living condition. I heard the Rondavals were made by him when they had 2 children and one served as a kitchen when they created the mud Rondavals before the family expanded.

We get there and put the buckets where they are suppose to be and quickly I go and take the paper that has Qaphile's number and we rush off making our journey to the shop to go and make the phone call. We get there and I had to wait as there was a lady that was talking there. We waited for a while until she was done and we went towards the pay phone. I dialed the number and waited for a while as it rang. Sometimes

I can find him if he is not on the road. It gets answered after some time.

“Hello”

“Boyabenyathi”, I lean by the wall.

“Kunjani Dali wami(How are you my Dali?)”, I smile.

“I am well. I was checking up on you”

“I am fine, it is just that I am getting used to driving the whole day”, he says

“I see”

“I am coming tomorrow to come and take you to visit me”, I feel a bit excited.

“Ngempela ?”, I ask

“Ngempela sthandwa sami(Really my love)”, I feel happy.

“Ngaze ngajabula(I am so happy)”

He chuckles.

“I will see you tomorrow ok?”, I nod.

“Ok bye bye”i say

“Bye”

He hangs up and I place the phone and turn to Nokwenkosi.

“Let’s buy some sweets for the kids. I have money”, she nods as we enter the shop.

“How is he?”, she asks.

“He is ok. He said he is coming tomorrow to fetch me to visit him”, She smiles.

“Yoh uya edolobheni?Uwe umuntu sisi!(you are going to town?)”, I giggle.

“I can't wait either”, we get some sweets for the kids before we leave the shop going back.

We reach the yard and go to help with Cooking.The kids are now bathing outside for the afternoon and they are splashing water around.It is nice being a child. You don't worry about anything and I am sure they don't worry about anything here.I go and place the sweets.

“We bought sweets”

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I say

“Ulokhu umosha imali uthengana noswidi abangena msebenzi ube wazi kahle ukuthi uyadla lay'kaya (You are wasting money buying sweets for nothing when you know that you are an extra mouth to feed)”, Thokozile throws that comment.

“Thokozile!”, It's their father. He is by the door.

She keeps her silence and so do I.

“Qaphile is fetching Khethiwe tomorrow for a few days”,
Kwenkosi says after the long silence.

I am scared. I am scared of their father very much and his broad voice doesn't help just like Qaphile.

“I will talk to him”, he says and walks out.

I breathe out after that and carry on with my duties.

It's the day that I am leaving. I am quiet excited. I have never been to the city or even Greytown but have stayed here for a long time. I wish I could share these exciting news with my friend Zijabule but Kwenkosi is close of a friend that I can get. She is very sweet and loving as well and has been nice to me since I came. I am in the rondaval and packing my clothes in the bag and take my money as well. I want to buy something nice for Kwenkosi and her mother when I get there. Maybe something for Sizwe as well as Nokuthula. I wonder if Qaphile can take me to get those things. Kwenkosi walks in the rondaval and looks at me.

“Bhuti Qaphile has arrived”, she says

“Oh ok”, she helps me with my small bag.

“You are not going forever right?”, she asks.

“No. I will come back I am just visiting”, she nods and we hug.

“He is still talking to mah no baba”, She says.

“Where is Sizwe?”

“I don't know but I am sure he is being naughty wherever he is”, She says

We laugh a bit and her mother enters the rondaval.

“Khethiwe usulungele ukuhamba?(Are you ready to leave?)”, she asks.

“Yebo mah”

“Ok. Qaphile is waiting for you”, She says.

“You ate?”

“Yes I did”, she sighs off relief.

“Phela asiyazi ukuthi indlela ende kangakanani kumele uhambe udlile (We don't know how long the journey is so you have to leave fed)”, I nod.

We walk out of the rondaval and Qaphile is standing with his father and one of his brothers. He sees us and comes to take my bag from Kwenkosi.

“She must come back unharmed”, His father warns like I am one of his daughters and Qaphile is a strange boy he doesn't know.

“She will baba don't worry”, He looks at me.

“Lets go”, He says

“Yes leave before Sizwe sees Khethiwe and cries”, His mother says before she comes and hugs me.

We break the hug and he holds my hand as we walk out of the yards. When we are a distance he looks at me and smiles and I shy away as well.

“Wangishalazela MaCele(Why are you looking away from me?)”,he says

“You are looking at me”, he chuckled.

“You don't want me to look at you?”, I nodded slowly while blushing.

He keeps a firm grip on holding my hand. We get to the taxi stop and wait for one to arrive and after an hour it did. He helps me in before he gets in and the taxi drives off.

I see the dust rises as the taxi moves away from a place I have only known my whole life. A place I call home.

We arrived in Durban and it was very busy with people moving around in every possible direction. Qaphile held my hand tightly before he said: "Let's go"

We started walking and I was looking around. I was used to seeing cows and dusty pathways and not roads with buildings so close by. I now understand why people come to the city. This is where money is made.

"There is a beach here and I will take you there tomorrow if you want to", he says

"I would love to go there. Bayaphithizela abantu lah(People are up and down here)", he chuckles.

"Very much Dali wami"

"Where are your brothers?", I ask

"uPhuthuma uyalayisha namhlanje(Phuthuma is driving today) and Zabanyathi and Gatsa are at the taxi rank. Nqobimpi is resting at the hostel", he says

"Hostel?"

"Where we live mama", I nod.

We go into a shop and it is not owned by a Zulu man like ubaba uGasa back at home but an Indian man.

"What do you want?", Qaphile asks.

I look around the shop.

“Anything”, I say

“Take anything”, he says

He pulls me around and I take biscuits with chips and juice before we go to the shop owner. He takes out R10 and gives it to him before we walk out. We make our way to the taxi rank and we get a taxi from then on. I am loving what I am seeing at the moment. Qaphile doesn't let my hand go and I am comfortable with that. I love his rough hands on my soft ones. We get to another place and we hop out of the taxi and walk the rest of the way to where he lives.

“There are men who live here Khethiwe. I want you to always be by my side or if I am not here atleast have One of my brothers near by”, he says.

“I will do just that”, He nods.

We get to a very untidy place. There are some taxi's parked outside and some men washing them there.

“Aw Gatsheni omncane!”, one of the men says.

He ignores it and pulls me as we walk inside this brick walled place. It is instantly dark inside this place . We are walking down a passage and there are sheets dividing some of these

beds that are here. We get to the far end and Qaphile throws my bag on the bed and I look around the place.

“MaCele”, I look around and I see Nqobimpi laying on a single bed in his boxers on the opposite side.

“Bhuti”, I look down.

“imoto ka Mdu sebeyi ngenelile”, Nqobi starts speaking to Qaphile.

“Laphi?(Where?)”

“KwaMashu. Kubi (it's bad)”, Qaphile looks at me.

“Do you want to rest?”, he asks.

I look at him and nod. I am a bit tired and it has been a long day.

He takes a pack of cigarettes and a lighter from under the pillow and shoves them into his pocket. He removes my bag and puts it on a shelf that has two pants and seemingly 3 tshirts.

“You can rest.”, I take off my shoes and get on the small bed.

“I will get something to put here for more privacy”, he says at the front that will block us seeing Nqobimpi on the other side.

“I think there is a cloth in the taxi. You can go and check”, Nqobi says.

Qaphile nods.

“I will be back. Watch her”, Nqobi nods as Qaphile walks away.

I look around for some time. I am really happy that I am here with Qaphile and excited of the day that awaits tomorrow. I have to take my money and make sure to bring something back from this trip. I close my eyes and rest for a moment.



I woke up later on to the sounds of voices all around. I sit up straight and I see Qaphile and there is a small light shining that makes it a big light here. He is taking off his clothes and I assume that it is late at night now. There is no window this side for me to see clearly how it is outside. I can see that he has put a sheet over the front blocking us from being at other people's sight.

“Has Qaphile come back?”, I hear a deep voice say.

“Yeah, He is here”, it's Nqobimpi.

“Qaphile”, the person is next to us.

“Bhuti”, he answers as he gets done undressing.

“Is MaCele with you?”

“Yes”

“Ok.”, he comes towards the bed and I move having myself against the wall and he gets in bed.

He kisses my neck and places his hand above my stomach and my heart beats a bit fast. He smells like nicotine.

“I love you MaCele”, he whispers into my ear.

“I love you too Gatsheni”, he exhales at that.

The lights switch off in the place and it's all dark.

I woke up in the morning and Qaphile wasn't next to me. I slowly got off the bed and sat at the edge wondering where he might be. He did warn that there are men here meaning he doesn't want those men coming any close to me or seeing me. Just as I was getting worried the sheet moves and he has white take away containers in his hand with cold drink.

“You are awake ”, I nod.

“I brought some food”, He gives the container to me and sits next to me with one.

I open it and it's Usu with Pap. I start digging in while enjoying.

“Where did you get this?”, I ask

“I went to buy it down the street. ”

“When you are done you will bath and change so we can go to the beach, like I promised”, he says.

I smile then nod. I eat till I am done then he throws the containers away while he goes to check if the bathroom is not occupied with anyone in it. I make the bed by folding the blanket and put it where it was before. He comes back and tells me to take my things we can go. I take my things and we go outside behind the place. There is a passage way that leads there and I could smell pee as I am walking inside. He is holding me and we get through a door and there and he places my bag on the sink.

“You can use one of the showers”, he pointed. I looked at all 3 of them and I took off my clothes.

He opened the shower for me and adjusted the water well. I got inside and I bathed in there. I was used to bathing in a basin but this is nice. You don't have to just wait for water to boil under the fire for warm water. I like this. I get done and my hair is a bit wet. I get out and wipe myself before we head a whistle.

“I will be back. Get dressed”, he says

I nod as he walks away. I quickly get dressed in my favourite red summer dress with black pumps. I wipe my wet hair and the door opens as I am packing things inside.

“Come let's go”, I take his hand and we walk out of the bathrooms. We go and place my bag and I take my small bag

that I was given by my aunt last year and out my money inside. We walk out of the hostel and make our way where the taxi dropped us off.

We are here at the beach. Qaphile said we are at beach front and there are a lot of people in swimming costumes and some swimming while others are just walking on the sand. Qaphile said we should take off our shoes and we did just that.

“I want to feel the water”, I say

He is a bit hesitant but eventually agrees if only we are standing by the shore and not go any further. I am so excited I can't even hide it. I let go of his hand immediately when we get close to the water.

“Khethiwe!”, he calls for me.

I don't listen but get to the water that splashes my feet. It feels cold and good. Oh my God I will tell Kwenkosi about this! I turn around to Qaphile who looks a bit worried and I wrap my arms around his neck. He wraps his around my waist.

“Ngiyabonga Gatsheni(Thank you)”

He exhales there after.

CHAPTER 8

I was back in Msinga. I told Nokwenkosi about everything and gave her the dress I got for her at the Chinese store in town that Qaphile took me to. I only stayed for 3 days and I had to come back. I was enjoying seeing everything there and the ocean was my favourite out of the whole trip. Thokozile wasn't pleased when I came back and was more mouthful to say that I was spending his brother's money when I see their home situation is like. She told me I should just go home because I don't have any baby with Qaphile anymore and that hurt me. A reminder of how I failed to keep our child alive. I was out helping Kwenkosi with taking the cabbage from her father's garden. Sizwe was laying on my back wrapped with a shawl asleep. He does this more frequently. When he is tired he comes to me crying and muffles a little "Mama" in there indicating he wants me to take him. I have gotten used to him calling me mama over the time and Qaphile's mother doesn't seem to mind at all. I take him from there then go and bath him before putting him on my back.

"This one doesn't seem to be bad than the others", Kwenkosi says carrying the cabbage.

“Yes”, the rest haven't been growing well because of the animals eating them. Sometimes a goat comes and ruins the vegetables that they grow so much.

“Kwenkosi!”, We move from the garden.

It worries me that fencing can't be done to protect the vegetables. We get to her mother and she asks Nokwenkosi to get a knife from the rondaval and she does go. She comes back and I set up the fire for them while Sizile and Thokozile are taking a break. They dealt with the morning food and we deal with the afternoon. I got up and dust myself when the fire is there. Nokwenkosi is done with chopping the cabbage and her mother pours water in the pot and we wait for it to boil before we throw the cabbage in and add salt. We go away when her mother tells us she will watch over the pot and we nod.

“The people from the nursing program haven't contacted me”, she says

“They will just wait a bit ok?”, she nods.

I hope Nokwenkosi gets that study scholarship and gets to be the nurse she wants to be.

QAPHILE

I am leaning Infront of the taxi while waiting for people to get in and fully load before I go onto the road. I am having an apple cutting it with the pocket knife I bought while cruising around with Khethiwe. I saw it interesting and liked it plus it is coming very handy as I am slicing my apple. I cut a slice and press my finger on the apple against the knife before I bring my hand forth to my mouth and take the apple.

“Qaphile!”, I look up and it's Joyce.

She moves from her stall and wipes her hands on her apron approaching me.

“Angisakuboni kulama Langa (I don't see you these days)”, she says placing her hands on her hips.

“Zondo gave me a few days off”, I cut the apple and pop it on my mouth. I was lying. Zaba was covering for me during that time.

“Yeah I heard. Zaba said that someone was visiting you”, she says

“Oh it's Khethiwe”, I say

“I hope she is ok”, she says with concern.

She knows what happened to our child. Joyce is the main lady around here at the taxi rank. She is a few years older than me

but still in her 20's. Everyone gets along with her as she is the person we buy our food from here.

"She is", I throw the bits of what's left of the apple.

"Othi ngibe indlela(let me leave)", I say

"I will see you", she pats my shoulder.

"Sho", I go and check if there is no see unoccupied before closing the door.

I go around and get inside then greet everyone inside and they respond. I start the taxi and drive off before I turn on the radio. I miss Khethiwe. I wish she stayed with me here but I can't at the moment. My living conditions and the money that I get wouldn't sustain rent and taking care of us then back at home. It would be too much on me.

KHETHIWE

I am doing some of my bead work before we sleep. Zaba is back here at home for only a few days before he goes back home. I sometimes can't believe that he is the same age as me. His behaviour says otherwise. He is mostly quiet at times but Kwenkosi says that he is trouble and hot headed that is why he is at the city so early. He is outside smoking and he does it in

secret. Their father doesn't know that they smoke or hell will break loose between them. He walks in the rondaval with his vest and boxers on.

“Lomcamo owunukayo awunuki kahle yazi(That shit you are smelling doesn't smell nice)”, Sizile comments.

“I wonder what Baba will do when he finds out”, Thokozile gives him a stare.

“Phumani endabeni ezingahlangene nani (Stay out of things that don't concern you)”, he says to his older sisters with much irritation.

“Sisi Khethiwe”, he signals his phone and I stand up placing my beads away before rushing to take the phone.

I go outside to my usual spot and stand there.

“Sthandwa sam”, I smile.

“Sqandamathe Sam. Unjani mama?(How are you?)”,he asks

“I am good”, he sighs

“I miss you so much, I wish you were close”, I also wish the same.

“Nami ngokunjalo Gatsheni(Same as well)”, he heave a sigh.

“I am working for our family ok? We will get married like I promised”, he says and I smile hearing that.

“Ok. I love you”

“I love you more Sthandwa sam”, he says

We spoke a bit before he ends the call and I sigh while sitting there. I get up and go to hand Zaba his phone and thank him. I get in next to Kwenkosi and push away my beads.

“Are you ok?”, She asks

“Yes”, I keep my silence there after and she lets me be.



Today was one of those days. The grown kids went to school and only Nokuthula and Sizwe were left behind. The holidays were very over for them but as soon as they come home they go and play.

“Bhuti!”

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I hear Nokwenkosi shouting.

It's Phuthuma with a plastic in his hand. He smiles as Sizwe gets a bit excited on his grandmother's lap who is trying to feed him some porridge. Phuthuma gets closer to us and greets.

“Hawu wabuya boh(You are back)”, it's his mother.

“Yes mah. Sizile take this away”, he gives the plastic to Sizile.

“I have your letter Nokwenkosi”, he says and she starts looking nervous.

“What letter?”, it's his father appearing wiping the sweat off his forehead.

Phuthuma greets.

“I came to bring Nokwenkosi’s letter”, He says

“I am scared to even open it”, she says

“Khethiwe please open it”, She says and Phuthuma hands the letter to me.

I take it and rip it open and take out the letter. I open it and read before I look at the nervous Kwenkosi. I sigh.

“What do they say?”, she asks.

“You are accepted into studying nursing in New Castle with a full paid scholarship in the next year”, I say

“You are lying Khethiwe!", She can't contain her excitement.

“When did this happen? What nursing school?”, It's Thokozile.

“You are ", I say

She jumps around. Her mother starts praising the Ndlovu ancestors and calling out on their calna names.

“Is it wise for her to go?", It's her father.

“It is baba. She will better her future and get a job if she goes”, Phuthuma says.

Her father nods. I hug her and congratulate her on it. I am so happy for her. Very much.

It has been decided that tomorrow we will go kwaButhelezi and buy a chicken from there for Nokwenkosi and slaughter it thanking the ancestors for opening the gates for her. Everyone is jolly but the two ask themselves how did she get it. We prepare supper for now and Sizwe is now following his father everywhere he goes forgetting about poor old Khethiwe.

Its the following day and we are on our way to buy the chicken for Nokwenkosi with Bhuti Phuthuma. Sizwe didn't want to be left behind so he was on my back the whole journey to the Buthelezi house hold. We got in the yard and went to knock on the door. We waited for a while until babu'Buthelezi appeared.

“Hawu Zingane ninjani?(kids how are you?)”,he asks.

“We are well baba how are you?”, Phuthuma asks.

“We are well. What can I help you with?” ,He asks.

“We came to buy a chicken”,he looked at Phuthuma.

“Follow me this way” ,we followed him to where his chickens are and stood there.

“You can choose anyone you want”, he says

Phuthuma opens the chicken coop and crouches to take the chicken. He pulls one off it's legs before closing the chicken coop.

“Nokwenkosi pass the money to baba”,He instructs.

“I am giving you this one free my kids”, that is generous of him.

We thank him and make our way back home. Sizwe is imitating the chicken noises while bouncing around.

“I am proud of you Kwenkosi. Don't disappoint us”,Phuthuma says

“I wouldn't bhuti”, she says

We get to the Ndlovu yards and Phuthuma goes to put the chicken away and it will f slaughtered when the kids arrive back from school. I go and out Sizwe down who goes to his grandmother.

“Khethiwe!”, it's Bhuti Phuthuma calling me.

I go to his side and he hands his phone to me and immediately know that it is.

“Qaphile”, I answer.

"How are you?"

"I am good. You are calling early today", I say. He chuckles

"Is it wrong?"

"No it's not. I am happy", I say

"I was missing you"

"I always do as well", I say

We talk for a while longer and I was so happy to hear his voice. Each time I hear him speak I find security in that.

CHAPTER 9

It has been a very long year and Christmas is approaching also the possibility of Qaphile and his brothers not coming back home. It would be the first Christmas I would spend without being home and it would be very different from what I have known. I enjoyed my Christmases as a child because I was the only one. My parents used to buy me new clothes every year up until I left their household. I do miss my parents and home from time to time. I would be on my way to my grandmother's house at the moment and Nombukelo pestering to come and visit during the holiday under her mother's influence. I know she hates the rural area but she sucks it up each time that she is here. Nombukelo is my cousin from my mother's side and she lives with her mother only and not both her parents. I don't understand how my mother couldn't support me when her sister doesn't mention Nombukelo's father but I am not there.

We are on our way to babu'Gasa's shop to buy amabele as instructed so that Qaphile's mother makes Zulu beer. It wasn't much money to be 'Wasted' there as Thokozile would always complain. I found out just yesterday that she has a boyfriend that she sometimes meet at the river and she always judges me for being with her brother. This is just something else. We saw her yesterday and she pretended like we didn't see her. She

was all smiles and laughing to every single thing the boy was saying. Well not everything he was saying but you get my point right?

“I want to call Qaphile you can go in and buy”, I say to Nokwenkosi.

She nods.

“Come Thula”, she takes Nokuthula's hand and they walk in.

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She does so with her small hands and I hand the sweet to her smiling.

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“Yabonga(Thank you)”, she says in her tiny voice.

Kwenkosi takes her and throws her on her back before we walk the journey home.

“I didn't find him”, I say

“Maybe he is busy”, I know he is. I wanted to speak to him. It always makes me feel happy and I haven't spoken to him in a week.

“I know”, I say

“Soon I will be leaving and I don't want to do that to you”, she says with a sad tone.

I look at her as she looks to the floor while she says that.

“I will be ok Kwenkosi. Go on and make your family proud just as I am”, she looks at me and smiles.

“Ngiyakuthanda sisi(I love you)”, she quickly says

“I love you too”, I do. She is the best thing I have had in that family so as many more.

“You know what? I will make nice beads for you to take with”, I say

“But you are running out of your beads Khethiwe. They keep you company”

“It doesn't matter.Sizwe will keep me company”,I say. She looks behind me.

“He is asleep now”, I tilt my head and adjust him a bit on my back.

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"I am thinking of Khethiwe", I say

She nods and pulls her bag close to her lap.

"You have talked to her today?", That's the problem.

"No", I lay back on the seat as I enter her neighbourhood.

"You really love her", she says

"I do", I answer honestly.

"I want to give her the world", I say

"Mmh lucky her", she says.

"Just go straight and drop me off by the red container", I nod and do so. I stop the taxi

"Thank you. Bye ", she waves.

"Bye", she closes the door and I drive to the Hostel after.

I get there and park the taxi before hopping out with the food. I lock the taxi and make sure that every door is locked before making my way inside. Some noise is here as people are talking

to each other. I get near the far end where my brothers are and I see Gatsa sleeping on the bed.

“Vuka nakhu ukudla(Wake up here is some food)”, he sits up and I give him food.

“Where are the others?”, I ask

“Zaba and Nqobi are there by Phuthuma”, he says

“And wena?(you?)”, I ask

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I go to Phuthuma’s bed and there is a sheet covering the front. I moved it aised and they jumped a bit in fright. I looked at the things Infront of me.

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“Keep it down people will hear you. We will explain outside”, Phuthuma says while taking the scattered money that is on the bed and puts it it a plastic before he shoves it in a backpack.

He takes the backpack and signals that we should leave. I am still wondering where he got that money from because we don't earn that much to have such money. We can't even save the little we get because it all has to go home.

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He wears a vest before following us outside. I am trying to piece answers that I don't know where to start by getting them. We get outside and Phuthuma says he is going to drop the bag in his taxi before coming back. We are now waiting for him in silence. He comes back as we are waiting for him.

“What is going on?”

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I ask first.

They look between each other. The 3 of them.

“We are stealing”, Zaba finally says

“Stealing where? What? Why?”, I ask

I don't understand and I am trying to understand what is going on here.

“Where did you get that money from?”

“Zondo, we have been stealing from him for months now and some shops as well.”, Nqobimpi says casually.

I look at Phuthuma who is looking straight at me.

“Are you insane? That man owns a gun he could kill us! Do you want to get arrested as well”, I say

“We are careful”, Zaba answers.

Phuthuma steps forward and holds my shoulders. Gatsa is just silent standing there.

“Its time to step up manje Qaphile. Doing things the right way doesn't help anymore. We tried back home but we were always robbed because we are poor. Even here at the city it's not any better but you see how much money that man makes each day because we transport those people everyday. We have 12 people to feed back home including isithandwa sakho. Our pay is small so this is us taking a step up”, He says

“What are you going to do with that much money?”, I ask

They look at each other.

“We will buy a route first”, Nqobimpi says

“Then we start our own business”, Zaba says.

I don't know what to say.

“Think of Khethiwe Qaphile. Do this for her”, Nqobimpi says.

I really want to do better and be able to provide for Khethiwe and so as my family. I want us to be better.

“Count me in”

KHETHIWE

It's Christmas day and Kwenkosi's mother and I made Zulu beer a few days ago. It's going to be a normal day for us and nothing special is being done either than the Zulu beer that will be poured in the yard and some drank by babu'Ndlovu as a thank you to the ancestors for keeping all of us till now. I really enjoy my time being here but I do wish that I didn't loose my child and where would we be right now. I asked to leave for a few minutes and they agreed. I was going to go and try Qaphile today and wish him a great Christmas even though he is far away from me. I make my journey to the shop when a van stops next to me.

"Khethiwe", I look and it's Wandile.

I ignore him as I am walking.

"Khethiwe I am talking to you", he shouts.

"What do you want from me?"

"I want you Khethiwe", he says

"I love Qaphile leave me alone Wandile Mdluli!", he sighs.

His father's van slows next to me as I am walking.

"Get in I will take you where you are going", he says

"No I am fine thank you", he groans.

“What did I ever do to you?”, he asks

“You made fun of people's situations. That is what I don't like about you!”, I say

“I am sorry”, I shake my head.

“Come on Khethiwe I could give you a better life”, he says

“I am fine”

He is silent for a moment.

“Where is your child?”

“Bye Wandile”, I walk faster this time. I soon see the van speed past me leaving dust behind.

I get to the shop and I have to wait for the person who is there to finish before I make a call. He gets done and greets me and I do the same before I go close to the pay phone. I insert a coin before dialing the number and I wait hoping that he answers. I hear a taxi hooting as it comes to a stop Infront of the shop. I turn my back to it as the phone gets answered.

“Dali wami”

“Hey, how are you?”, I say softly

“I am good Sthandwa Sami. How are you?”, he asks

“I am well. I wanted to wish you a great Christmas”, I say

“Why don't you come and wish me that great Christmas?”

“Haah ikude eThekwini (Durban is far)”

He chuckles

“Ok. Ngizokubona (I will see you)”

“Ok,I love you”

“I love you too”,We hang up and I breathe out.

Some lady with luggage was standing behind me waiting to use the pay phone. I excused her and turned to find myself astonished. He is standing there with his brothers. I rush to him and throw myself in his arms and he accepts me while lifting me up as he chuckles.

“You missed me?”

“You don't know how much I did”, I say honestly.

He puts me down and I greet his brothers and they greet back. They take the plastics that they came with and we started walking back home with Qaphile and I behind them. He was holding my hand. Oh how I missed holding that rough hand in mine. The last time I saw him was when I visited him in Durban. I kept on glancing at him bit by bit.

“You are looking at me”, he says chuckling with his deep voice that I have now gotten used to hearing and love hearing.

“I was not”

He chuckles and pulls me to him and tickles me and I start laughing.

“Qaphile stop it!”, Zaba looks at us and he shakes his head.

“Why are you lying?”

“I am not. I am sorry”, he lets me go and I get to breathe.

He looks at me and lifts my chin up to look at him.

“Ngiyakuthanda Ngenhliziyo yami yonke MaCele (I love you with my whole heart)”, he says

“I love you too”, he lowers his head and kisses me.

We got to their home and everyone was happy to see them as much as I was happy to see Qaphile. The children were all over and around their brothers. Thokozile and Sizile were on their best behavior today or maybe it's just that I haven't bumped my way into them the whole day. Christmas was nice and I enjoyed it. It was different from what I am used to but I really enjoyed it. We stayed outside until night time and the kids were called inside. We sat by the now not so burning fire and just seated there.

“You know I love stars”, Qaphile says close to my ear.

I look at him

“Why do you love them?”

“They are the most beautiful thing no one has to buy. After you ofcause”, I giggle.

I look up to the sky. Yes they are beautiful and no one has to buy stars in order to see them.

“Nkanyezi”, I say and he looks at me.

“Thats our son's name”, he nods.

We don't touch on the subject as much.

“Don't stay out too late”, Qaphile's mother says from the inside.

The kids are not settling inside by the sound of things. Who would've thought I would be here today with the man I love.

CHAPTER 9

It has been a very long year and Christmas is approaching also the possibility of Qaphile and his brothers not coming back home. It would be the first Christmas I would spend without being home and it would be very different from what I have known. I enjoyed my Christmases as a child because I was the only one. My parents used to buy me new clothes every year up until I left their household. I do miss my parents and home from time to time. I would be on my way to my grandmother's house at the moment and Nombukelo pestering to come and visit during the holiday under her mother's influence. I know she hates the rural area but she sucks it up each time that she is here. Nombukelo is my cousin from my mother's side and she lives with her mother only and not both her parents. I don't understand how my mother couldn't support me when her sister doesn't mention Nombukelo's father but I am not there.

We are on our way to babu'Gasa's shop to buy amabele as instructed so that Qaphile's mother makes Zulu beer. It wasn't much money to be 'Wasted' there as Thokozile would always complain. I found out just yesterday that she has a boyfriend that she sometimes meet at the river and she always judges me for being with her brother. This is just something else. We saw her yesterday and she pretended like we didn't see her. She

was all smiles and laughing to every single thing the boy was saying. Well not everything he was saying but you get my point right?

“I want to call Qaphile you can go in and buy”, I say to Nokwenkosi.

She nods.

“Come Thula”, she takes Nokuthula's hand and they walk in.

I pop a coin inside the pay phone and dial Qaphile's number. I have memorized it over some time now as I constantly use it. It wasn't hard to do so but very easy. Him and his brothers really work hard and I am grateful that they have all as a family accommodated me in their life. The phone rings but it doesn't get answered. After some time I give up and I put the phone down and rummage for another coin and I find it. I pop it inside the pay phone and dial his number once again and it rings unanswered again. I put the pay phone down and move away from it. He must be on the road and busy. I look at the pay phone for a while. None of his city brothers who have a phone are here in the area for me to at least get a call from him later on. I turned my heels and walk inside the shop. Kwenkosi is paying for what is needed and I go and buy some sweets with the little money I have for Nokuthula and Sizwe who is on my back silently being there. I know he is not sleeping as Kwenkosi confirmed it along the way but he is just silent.

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“I know”, I say

“Soon I will be leaving and I don't want to do that to you”, she says with a sad tone.

I look at her as she looks to the floor while she says that.

“I will be ok Kwenkosi. Go on and make your family proud just as I am”, she looks at me and smiles.

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“Nkanyezi”, I say and he looks at me.

“Thats our son's name”, he nods.

We don't touch on the subject as much.

“Don't stay out too late”, Qaphile's mother says from the inside.

The kids are not settling inside by the sound of things. Who would've thought I would be here today with the man I love.

CHAPTER 10

“Don’t loose yourself. Please uziphathe kahle mntanami(Take care of yourself my child)”, Kwenkosi’s mother says.

Everyone is here to see her off except Sizile and Thokozile. It is end of January and Kwenkosi is going to New Castle to study. I am really happy for that I wouldn't lie about but I will miss her. In the space I have lived with her I enjoyed her company and now I will sleep alone without her next to me.

“Take here”, Her father hands over a R100.

“Baba I can't. You need it”, she says

“You need it mntanami”, she nods.

“Ngiyabonga Gatsheni (Thank you)”, the taxi comes and she waved at us before hoping inside.

We wait a bit before walking the journey back home. It's worrying her parents that she will be in a different place all alone. She is their daughter after all.

“Mama”, Sizwe says lifting his hands up for me to carry him.

I do pick him up and he immediately lays his head on my shoulder.

“He doesn't want to walk”, Kwenkosi’s mother says.

“He loves it when I carry him”, I say

“He is really loving you”, I giggle a bit and look at Sizwe.

I love him too. We get back to the Ndlovu yards and I go and help out with the supper cooking.

QAPHILE

“Stay here and be on the look out”, Phuthuma instructs Gatsa

“I will”

We hop out of the taxi and I wear my black jacket and a cap on. We are parked at some supermarket. Since I joined in we have been going in and out Indian shops but this supermarket is going to be our biggest one yet. We have laid off stealing from Zondo for a while because he is starting to see that his money doesn't add up and soon he will catch on that we are taking his money that being the death of us. The money is always in Phuthuma's possession and he makes sure that it doesn't get out of his sight. If we succeed here then we would be able to buy the route we need and at least one taxi.

We get to the gate that is in front of the store and Zaba takes out his pocket knife and starts fiddling with the lock. We keep on looking around making sure that there is no one in sight.

“Hurry up Zabanyathi” Nqobimpi says

He gets done and the lock is on the floor. We open the gate and unlock the glass doors before entering the place. The shop is very big. We take out our flash lights and flash them on.

“You two take left we take right”, Phuthuma instructs and we do so.

We walk around looking at the shops getting lost between the food isle. I see a hand bag hanging there and it's black.

“Khethiwe might like this”, Nqobimpi says.

I take the bag and we carry on walking.

“Found anything?!”

“Not yet!”

We find a closed door and we look at each other.

Nqobimpi tries to open but it is locked.

“We found a room!”, he shouts.

He tries to open the door but it is not opening. They come by our side and Zaba does what he does best. He is getting good at these door unlocking things and I wonder where he learned it. He soon opens and we get inside. There is a desk and a picture of the President on the wall. We go around the room and open the drawers and Phuthuma finds some stacks of money. We

looks at each other before he shoves them in his backpack. We search for more and Zaba finds a key to a safe. We use it and open the safe. There is a gun and also some more money.

“Take it. We don't have time” I go for the gun and Zaba takes the bag in my hands and shoves the money inside.

We finish up and Gatsa bursts into the door.

“The police are coming”

“Shit! Let's go”, we grab the last stack before rushing out of the store.

We could hear the sirens as we got into the taxi. Phuthuma throws the bag at the back and starts it. We hear gunshots before he drives off. We are all silent before anyone talks.

“That was close”, I say after we are a distance away.

“Very”, Zaba says

“That money should be enough for now”, Phuthuma says.

“Do you think that place has cameras?”

“I doubt but If there are then they didn't see who it is as we didn't turn the lights on”, Nqobimpi says

“No one should ever know about this”, Phuthuma says

We all nod. We know and we can't risk anything here. He drives off to the hostel. We will count the money later on for now we need to rest. I want Khethiwe to visit. I miss her really.

"I am fetching Khethiwe tomorrow", I say

"Make sure she is always by your side", Phuthuma says

"I will"

I relaxed myself on the seat looking outside the window.

KHETHIWE

It is quiet boring now that Nokwenkosi is gone. I didn't think I would really miss her this much but I really do and have been enjoying her company. I woke up in the morning and did my blankets quiet well cleaning up where I was sleeping. Dumisani is older than me but he doesn't want to work in the city. He believes that he needs to help his father by looking after the family.

"Your friend is gone shouldn't you be gone?", It's Sizile.

I ignore her. I wouldn't let her ruin my morning.

"Even if you keep quiet you heard what I said", she says

I get done and walk out of the rondaval. I find the mother dishing up porridge by the fire. I greeted her and she greeted back. I asked to help and I was given permission to do so. I don't want to sit around when I live here. They have been nothing but great to me. We all ate some porridge and went onto doing our usual duties. Today Thokozile and Sizile went to fetch water. They were not happy with Kwenkosi going yesterday and even now. I wonder what is really wrong with those two. The day progressed and I helped with peeling the potatoes for the afternoon meal that we are about to cook.

“Haibo yini leh engiyibonayo(What am I seeing?)”, Kwenkosi’s mother says

We both watch as Qaphile makes his way in. How my heart just jumps when I see him. He comes in holding plastics and stands in front of us. He greets and we greet back.

“You didn't say you were going to come back”, his mother says.

“I am here to fetch Khethiwe”, I look at him and then his mother.

“Your father is at the garden”, he nods and takes the plastics inside the rondaval before going to where his father is.

“Go and bath Khethiwe”, His mother says

“Mah?”

“Go and prepare Incase you are leaving”, his mother says.

I nod and I go and place water to boil. I have to wait a while.

As the water was done he came back from his father.

“We are leaving as soon as you are done”, I nod.

I go and bath inside the rondaval and I get done. I dress up and pack the bits that I have. I get done and walk out to throw away the water before taking my bag to leave. I am going to Durban and I am so happy to be doing so. I get to them as they are talking and he takes my bag before we bid our goodbyes.

Here we are again. The city once more. Today I got to see the ocean as the taxi was passing by and it intrigued me. If I could I would've lived here a long time ago. We got off the taxi rank and he told me that he wants us to go to his brothers first before we go to where he lives. I was ok with that. We got to the taxi rank and shouted for someone named Joyce. A lady showed up from tent and she was wearing an apron.

“Qaphile?”

“Please can I get a set of your food”, he says

“Who is the lady beside you?”, she asks

She has purple eye shadow on and her brows are drawn and black. She is very light skinned and beautiful in my eyes. A true definition of a city woman.

“My Dali. Khethiwe”, he says

“Oh ok”, she goes to get the food.

“MaCele!”, I look around and it's Zaba.

He is walking towards us. He gets to his brother.

“You are here”, he says as soon as he gets to me.

“Yes”, I hold onto Qaphile's hand.

“Here is your food”, the lady hands it over.

Qaphile pays her before he takes my hand and we bid good bye. We go and eat before we leave the place.



I have plumped myself in bed and took the rest that I needed and woke up later. Qaphile came in with food and something to drink. I sat up on the bed and rubbed my eyes before looking at him.

“You slept for so long”

“I was tired”, I say

He sits down and hands the food to me and I eat.

“Do you buy food everyday?”, I have to ask

“Sometimes”, he says

“Do you cook? Where do you guys cook?”, I ask

“We don't cook. There is no where to do so”, he says

I nod and indulge into my food. We get down and wash away the food with the drink before he slides into bed after Undressing. He puts his hand on my stomach before kissing my neck.

“I got you something but I will give it to you in the morning”

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he says

“Don't spend money unnecessarily Qaphile”, I say softly

“I am not”, he kisses my neck again.

The lights turn off and his hand travels under my top.

“There are people here”, I say

“We will be quiet Sthandwa sam”, he whispers.

I have never done this with people around in my life. He keeps on kissing me before he turns me to lay on my back and gets on me kissing my lips and I return the favour opening my legs so he could fit in between them.

“I love you MaNdosi”, he says

“I love you too”

We woke up in the morning when we heard someone calling for Qaphile. We were naked and he was holding me from behind. He groaned before he let go of my waist and got off the bed. I watched him pick up his boxers and his t-shirt before getting dressed in that and walk out. I sit up rubbing my eyes then pulling the blanket over me to cover my nakedness. I get off the bed slowly and take my clothes that are scattered on the floor and dress up before doing the bed. I don't know what time it is but from the place lighting up a bit I knew that it was morning. Qaphile comes back after a while with food and we ate together. After we were done he went to discard the containers while he goes and checks if there is no one in the showers. He came back after a while and told me I could come. I grab my bag and follow after him while holding his hand. We get to those unsanitized bathrooms and I ask to first go and use the toilet. He comes with me and watches over me as I use one and then I am done. We go to the showers and he adjusts the water before we undress and bath together. When we are done we get out and I get dressed before we leave and he goes to change. He gets done. He pulls a black bag on his shelf and lays it on the bed.

“Qaphile”

“Do you like it?”

“I love it”

I have never owned such a hand bag. I put it over my shoulder and run my fingers on my clothes.

“Does it suite me ?”, he nods.

I put the bag away.

“Come let's go”, He says

We walk out of the hostel and there are some men sitting there having some beer and a chat.

“Do you always pass people?”, I ask

“I don't want them to be friendly when you are here”, he says

I nod at his statement as we leave. We walk for some time and get a taxi going to town. We get to town and I am excited to just enjoy my day out here. He wasn't letting go of my hand as we were walking through the streets. His phone rang and he took it out of his pocket and he answered as we were walking by shops. We stop and I look through the window just admiring the clothes. Women here wear pants and it suits them quiet well. I one day wish to wear them if Qaphile is ok with that. He is still on the phone talking to who ever and I move away from

him and make my way inside the shop. There were white people inside and some African. One white woman smiled my way and I returned the favour in waving as well. I grab hold of the red pants Infront of me and took them off the railing and held them against my body.

“Khethiwe”, I jump in fright.

I place a hand on my chest before I place the pants where they were.

“You scared me”, I honestly say

“You always give me a fright when you disappear”, he says

“I am sorry”, I look down.

“Come”, he takes my hand and we walk out of the shop.

We stroll our way through the city and he buys some ice cream for me as it is hot.

“I would like to visit the beach again”, I say.

“Come let's go”, we proceed our way until we reach the beach.

I can say now that I love the ocean. We saw a man pulling a carriage with someone on it across the street.

“You want to go on?”, I nod as much excitement on me.

He chuckles and pulls me towards the man. We get there and Qaphile asks how much is the ride to the ‘Risho’. That is what I

heard and it is R25 per ride. He paid and assisted me on before I was pulled away from Qaphile. The wind was blowing on my skin as the sun kissed it. I was feeling like a child for a moment there. I was happy. When I got down I thanked the man and rushed off to Qaphile. He caught me in his arms.

“Lets go and eat. There is KFC”, he says

I nod. I will be very fat when I go back to Msinga.

QAPHILE

It's at night and Khethiwe is asleep under Gatsa's watch. I didn't want to leave her alone but I was called urgently here. We were a bit far from where the Hostel is just so that no one could walk out on what we are talking about.

“We are robbing a bank tomorrow”, what?

“We were almost caught just yesterday. Aren't we laying low plus we have enough money to buy the route”, I say

“Yes we do but just like baba always says indoda ayilali. Iyasebenza (A man doesn't sleep but work)”, Phuthuma says

“This is a risk”, I say

“A risk we should be fully be ready to take”, Says Zaba

“Ok let's say we do this and what are we going to get in there with? This is not a movie”, I say

“Just like we do our jobs at night we will do this one as well.”

“We will use that gun you took from the last cash in”, Nqobimpi says

“What about Khethiwe?”, I ask

“Gatsa will stay with her.”

“Think about home. You know How Thokozile and Sizile are. They might not show it to you but they are mistreating Khethiwe and she won't tell you because they are your sister's. She needs to be gone from Msinga and you are the only option”, I close my eyes and sigh.

“I will see”, I say

I move away from them. This is getting out of hand a bit but my motivation is Khethiwe. We came here to make an honest living and now we are just surviving life.

KHETHIWE

It's a new day. Qaphile has to go and work so today I am with Bhuti Nqobimpi. He said we will go to some place where they

sell food specifically meat so I am excited. I was done showering and getting dressed. I took my small bag with me.

“Qaphile should take you to buy some pants”, he says as I get out.

“Is it appropriate?”, I ask

“From what I have heard it's comfortable and I don't think he would mind”, I smile. I really would love to wear pants.

“I will ask him”, I say

He nods. When we reach town we get a taxi going to a township area. We get to a place and we are seated down. It's actually a store with a game being played by men and they are drinking. We get to sit down and he goes to get us something to eat. I repeat that I will get home fat than I am right now. The food comes back and we are eating.

“Khethiwe you know my brother loves you very much”, he says

“I love him as well”, I say

He nods his head that

“It is just that I am wondering how long would you tolerate our family”, he puts the food in his mouth and chews it aggressively. I am glad he has his mouth closed in that manner.

“What do you mean Bhuti?”, I ask

“I mean just that”, he says

“Do you have a problem with me being with Qaphile?”, I ask

“No, don't get it wrong. I am to see my brother in this manner”,
I carry on eating my food.

We are both silent after that.

“Don't you miss your family?”, he asks

“My father would never accept me back. I am no use to him
since I lost my virginity to Qaphile”, I say

“Things will be ok that's a promise”, he says

I nod and look at him before carrying on with my eating.

PART 2

CHAPTER 11

I look at Sizwe who is waving non stop. He has been crying his lungs out but he finally stopped. I am heavy hearted that I am leaving him. I wish I could take him with me and stay with him forever but I will make sure to visit with permission from Bhuti Phuthuma. He is looking at me while fisting on his t-shirt as my bags have been taken away.

“Bye bye Mama”, he hasn't stop calling me that and I don't think he will.

It has been over 4 years now and he has never called me Khethiwe or aunty Khethiwe by mistake. Everyone has gotten used to how close we were and how I grew on him. I am happy that I got to see him start school. He was so excited just as I was taking him there everyday and now I wouldn't take him to school everyday.

“Come let's go”, He says pulling my arm gently towards the car.

I roughly wipe the tears from my face. I was happy that I am leaving Msinga but I am not ready to part with Sizwe as yet. Nokwenkosi pulls him close to her as I get inside the car. She has came back from Nursing school and now she will work at

the community mobile clinic. She told me she wants to leave as well and go overseas and I really hope it works well for her.

The door is shut and I look out of the window before the car moves. I look at them fade away from my eyes. I am heart broken and I wish I could take them with me. His hand is on my lap and I look at it before I look at him.

“It will be ok”, he says and I nod.

He sets his eyes on the road and I do the same sighing.

“You can open that plastic. I bought something for you”, he says

“What is it?”

“Open it”, he says

I take it and open inside. There is a chicken licken box also with chips and juice as well as biscuits and a packet of sweets.

“Thank you Gatsheni”, he smiles.

I place the plastic away and I play with my wrists a bit before I look at him.

“Thank you for still loving me after everything”, I look away

“We have no control over what happened Khethiwe. We will have a child when it's beneficial for us to have one”, he says and I nod.

He has grown and so have I. I still get mesmerized at how handsome he becomes even the way he dresses has more style and effort. I sometimes don't believe that for the 6 years I have known him and the 4 we have been together he still loves me as much as I love him.



We reach a new place. It is not the Hostel anymore. No it's a house in the township. There is a taxi parked in the yard. Qaphile and his brothers really worked hard to obtain what they have now. They have 6 taxi's over the years and things have been better back at their home. They even started building a house for their father back home and two cows, a few chickens and they want to expand the cattle for their father.

He parks the car behind the taxi and we get out of the car. I look around the place and the neighbours are so close.

"Come", I rush over to his side and he locks the car before we go to the house.

"This is your house. You can do whatever you like Sthandwa sami", he says immediately after opening the door.

There isn't any furniture but I love it. It's a 5 room house. With taps inside meaning I don't have to go and fetch water from the river anymore. I walk in each and every room and there is a

bathtub than a shower. I look at Qaphile. Atleast one room has a bed.

“Do you love it?”

I wrap my arms around him and give him a kiss.

“I love it so much Gatsheni”, I say

“I am happy that you do. We will buy all that you need for this house tomorrow”, he says

“Ok”, I say

I can't believe I will live here.

“I am coming back right now”, I nod as he leaves. I keep myself busy with looking around the house once more.

We are up and about the next morning. Qaphile told me to wake up as we are going to get things to make this house less empty. I am excited about the journey ahead and I couldn't wait for it. I was done with preparing myself and he was changing as well. There was a knock on the door and I was a bit hesitant to open but Qaphile is here so it would be safe. I went to open and it was Zaba.

“Hello Sisi Khethiwe”, he says

“Hello”, I make way for him.

He depends on his moods whether to call me Khethiwe, Sisi Khethiwe or MaCele.

“Who is that?”, it's Qaphile

“I came to fetch the taxi”, Zaba says.

After some time Qaphile appears and he throws keys to Zaba who catches them.

“Thank you. Enjoy your day Khethiwe”, he says

“You too”, he walks out and I notice a gun on his left side tucked in his pants.

“Lets go”, Qaphile says.

“Why does Zaba have a gun?”, I ask Qaphile.

“Its for Protection Sthandwa Sami. Let's go”, he grabs my hand before I could shoot another question.

What protection is Qaphile talking about? Are they in some sort of danger of some sort? I don't understand at all. I keep my silence on what I wanted to ask and just let it go. They know what they are doing but I have never imagined Zaba with a gun. We get to town and we start with furniture shopping. I am having a great time and Qaphile says I can take anything I like. I do as I am permitted and by the time we are done I am content with what we have. The delivery truck leaves and he calls one

of his brothers to go and monitor everything while we go and buy groceries. His phone rings and he rejects it.

“I think we should buy you a phone as well”, he says

“It is too much Gatsheni”, I say

“It is not. Then tomorrow we will take you to buy clothes as well”, he says

I keep my silence

“What is wrong?”, he asks with a frown.

I look at him and sigh

“I don't want you wasting money on me.”

“I am never wasting money on you. It makes me happy to take you around and get what you want Dali wami.”, I smile

“Is this enough?”, he asks pointing inside the trolley.

“Yes it is”, he nods.

We go to the till point and he pays up. His phone rings again and he takes it out of his pocket and places it back inside. We leave the supermarket and everything gets loaded in the car.

QAPHILE

Khethiwe has been moving around the house placing things where she thinks they would be fitting. She was also cooking by the stove as well for supper. I took my phone after changing and went past by her in the kitchen.

“I am going for a smoke”, she turns to me and smiles

“Ok”, oGatsheni know how much I love this woman.

I move outside and take out a cigarette and lighter then light it up before taking a few puffs in and out and then I make a call. It goes through quicker than. I anticipated.

“Qaphile I need money”, that's the first thing I hear

I take a puff .

“How much?”, I ask

“R600”

“Ok. How is everything going.?”

“It's not getting any better”, I sigh and scratch my head.

“I will see what I can do”

“Please do. I hate this”, I nod before hanging up.

I sigh and look up at the stars for a while the finish smoking before making my way inside the house.

“The house looks ok now don't you think?”, she asks with hands on her hips.

“It feels warm”

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I say

“Its the food on the stove”, she giggles lightly.

I go to her and hold her waist.

“I am happy you are here with me”, I kiss her neck.

“Me too”, she turns around and looks at me with a smile.

”I am done cooking. Should I dish up?”, I nod.

She moves away from me and goes to the kitchen

KHETHIWE

I am enjoying my time in Durban really. It is my third day since I have moved here and Qaphile went off to work. He gave me some money to go and buy what I like so Bhuti Nqobimpi will be the one who will take me to go and buy those things. I was cleaning around the house before I went to take a bath. I am loving this system of fast hot water. I get done and I go and get

dressed. I will also go and get a phone as well. I finished up and made my way to make something to eat while I wait. A knock comes from the door and I go and open.

“MaCele. How are you?”, Nqobimpi asks.

“I am well and yourself?”

“I am good. Are you ready?”, I nod.

“Let me get my bag”, he nods.

I go and take the bag Qaphile bought for me some years ago. I still have kept it well over the years. I take the money as well and then leave locking the door. I see a car parked Infront of the gate as we walk out of it. I lock the gate as well and we make our way to the car.

“There is someone else in the car. Can we drop her off before we go?”, he says

“Its fine we can”, I really don't mind and I am not rushing anywhere.

The day is still long and it wouldn't be over that quickly. I get in the car and I greet the lady who is sitting at the front. My heart races as I see her bump.

“Khethiwe is greeting”, Nqobimpi says as he gets in.

“Cela ungangicasuli Nqobi please(Don't irritate me)”, he clenches his jaw and starts the car.

I keep my silence as the car moves.

“So you go around and take other girls to shops but you can't for me ?”, the lady speaks.

“I did nje. You think the clothes you are wearing just came from the sky?”, she clicks her tongue.

“You know I hate that and your attitude is always in the way of me doing things right”, the lady folds her arms.

“I can't wait to give birth.”, she says

He keeps quiet. So he impregnated her? I didn't see this one coming.

“Your family hasn't even come to pay for damages. My father is waiting”, The lady says

“They will come”, he says

We enter a road and his car slows down.

“When?”

“Next weekend”

“They better”, she opened the door as the car stopped and got out with plastics before closing the door.

Nqobimpi laid on the seat and sighed. I looked out of the window after that.

I have gotten the phone and now I was shopping some clothes at Edgar's after I was in Truworth. I am enjoying this and Nqobimpi keeps on giving money on top of all the money Qaphile handed over to me.

“You want to buy those pants?”, Nqobimpi asks after he seated himself down and was busy with calls.

“I don't know if Qaphile would be comfortable with me wearing them”, I say

He takes his phone out and makes a call.

“Qaphile, we are here at Edgar's with Khethiwe”, Nqobimpi says with a bit of a frown on his face.

“She wants to buy pants kodwa uyakusaba angazi usabani lah kuwe (But she is scared and I don't know why)”, he chuckles and hands over the phone to me.

“Hello”, I answer.

“Get anything you want Sthandwa sami”, he says

“Really?”, I ask

“Yes, anything that makes you happy”, he says

“Ngiyabonga(Thank you)”

“I will see you at home. Don't cook. ”

“Ok”

“I love you ” he says

“I love you too”, I shy away from his brother.

I hand the phone over thanking him and go straight to the ‘Jeans’ Infront of me. I take about 5 pairs of jeans before I find it enough.

“Is that enough?”, He asks and i nod.

“Lets go and pay”, we go to the till point at pay up for all the clothes before we go and eat.

I am hungry and going to buy clothes with Nqobimpi is nice. It is not weird but he isn't as fun as Zaba is. Zaba is a ball of energy and always loves putting someone on the edge. I wondered if Nqobimpi had a gun as well but I can't see it anywhere around him which means he doesn't.

We are now seated with food Infront of us and plastics on a chair just next to us.

“You are having a baby?”, I ask

He looks at me for a while. I think I am regretting it a bit.

“Yes”, he answers.

I just nod my head and proceed eating.

“I am not marrying the mother if that is what you think”, I look at him

“Why?”

“She lacks respect.”, the disgust in his voice cannot be missed.

“But don't you love her?”, I ask

“No. It was a mistake”, he says then releases a sigh.

“I am not perfect Khethiwe but I would never abandon my child.”, he says with a bit of a smile on his face.

“I know”, I say and take a bite off my food.

He carries on eating his food there after.

CHAPTER 12

Bead work. It is one of the things I love doing very much. It takes time to perfect it but it is what I love. I am really glad that my grandmother taught this skill to me at a young age. I wouldn't be able to be in my own happy space by not doing it. I am seated outside on the grass mat after doing some cleaning and also cooking just in case Qaphile decides to come back early. This place is noisy and not as peaceful as back home but I love it here. It has Qaphile in it. My phone rings and I take it from my bead bag and answer it.

“Hello”, I answer.

“Haah awusangishayeli ucingo sisi Mase uhlala edolobheni(You don't call me when you live in the city)”, I laugh lightly.

“Kwenkosi?”

“Yes, Ah I had to get your number from Bhuti”, she says

“I am sorry. I am still getting used to staying here”, I say

“Are you happy? You don't miss me and Sizwe?”, She sulks

“I miss you and Sizwe. How is he?”, she sighs.

“He calls for you alot. Wait a bit”, she says.

I wait a bit before I hear her speaking again.

“Here is Mama Sizwe talk”

“Mama”, my heart warms and wish he was in my arms at this moment.

“How are you my boy?”, I hear him fumble a bit.

“Talk Sizwe”, I giggle at Kwenkosi’s frustration.

“Mama buya(come back)”, I hear his voice breaking.

“When school closes I will come ok?”, I say

He is silent for a moment.

“Uyakuthanda umama(Mama loves you)”

“I love you too”, it is silent again

“I will call you later. He is crying”, my heart pains.

“Ok.”, I say before she hangs up.

I close my eyes for a while before I sigh and carry on with my bead work. When it was getting a bit breezy I went inside the house and placed my things away. I took my phone and called Qaphile.

“Khethiwe are you ok?”,he answers in panic.

“I am fine.”, I say

“Are you sure?”

“Yes I am. I just miss Sizwe”, I say

“Uhm, I will talk to Phuthuma about him coming here this weekend”, he says

“Yes anything for you.”, I smile.

“Sthandwa sami”, he says.

“Yes?”

He sighs.

“No woman has shown me love despite who I am and was. No one saw what you are seeing in me and I am thankful and love you so much for that. No matter what we will stick together and I will keep my promises know that”, he says

“I know. I love you Gatsheni and no one else”, I say

“I am happy to hear that. Do you want me to come home early?”, he asks.

“Finish work. You will find me where you left me”, I say

“Ok. Let me rush then ”, we end the call.

I was woken up by shuffling and then a kiss on my neck and a smell of nicotine accompanied it as well. I open my eyes and it's dark outside. He wraps his arm around me and pulls me close to him.

“Sthandwa sami”, he says

“What time is it?”, I ask

“It’s late. I am sorry I came back late”, he says

“You are ok that's all”, I give him a hug.

“Can I dish up for you?”

“No

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I ate at the taxi rank”, he says

I nod my head and lay on his chest.

“I spoke to Phuthuma”, he yawned.

“What did he say?”

“You will see Sizwe this weekend”

“Really?”

“Yes ”, he yawns again

I let him be.

“Lets sleep”, I say

He is silent after that. I keep mine as well staring into the dark. Wondering if nginesinyama or what?(If I have a dark cloud).All I ever want to do is make him a man one day and make him as

happy as he makes me. I knew I wouldn't love Wandile as much as I love Qaphile.



Morning. It's already creeping in and soon enough the sun will be out. Qaphile was bathing as I prepared porridge for him on the stove so he would leave when he has eaten. As I am done he pops out of the bedroom and comes to the kitchen.

"I made some food", I say

"Thank you", his phone rings and he motions that he wants his porridge with only sugar and I nod.

He grabs the set of keys and walks out of the house. I turn off the stove and place everything for him on the tray. He comes back and sits himself on the couch and I serve his food. He doesn't wait long for it to cool but gobbles the hot substance. He gets done in time and I take everything away.

"I have to rush", he says and takes out a plastic money bag that has money in it and counts a few before he hands it over to me.

"Thank you", he kisses me then leaves. I close the door and clean up first before going to rest a bit.

The sun has risen and I am done with my house chores. They are not alot at all. I take the money that Qaphile gave to me

and I think maybe I might find a shop here. I get out locking before I am on the street. People are up and down and kids are playing all together. They remind me of the now grown siblings of Qaphile's. I stop by the children and ask one of them where the shop is and one offers to accompany me there. I have always wished I had siblings. As old as I am but I really wished I had them and I wasn't alone. We got to the shops and I bought biscuits and so e sweets for the kids before thanking her and we both left. As the kids were playing a red car came to a halt Infront of them and a child was grabbed before shoved inside by men before it drives off.

The rest scattered and I was frozen into place.

“Mama bayamthatha !(Mom they are taking her!)”, the cry of the boy rings in my ear before I start moving my legs as quickly as possible until I get home.

I sit myself on the couch and I sigh. The sound of my ringing phone frightens me and I go and take it. Nokwenkosi didn't call again last night.

“He...Hello”, I say

“Sthandwa Sami what is wrong?”, tears stream down my cheeks as I am shaking.

“Its ok. I am ok...I”, I try wiping my tears vigorously.

“Khethiwe”, I hang up and place the phone on my lap.

Oh my god I hope they find that child. If I just tried to help maybe she would be ok. I went to out away the things I bought before heading to bed to sleep for a while.

**

Kids screaming and scattering all around. She is screaming but I can't hear anything. I see her trying to figt but they are dominating her.

“Mama bayamthatha!(Mom they are taking her!)”

**

I open my eyes and breathe in and out heavily.

“Calm down”, he is next to me as I am trying to get my breathing to normal.

“You worried me”

“I am fine. You•••You should be at work”, I say

“I couldn't when I didn't know how you are”, I look at him.

“I just need to rest”, he is unsure as I pull the pillow and try to close my eyes again.

QAPHILE

I couldn't leave Khethiwe for a moment. I looked at her sweating as she rests and wondering what is bothering her. She was fine when I left and now I don't know what happened. I

stay in the bedroom for a while before I stand up and go to the lounge. They stand up and look at me.

“She won't tell me”

“A child was abducted just a few hours ago”, Gatsa says

“I am worried”, I say sitting down.

“What is bothering Khethiwe should be least of your worries right now.”, Phuthuma says with a frown on his face.

I look down.

“I know”, I say

KHETHIWE

It's the weekend. Sizwe was coming in today and I am happy that he is coming. I can't wait to enjoy and spend my time with him. I hear the car sound from outside and I peak through the curtain. I wipe my hands before taking off the apron and a knock comes from the door. I go and attend it before he falls into my arms as heavy as he is.

“Mama!”, I hold him tightly.

I look at Phuthuma.

“Thank you”, I say

I put Sizwe down.

“Can we talk?”, Phuthuma says

I nod and hold Sizwe's hand.

“Come and let me show you your room”, he seems excited.

I dragged him to the bedroom and he looks mesmerized.

“Go in”, he does while I go and attend his father.

I sit down opposite him and he sighs playing with the car keys.

“I don't know how I would thank you for taking up on such a responsibility of loving and being a mother figure to Sizwe. ”, he says

“He is an amazing child”, I say

“Keep your heart pure MaNdosi. Always”, he says

“I will Bhuti”, he faintly smiles before standing up.

“I will see him later”, I nod as he stands up and walks out.

“Mama!”, I look at Sizwe before going to him and pull him to the kitchen to get food.

I know its short and I am sorry

CHAPTER 13

Who doesn't love Saturdays? I used to love them very much while I was still in school mainly because I had no school that day and Sunday was just a weekend sucker reminding you that tomorrow kuyavukwa. You are going to school sisi. Even now I still enjoy my Saturday when they are well spent. I was with Sizwe at the beach. I love this place the most and we got some swim wear and we are going to get to the water with the watch of Qaphile and his brothers. I wrapped a shoal around my waist as I placed my bag on the sand when we reached the shore. I wiped Sizwe's face from all the ice cream that is on his face. I took out the camera from my bag.

“Come and stand here Sizwe then smile for Mama”, I tell him.

He does just that and he smiles as I take a picture.

“Are you even taking a good picture MaCele?”, Zaba jokes and they laugh with his brothers.

“Yes see”, I take a picture of them.

“I am not for pictures Khethiwe”, Nqobimpi quickly says

“So am I”, Qaphile says

“But you would love taking them if Khethiwe likes it”,

Phuthuma says

They chuckles amongst themselves. Zaba comes towards me taking the camera.

“Come let me take a photo of you two”, he says pushing me towards Qaphile.

I stand next to him. I have never really took pictures before. A camera was something scarce back home. Zaba takes a photo.

“Now pose Khethiwe”, Zaba says.

“Like the city girls?”

“Yes like the city girls. Better yet like Qaphile's woman”, he says

I laugh at that and we get done with s few. I ask to take one with Sizwe by the ocean and he does. I take Sizwe with me and we go towards the water.

“Don't go any further”, Qaphile says.

I am just enjoying the water as it splashes on my legs and half of Sizwe's body. I would lift him up with his hands if the waves come stronger for him to with stand. I was enjoying. We became tired and Sizwe was hungry. We went over to his fathers who were standing while looking at us. Qaphile was on his phone while speaking to someone and it sounded serious.

“Baba I am hungry”, Sizwe rushes to his father.

“Lets go and get some food for you”, he says picking his heavy self up.

“I have to rush. It's bad”, Qaphile says after the call.

His brothers keep quiet after that.

“Is everything ok?”, I am now worried. I get closer to him and place my hands on his shoulders.

“I am sorry Khethiwe”, that's all he said to me.

We have been stuck here at the waiting area in the hospital. Doctors and nurses passing by us as we are waiting. I am sure Nokwenkosi is most excited about being hands on now in her job. I had to change and feel comfortable while we are waiting as we rushed here. No one was talking to anyone at this point but we were all silent. A nurse approaches us and she had a file in her hand.

“You are invited into the ward. We are done with taking test samples”, the nurse says before we walks away.

We are still seated on the chair and I don't know where Qaphile disappeared off too. Phuthuma sighs and stands up with Sizwe and pulls him away as they walk through the hospital corridors. They all stand up and I look at them before standing up and following after them. They enter a room and I follow as well. I

see that woman from the taxi rank again. What is her name again? Yes Joyce. The beautiful make up woman I once saw. She is crying in Qaphile's arms who is comforting her. I look around the room and see a girl child on the bed with wondering eyes. Doesn't she have family and why did we rush here?

“This is beyond medical Power Qaphile and you know it. It's time to face the music and do imbeleko for ingane(the child)!” , Phuthuma says angrily.

A child? Imbeleko? What child?

“He is right Qaphile. Our child has been sick for far too long and I won't loose her!” ,Joyce says

Qaphile looks down and looks my way. I feel tears on my cheeks and I aggressively wipe them away feeling a lump on my throat. I turned around and made my way out. I needed the bathroom and I don't know why but I am feeling a burning sensation coming from my chest. I am heart broken. She gave him a child. She gave him something I failed to give to him twice!. I don't make it far before I seat myself on a bench and I cry my lungs out. I couldn't hold it in anymore. He loves her and feels sorry for poor Khethiwe!

“Dali wami Ngiyaxolisa (I am sorry)” , he embraces me as I am crying.

I have never felt so much pain even when I lost my children I have never felt it. It feels like a stab of a thousand daggers in one place constantly. Disappointment dominated everything else. I was in pain but much disappointed about the situation.

I have stopped crying and Qaphile hasn't moved away from me. Joyce was perstoring for Qaphile to put his attention on his daughter until the brothers took her away. I am still on the same bench in the same position with the same feeling just different time frame.

“Khethiwe look at me please”

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Qaphile begs.

“I am sorry, it was one mistake and it never happened again after that day. I love you Khethiwe and no other woman.”

“I love you Khethiwe and I made my promise to marry you one day and I will because you are everything to me”, I look down.

“Please look at me ”, he holds my face and I look at his glistening eyes as he swallows as well.

“Ngiyakuthanda MaCele Ngenhliziyo yami yonke. Ayidle ishiyele Sthandwa Sami ngiswela amagama okusho ukuthi ngikuthanda kangakanani(I love you MaCele. With my whole heart. I am

sorry my love, I loose words to describe how much I love you)",
he says

He wraps his arms around me and I just break down all over
again.

"I am sorry"

It's the following day. Sleep can't take the pain that you are
feeling but it makes you forget the world for a while and focus
on other things else or nothingst all. I woke up early today. I
couldn't sleep at all or even catch a peaceful sleep. I left
Qaphile in bed. Sizwe was taken by his father yesterday. I was
excited about this weekend and I didn't think it would end up
this way. I went on cleaning and did some cooking to get my
mind off things before I sat myself in the next room on the bed
with an open window doing my beads slowly making sure I am
perfecting the outcome of the Jewel. I wish I was by the ocean
hearing the waves and seeing people being happy over water. I
smile at that. At how Sizwe and I were happy to go to the beach
yesterday. He was really extatic. I sigh before stopping for a
moment and carrying on with what I am doing.

"Sawubona(Hello)"

I stop beading lifting my head up facing the window.

"Yebo" my voice responds softly.

“How are you?”

I didn't sleep. I was trying to get rid of something that I am still feeling even now.

“I am fine. How are you?”, I ask while staring at the white lace curtain. I hear him heave a sigh.

“Khethiwe please talk to me ”, I turn to him.

“I am ”

“I hurt you I know and it pains me to see you like this and it's all my fault. Please Sthandwa Sami say something”, he says

“That was Yesterday. Today is a new day”, I say and turn back to what I am doing.

“I will keep on saying sorry and proving how sorry I am MaCele”

“Do imbeleko for your child Qaphile. There is nothing stopping you after all I am not your wife”, I carry on.

“Don't say that Khethiwe”, He says

It was better being with his sister's than now.

“I will give you space”, he says and goes out. I stop beading and gather my things. I take my phone and make a call.

“Hi. I hope I am not interrupting you”, I say

“No you are not”, He says

“Can you take me to town. I want to buy some clothes with the money that's left”, I say

“Uhm ok. I will be there”, He says and I hang up.

I get out of the spare room and go and take a refuse bag before going to the bedroom. I look for scissors and take my clothes.

He looks at me as I do so.

“Are you leaving?”, I look at him. I take his as well and put them inside.

“No”

“Why are you taking our clothes?”

“I will put them back I just want to clean Qaphile”, he keeps quiet.

I take the refuse bag and drag it to the bathroom and put them all in the bath tub. I take the scissors and start with cutting all of the clothes one by one until they are all in shreds. I get done and I go and take some paraffine and matches before I go to the bathroom and I pour some paraffine on the clothes before I light it up and I sit down on the floor watching our clothes wind up in flames. I pulled my legs together as I watched. I took the scissors and looked at them.

“What is burning?”

Nqobimpi opens the door and quickly pulls me out as Qaphile rushes to take the fire out.

“Are you ok?”

I smile

“I am. We can go”, I say

He looks at me for a while before he nods. Qaphile comes out of the bathroom. I look at him before I go and take my bag before we leave with Nqobimpi.

I went to the salon and they did a dry perm on my hair after relaxing it. Then after that we went to buy clothes and mostly mini skirts, silked dresses and also shorts with lots of pants. I even got my first pair of heels from Nqobimpi’s advice. I even got make up and the lady at the store was kind enough to show me how to use it and put a small amount since I am new but for now I enjoyed the shopping and I don't want to think of the events of yesterday.

CHAPTER 14

I was sitting outside on my own being an outlier, an out cast in a place that I have lived in for 4 years. I understand that per traditions I am not supposed to enter emsamu of this house unless I am a wife here and that is why we are here. To try and heal Qaphile's child. I don't think I hate him or his child. I just don't know where I really am in his life. He gives me the reassurance that we are still together like it is only the two of us when it is not anymore. Joyce is involved as well in this equation.

“Khethiwe sesiqedile(We are done)”, Kwenkosi calls upon me.

I look at her and stand up from where I am and she comes towards me.

“We are still friends right?”, I smile and nod.

“Yes we are”, I say

“I am sorry and Nalo Joyce wakhona engathi oSizile (And this Joyce is just like Sizile)”, she says with disgust clicking her tongue in the process.

“I love him.”, she looks at me.

I walk to the window and I stand there.

“I love him Nokwenkosi. As much as I wish I•••I wish our children survived and we had our own little family like he promised but I guess promises are broken”, I say

“Don’t say that Khethiwe you are hurting and it's not good. Stab him if you want to, do it!”, she says

I turn to her and gasp.

“Nokwenkosi that is your brother”

“I don't care”, she wets her face with tears and comes rushing towards me and hugs me.

“Oh your poor pure heart Khethiwe.”

I wrap my arms around her. There is a knock on the bedroom door and it's Qaphile's mother.

“Is everything ok?”, we break the hug and Kwenkosi wiped her tears.

“I hate your son mah engathi angayofa and uKhethiwe athole umuntu ongcono kunaye nx(I wish he could die and Khethiwe finds someone better than him”,

“Nokwenkosi that's enough! You don't say bad things about other people”, I say

“Khethiwe•••”

“No it's enough. It's ok. I have moved on and there is nothing I could change”, she looks at me.

“But•••”, I shake my head and she walks out of the room.

“I commend your bravery Khethiwe”, Qaphile's mother says.

I look at her before nodding.

“You are part of this family and that will never change right?”

“Yes it won't. There are challenges in life that we have to just overcome”, I smile.

“Go and talk to him”, she is referring to Qaphile.

I haven't talked to him since the fire incident. I slept in a separate room and cried for a whole week before I felt like I was ok and ready to move on. Forgiveness is one thing I am weak on and will always be.

“Ok”, we walk out of the bedroom.

Thokozile and her newly found sister in law are having a great chat at that tip. Qaphile's mother disappeared somewhere in the house. I walk past them and go to the outside searching for Qaphile and I get to the kraal where they are standing outside it only his father is inside with the two cows.

“Not anyone is allowed here Bafana bami”, his father says

“We herded before”, Zaba defends.

“Sanibonani”, they turn to me.

“MaCele”, I look at Qaphile.

“I will be back”, he says before coming towards me.

We walk away from the kraal and his family members that were there. We were walking in silence. I heave a heavy sigh before I intertwined my hand into his and he holds it back firmly as well then raises out hands to kiss the back of mine.

“I am sorry for causing you pain”, he says. I keep my silence before he sighs. We get into the rondaval and I go and seat myself down.

“I just want the truth”, he nods and comes to kneel Infront of me.

“I will give you anything Sthandwa sami”, he holds my hands and kisses them.

“Do you love Joyce?”

“No, I love you”

“What happened?”, I ask.

I really want to know. He sighs

“I sometimes took Joyce home when I bought her food late and it was just that one night Sthandwa Sami. I promise you.”

“You broke your promise Qaphile. You said we would have children together not with me and other people. Is it because that I have been failing to bring a living person on this earth...I am sorry”, I say softly.

“Khethiwe I don't want you to think that like that”, he swallows looking at me.

I heave a sigh.

“Will you marry her?”, he places his hand on my cheek.

“You are the only person that I would marry”, he says with a smile in his face.

“Ok”, I nod and we hug each other.

“I love you so much Khethiwe”

“I love you too”



The goat was slaughtered after everything was done and the child was introduced to the ancestors. I was sitting with Sizwe and Nokuthula. She has grown very much now and is a very bubbly child compared to Sizwe. His father says I smother him too much that is why he is always attached to me but I like it.

“Mama is Thula going to come next time I visit you?”, Sizwe asks while leaning on me.

“Sure

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Come let's go and eat”, I say

We leave the rondaval and go inside the main house. When I look at that child you can't deny it. It is really Qaphile's child.

“Oh Khethiwe dish up there is food”, Qaphile's mother says

I nod as she walks away with a plate. I dish up for Nokuthula and Sizwe.

“Mama ”, Sizwe pats me.

“Yes?”, Joyce walks in the kitchen with her daughter.

She is 3 years old. The daughter that is.

“Can I have more meat?”, I nod. I dish up the way he wants it. I give him his food and so as Nokuthula.

“You should stop mothering other people's children and actually have your own”, Joyce says

She places her daughter on the floor before she dishes up food.

“You should stop giving babies to other people's men and get your own sathane ndini”, Nokwenkosi says as she enters.

“What is going on?”, It's Bhuti Dumisani.

We all stand there in silence.

“I am speaking”

“Its this one. She bothers Khethiwe”, Nokwenkosi says

“I didn't do anything”, Joyce says innocently.

“You two stop the bickering. I could hear you and wena akukona kini lah noma ucabanga ukuthi uzoshadela layikhaya.Ubeke haze yacaca uQaphile ukuthi Angeke akwenze lokho sithembe siyezwana (And you, this is not your home and don't think you are going to marry into this family. It was made clear by Qaphile that he won't do that so I hope you hear me)”, Joyce nods

“Yes”

He looks at each and every one of us before walking out. I had forgotten that there are children here.

“Come let's go”, I say to them and they all follow each other out.

I don't know how to handle Joyce. She is very rude and to think I thought she was nice.Yes I met her once every now and then but I never thought she was like this.

We are back in Durban and the buzz is still there. I get to wear the clothes that I have now freely while around the house. I haven't been out going anywhere since that day but today I am determined to leave and go to town without getting any lost. I cleaned the house before I bathed and changed. I wore shorts with a white top and shoes. I looked youthful and mostly like the people around here in the city. I put on my red lipstick and took my bag before leaving then. I had made sure that my camera is always in my bag just Incase anything. I walked to the taxi stop and luckily a taxi came by quicker than I had anticipated. I jumped inside and greeted the people in there before it moves.

“Aw kodwa ngo Makhelwane elahlekelwe ingane yakhe(Her only child)”, the woman says

“Its painful.It would've been better if the child was still alive.”,The women beside me says.

“What has been of the world”, there is silence there after.

When we got to town I walked all alone holding tightly on my bag as I am walking. I see a lady who is seated on the side road selling traditional attires. I go to her.

“Can I see?”, I point at the bead work and she nods.

I look at it thoroughly before looking up to her.

“They are very beautiful”, she smiles.

I take out my camera and take a picture of them before I wave my good bye. I keep on walking and I stopped one lady and asked her to take a picture of me using my camera and she agreed. I thanked her after she was done and continued with my journey. My phone rang as I was still on the road and I answered it.

“Hello”

“How are you?”

“I am good. I am in town”, I say with much excitement.

“Where in town?”, I look around.

“I see some buildings. It's not any of the places I have been too”, I see a man pushing a cart and I rush to him across the road.

“Do you know how to go back?”, he asks.

“No really sure but I will ask when I want to leave”

“Please find out the street you are on”, he says

“Ok I will”

I get to the man.

“What are you selling?”

“Popsicle”, he says.

“Can I have one?”, he nods as I take out my money and pay up.

I thank him after and leave still exploring the city and I ended up at KFC. I went to get some food and sat myself down to eat. My phone rang again and I took it out and answered it.

“Hello”, I answer.

“I am worried that you are lost somewhere Sthandwa sami”, he says

“I am not lost. I am at KFC in town. Awu Qaphile I am ok”, I giggle.

“I am not ok”, he says

“If you can you can come”

“I am coming”, he hangs up.

I carry on eating. I am enjoying the food that I ordered more of it and ate again. When I was done Qaphile entered the franchise. He looked around at first then came to me straight. I stood up and threw myself in his arms.

“You see, I am not lost”, I say

“You are beautiful”, That's the first time I hear him say that.

“Thank you”

I take my bag and we walk out holding hands. We go to the car and hop inside. I take out my camera.

“You love it?”

“Yes. I have been using it all day”, I say

He kisses me and I return it as well.

“I am happy to see you happy”

“You make me happy”, he starts the car and drives off.

CHAPTER 15

The neighbours were going in numbers to the house of that child that died. I haven't heard anything but I also wanted to send my condolences to the family. I dressed well and wrapped a doek on my head before leaving the house. There were two cars parked outside and I could hear church women singing. I am not one for church and I have never really been to church to say anything but I know there is a higher power above our ancestors of which they say is God. I didn't know if I should turn back. I stand there for a while before a lady comes putting a shoal over her shoulder's.

“Sawubona sisi(Hello)”, she says

I greet back .

“I have never seen you here before”, She says.

“I just recently moved. I heard about”, she sighs.

“Eyi my sister is not coping at all. Come inside”, she pulls me inside the yard and I stand by the door one inside.

The woman is crying her lungs out. I felt her pain as she was crying for her daughter. I didn't know what to do. Her child was playing on the street with other children and now she is no more. I stayed there for a while before offerings were done and

I left after that. I quickly rushed home and when I got there I sat down on the couch. At least those men who took that child were found but she wasn't found alive. I heard that she was found in some but there with other parts of children. They were about to do something with her body that I have concluded. I go to the bedroom and take my bead work before I start working on it. I find myself thinking of Qaphile's child. Is she safe wherever she is? I quickly took my phone and made a call. It got answered quickly.

“Dali wami”

“Have you checked how your daughter is?”, I ask with concern.

“I haven't talked to Joyce since imbeleko”, he says.

“Haibo Qaphile! You should check up on your child more often to make sure she is safe”, I say

“Sthandwa Sami is everything alright?”, I sigh.

“I am just worried. You remember that child that was reported missing?”

“I do. I know the story and after everything I don't want to talk to Joyce behind your back engathi siyathandana(Like we are dating)”, he says with much disgust and sighs.

“Oh I see. We can call when you come back”, I say

“Khethiwe we don't have to do this. If the child needs anything her mother will say”, he says

“Qaphile please”, I beg. He sighs

“Ok.”, we speak for a while before I hang up the call.

I am with Nqobimpi's woman per say. She is a very grumpy person but Nqobimpi said she hasn't been this worse before. She is close to her due date of giving birth and you can just tell that she didn't plan to have a child at all. Nqobimpi asked me to accompany her to get some last-minute things for the child. She isn't interested in it as I am. I am quiet excited for her really and Sizwe having his first cousin that he could play with either than Nokuthula.

“This looks nice”, I pick up a romper and she grabs it and places it back.

“Its a boy Khethiwe”, she says.

I nod and look for things that could fit a boy.

“Sisi why are you not excited?”, She looks at me.

“Unlike you Khethiwe I have school and I didn't plan for this. Even my boyfriend dumped me”, she says

“Don’t you love Bhuti Nqobi?”, I look at her and she takes what she likes and shoves it in the basket that is in my hands.

“That one was supposed to be an experiment. You know I think I fell for him somewhere. Unempatho yena(He treats me well)”, she says and shakes her head.

“You wouldn't understand. You are head over heels in love with his brother”, she says and I Smile.

“I have known him for years”

“So you don't love him but know him?”

“I do love Qaphile sisi. He is the person I chose and he loves me too”, she claps her hands and sighs.

“Uthando lwase mafarm Jesu (Village love)”, she says.

“We should get blankets for the child as well”, I say

“Nqobimbi’s mother should be the one shopping as she will take care of this child”, she says

“I want some chicken licken”, she says licking her lips.

“We will go when we are done”, she nods.

“I need to sit down. My legs are swelling badly again”, she says in a bit of pain. I nod there after.

We get everything she wants and we are done. I help her here and there also buying new white towels and PVC waterproofs as the child will use towels we go and pay.

“Plesse call Nqobimpi. I am tired of being here ”, she says and I nod.

I make the call as we make our way to chicken licken. She is really dragging herself and is annoyed. I am holding everything as she rests her hand on her back as we are walking. We get to the franchise and I place the things where she is seated before I go and order what she wants. I join her again waiting for her order. She keeps on rubbing her back.

“Liyasha iqolo(My back is burning)”, she says.

“I hope Bhuti is close by so you can get home”

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she leans back on the chair and takes breaths.

“No man Khethiwe I am in pain.This is why I didn't want a child! Kuyimanje I am having heart conditions I don't know about ”, she is shouting now and crying.

I stand up from my chair and go behind her to fan her face.

“Calm down Sisi”,She starts screaming and everyone is now looking at us.

“What should I do?”, I ask.

“She needs the hospital”, One lady says while coming towards us.

“Oh Nkosi yami Khethiwe ngiyashona (Oh my God Khethiwe I am dying)”, She cries I am panicking

“Where is the hospital from here?”, I ask.

“We will call an ambulance”. I nod and go and fan her.

“It will be ok just breathe in and out.”, she moans while placing her hands on her back.

“I am dying Khethiwe this is painful”, she says

“Breathe ok? I am here we will go to the hospital”

“I can’t breathe I need water”, I go and ask for water.

People are surrounding her and now her shoes are taken off. The paramedics come with a stroller and get her on it. I state who I am before we could go together. She is having trouble breathing and I think she is panicking. The paramedic speaks to her.

“Calm down, everything will be alright”, we get inside the ambulance and it drives off.

They have rushed off with her and I am waiting for the nurses to come and inform me what is going on with her. Bhuti Nqobi called a while ago asking where we are and I told him that we are at the hospital. The way she was loosing her breath and they had to put a mask on her in order for her to breathe properly told me that it is a bit bad.

“You are the lady that came with the pregnant woman?”, I nod looking at the nurse who has approched me.

“Yes”, I say. She sighs and sits me down.

“Your sister gave birth to a baby boy. He is healthy and well”

“Her water didn't break”, I say

“You can go into labour without your water breaking but it's not a often case.”

She says.

“Ok, can I see her?”

“That is why I am seated with you. Due to her Peripartum cardiomyopathy she experienced too much shortness of breath. She couldn't do natural birth so with her given permission we had to perform a C-section which was a higher risk”, she says.

I don't understand what she is saying at the moment.

“She didn't make it after birth”

I look up to the nurse.

I did it slowly like the nurse has instructed me to do so. He is crying his lungs out like I have just pinched him when I am trying to be as gentle as I could ever be. I get him out of the little bathtub and wrap him in a towel before placing him on the bed and wipe him. I start to lotion him before I wrap his bottom with the towel and put on the pvc waterproof on after before I get him dressed his clothes. I get done and hold him in my arms before feeding him his milk and he calms down sucking for dear life.

“You are natural at this”, I look up at him.

“How did it go?”, I ask.

“We need to call baba in for this. Her father chased us away”, I shake my head.

“You are not eligible to go and negotiate damages. You are all young”, I say

“I know. Don't you want to come home? We can leave him under the nurse's care", I look at him.

“Children get stolen and I wouldn't want that happening”, he sighs and nods before coming to sit on the chair Infront of me.

“Where is Nqobimpi?”

“I don't know where he disappeared of too but Phuthuma is going to search for him”, he says

”Ok. Will he be able to take care of a child?”

“No. That is why the baby is going to Msinga tomorrow”, I look at him.

“I will take care of him”, Qaphile looks at me.

“There are children back home already and Mah can do it”, he says

”As you have said. There are children back home. Alot of them and your mother doesn't need that. I would love to take care of the baby Qaphile.”, he scratches his head.

“Ok, I will talk to Nqobimpi about it”, I nod with a smile and look at the one in my arms before removing the bottle.

He is now sound asleep and you wouldn't say he was screaming his lungs some time ago.

“Does he have a name?”, he asks.

“Sikelela” I say craddling the child.

CHAPTER 16

His piercing cries wouldn't subside. I rock him back and forth in my arms before I take his bottle from his bag and shove it in his mouth and he sucks there after being silent for a moment. I look up as we enter the gravel road.

“You are ok there MaCele?”, Zaba asks and Qaphile fixed the review mirror while staring at me at the back.

“Yes I am fine”, I say with a smile and look down to little Sikelela.

“Kwaze Kwanzima (It's so tough)”, Zaba says heaving a sigh.

I keep my silence for a moment so as them. It is hard. Here is a new born child who just lost his mother through some complicated medical term that I am sure Nokwenkosi understands better than I could've ever tried to. I am glad that they found Nqobimpi before we could make this journey to their home in Msinga. I look out the window and look at the widely spreaded houses from each other. Very different from the city noise that I hear every single day. I look at Sikelela and remove the bottle from his mouth and hold him against my chest before rubbing his back for him to burp and he does so.

“Awuboni nje!”, I say with a smile.

He looks at me with his pure white eyes and dark brown iris's that make him look more cute than he is. We get to their home and already the others have arrived before us. We get out of the car and I grab the baby bag before Zaba closes the door for me.

Their parents are waiting for us Infront of the house. Their mother looking more curious about us being here without announcing or anything of that manner. We get into the yard and Phuthuma looks down.

“Sanibonani(Hello)”, he says

“Haibo eyabani ingane Khethiwe?(Who's child is it Khethiwe?)”, I look at them and she looks at Qaphile.

“Its Nqobimpi’s”, Phuthuma says.

Nqobimpi can't even utter a word.

“You are here to drop the child off?”, she asks.

“We were but Khethiwe wants to take care of Sikelela”, Phuthuma answers.

The rest are silent and not looking anywhere but the floor.

“We came here asking for assistance from baba. Unfortunately Sikelela’s mother passed away after giving birth and since Nqobi didn't pay for the damages he saw it fit he does so in that

manner Sikelela can be a Ndlovu and we can do a ceremony for him”

“Meaning?”, his father says after being silent for so long

“We need your help baba. We need to go back to the city with you so you could negotiate for us”, Phuthuma explains.

“Come Khethiwe”, His mother says and I follow her inside the house.

“Mama!”, Sizwe says as soon as he sees me. I sit down on the couches.

He comes and stands Infront of me and looks at Sikelela.

“Where did you get that baby?”, he asks.

“The hospital”

“Oh at the city?”, I nod.

He takes his tiny hand into his and swings it around.

“Sizwe the child is fragile”, I say reprimanding him

“Why doesn't he say I am hurting him?”

“Babies can't talk”, he giggles.

“Will he stay with us ?”, I shake my head.

“No. He will stay with me in the city”, I say

“Why? I want to stay with you in the city Mama”, his voice is breaking.

“I want to too Mama”, he says and I sigh.

“Gogo loves having you here”, I say

“Let me go and ask Baba”, he rushes off before I can say anything.

I sigh and look at the silently looking at me baby in my hands. I feel for this child and Sizwe. I do very much.

“Nokwenkosi left yazi. Uthe uya ebelungwini (She said she is going to white people)”, Her mother comes back in and sits Infront of me.

“Her job?”

“Somethihg like that. Working at Kingdom unite nton nton but she had to go and work in Johannesburg before they think of taking her or what”, Hawu she didn't tell me.

“Oh I see”, I smile.

“Dali wami”

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He comes and holds me from behind before he kisses my neck.

I am looking at the new dressing table that is in the room. We were given a private room as I am with a baby. Qaphile's mother volunteered to sleep with the baby but I wanted to do so and let her rest with her husband peacefully. The last time I was here this dressing table wasn't here. She did mention that Nokwenkosi was the one who bought some stuff for the house before she left including the things in this room.

“Sthandwa sami”, I say as he lifts his head a bit and looks at me.

“I am tired”, he says and kisses my shoulder over my nightdress

”Lets get in bed so you could sleep”, I say

”Lets move the bed against the wall. I want you to sleep in the middle”, he says

“Haibo Qaphile.”

“MaCele”, he kisses my neck again.

“I love you so much”, he says and my heart yelps.

“I love you too”, I say



I gave in to Qaphile's crazy suggestion. I woke up in the morning and he wasn't next to me. I got of the bed and I went to pee at the outside toilet before I came out and went to wash

my hands before making my way inside the house. I greeted whoever was there and went to the bedroom. I checked Sikelela and he had pooped. I had to bath him and also take all the dirty towels and wash them today because he will need them very soon. I go and get him bathing water from the kitchen.

“Hayi awupheli mandla layikhaya (You don't stop appearing in this house)”, Sizile says.

“Good morning”, she clicks her tongue and move from the stove.

I got the water and pour in a basin before I went to make it a bit warm and not hot before I went to undress Sikelela. He started crying then and I kept on apologizing for nothing. I got done and bathed him. Qaphile walked in as I was bathing his crying self. I got done and wrapped him with a towel.

“Please throw on that towel inside his bath water so I can wash it”, I say.

He takes the towel from the bed and throws it inside the water. I get Sikelela dressed before I drop some few Entrees druppels in his mouth and he started to calm down as I craddled him. Qaphile is sitting on the bed watching me. When I am sure he has settled I hand him over to Qaphile.

“Hold him a bit”, he nods and tries holding him.

“Watch his head Qaphile”, I say

In the end he finally holds him properly and looks at me as I kneel and wash the towel Sikelela messed up. I get done and take the other two and wash them as well to my satisfaction.

“I will be back ”, I say

“Will he not cry?”

“You are his uncle so you will see how you calm him down”, I say

I take the towels and the bathing basin walking out. I greet Qaphile's mother before I discarded everything and I go to put the towels up to dry.

“How did you sleep?”, she comes out and asks me.

“Well mah. He is not trouble at night”, I say

“God bless your heart Khethiwe.”, I smile.

“Thank you mah. Let me go and feed him”, she nods and I go to feed Sikelela.

Their father agreed to come with them and assist with everything that is needed to be done. I am enjoying being with Sikelela all the time and Sizwe is not happy about this newly found child that has most of my attention as he presumes. He is

adamant in coming to stay this side with me but he should atleast finish this year at school and also finding a school for him this side. Also Qaphile's concern have to be involved.

Joyce called and she wanted me to baby sit her daughter while she went to God knows where. I think she said a wedding or graduation or something but she didn't want her child there and I didn't mind baby sitting for that day. Her daughter looks just like Qaphile and has her mother's complexion. She is beautiful and quiet. Not as loud as Sizwe was when he was her age. He has jealousy tendencies now I have noticed since Sikelela came about.

Qaphile and his brothers left to go and pay the damages before Sikelela's mother is buried. She wasn't mean. I wouldn't say so and I believe if she lived maybe she would've loved him so much.

The house is quiet with all the kids sleeping. I have cooked Incase these men come back hungry as ever.

“Khethiwe!”, I peak from the bedrooms and they are back.

They plop themselves on the couch and their father asks for water. I go and get some for him and go back to dish up as they are discussing what had gone down at the negotiations. Sikelela is peaceful today and not crying so loudly as he usually does these days.

“Sisi”, It's Nqobimpi. I haven't spoken to him in a week since the news of his woman.

“Bhuti. How can I help you?”, I ask

“Ngiyabonga(Thank you)”, he says

“And I love his name”, he says with a faint smile and I smile as well.

“Do you want to see him?”, I ask.

“No it's fine. I know he is ok”, he says

“Ok then. Everything will be ok”, he nods before he walks off.

I finish up dishing and go to serve these men. They eat like they had last eaten yesterday. I leave them there and go and check on the children. I am starting to love Qaphile's child as well like my own. Nothing calms me and fills me with joy and excitement than watching them sleep or make the slightest noise. There is something that I am doing right and I promise to raise all 3 of them with all my might.

CHAPTER 17

QAPHILE

“Qaphile!”, I turn the ignition of the taxi and hop out.

It's Joyce in her apron. She moves from her usual salon friend and comes my way. I go around the taxi as people hop out.

“What do you want Joyce?”, I ask

“We have a child together. There is no need for you to talk to me like that”, he says

“It was a mistake that happened once”, I say

“You are meaning that our daughter is a mistake?”

“Yes but I love my child not you get that in your head”, I say

“I hope lesi Sthandwa sakho sase mafarm siphethe kahle ingane yami (I hope your village lover is treating my child well)”, She says

“You said you were going to a graduation. Is this a graduation after 3 days?”, I ask

“Haibo I also need a break. I need money for when Oyi comes back”, she says

“She is not coming back”, I say taking out my cigarette and light it up. She frowns and puts her hands on her hips.

“Haibo why?”

“Khethiwe loves her and she doesn't want her leaving”, she clicks her tongue

“She must go and make her own child and not steal mine. I want my child back Qaphile I am not playing!”, she says.

“You should've fetched her the same day”, I takes puff.

“Don't. It's not my fault she keeps loosing your children and I can keep them”, I look at her and my hand is on her neck quickly

“Bafo!Bafo!”, Nqobimpi pulls me away from Joyce.

“Baleka Joyce ngoba lah ngizokubamba khona•••(Run Joyce because when I catch you•••)”, She rushes over to her friend.

Nqobi presses me again this taxi.

“You shouldn't let your temper run like that”, he says

“Leave me alone”, I get off his grip and walk away taking my cigarette and smoking.

She pissed me off. I don't know why oGatsheni are doing this to Khethiwe or is it oNdosi? I take out my phone and I call Dumisani.

“Qaphile”, he answers.

I don't know why he doesn't want to come to the city. He said he would one day but I guess he loves fixing people's fences back home. He is really good at it.

“Dumisani.”, I sigh.

“I am having a problem”, I say

“What problem?”

“Why oGatsheni bangiflathelile?(turning their backs on me?)”, I say

“What is it about? You are doing well there with the others”, he says

“Khethiwe’s children. My children. The last one didn't last longer like the first one”, I say

“Eyi kulikhuni ukuthi ngisho. Mhlawumbe ingoba awukakaze uhlawulele intokazi (It is hard for me to say. Maybe it is because you have never paid damages for her)”, he says

“Or maybe her ancestors are angry?”

“Yes it could be because she was chased away from home. Kuningi(It's alot)”, he says.

“I will pay the damages when I pay ilobolo”, I say

“Hawu sesizo faka imqhele yethu maduze nje?(we are going to put on our traditional attires soon?)”, he says with a bit of excitement and I chuckles throwing away my cigarette.

“Yes. I just need to buy the cows and send them to her home”, I say

“Lets go and steal them from the Mdluli's", he laughs after his statement. I do as well.

“Eyi loyamfana (That boy)”, I say

“Take care of MaCele Qaphile. Uyakuthanda losisi(She loves you very much)”, he says with much seriousness.

“I love her too”, I say

“I won't dwell with Oyi’s mother kodwa I hope it was the first and last time something like that happens if you want to marry MaCele Qaphile.”, he says sternly.

“I hear you”

“Good or you will come back if that city drives you crazy”

“Ok”,I say

“Fix things. ”, I sigh.

KHETHIWE

“Wena ave ukhohlakele ntombazane (You are so evil)”, she laughs as I say that.

“Everything just happened so fast. How are you ?”

“I am well. I am sitting with Qaphile's daughter for 3 days and her mother hasn't fetched her”, I say

“Haibo! You are not it's mother”, Kwenkosi says.

“I know but I don't mind at all. She is a sweet child like you”, she giggles.

“A bit crazy as well”, she says laughing.

Sikelela cries and I move from the lounge and go to the bedroom taking him.

“Are you ok kodwa sisi?”

“Yes. I forgave and moved on and I am enjoying helping out Nqobimpi and Qaphile is my love. What is his is mine as well” , I say

“Awu kodwa Khethiwe. Ngangithi ngilungile kodwa wena uhamba wedwa nokulunga kwakho(I thought I was kind but you take the cup in being kind)”, she says.

“I don't want what I went through Kwenkosi. I want to love these kids even in bad times”, she makes sounds.

“I hear you. I have to go I will call”

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I nod before she hangs up.

I change Sikelela’s nappy and it's wet. I put a new PVC and also a new towel before I wrap him in a blanket before I go and wash his things.

“Oyi come”, she moves from the door and comes towards me.

I take her to feed her the porridge that she didn't finish. She gets done and I let her go. Her mother hasn't come to take her but I don't mind. It keeps me very busy and I enjoy being this busy. I love children and I didn't realize I did until Sizwe and Nokuthula. He is still not happy that he is not living with me. He visited this past weekend and came a day only and it was hard for him to leave in the end of it all.

I hear crying and I rush to the bedroom and Oyi is holding Sikelela in her arms.

“Ngane yakhala(The child is crying)”, she says.

“Bring him here ”, she shakes her head.

“Zothulisa mina(I will calm him down)”, he eventually does. I quickly take my camera and take a photo of them before grabbing Sikelela from her arms.

I sit down on the bed and she gets between my legs and stands on my feet so she could look at Sikelela.

“Ngane yakho leh?(Is this your child?)”, she points her tiny finger on Sikelela’s cheek.

“Yes it is my child”, I say

“Nami ngifuna ngane yakho(I also want to be your child)”, I smile.

I didn't know she was this naughty as well.

“You are”, she looks at Sikelela while folding her arms giving her head over his. He is looking at me.

Sikelela finally sleeps and I put this one on my back just so she could sleep as well. I go to the kitchen and the door opens. Qaphile comes in closing the door.

“You are back early”, he comes and kisses my lips. I pull out.

“Oyi is on my back”

”I am sorry Mama. I missed you”, he says

“I missed you too”, I say.

“I haven't cooked”, I say

“I will ask Zaba to buy something don't cook”, he says.

“Ok”, he moves behind me.

“She is asleep”, he says.

“Ok let me out her down. ”, I go to the bedroom and I lay her down.

He walks in and after securing and making sure the kids are ok. He holds my waist and turns me towards the door to the other room before closing the door.

“You are everything to me Sthandwa sami”, he holds my cheeks.

I hug him and in hale his nicotine scent before exhaling. He wraps his arms around me.

It's the next day and Nqobimpi came to check if I don't need anything that is concerning Sikelela. I made him sit down a bit and actually hold his child for the first time. He didn't know what to say after. All he just said was:“He looks more like me than his mother”, he went silent after that statement and left R200 on the coffee table before he left. I remember that the store I once went to sells ice cream as well so I bathed Sikelela and Little Oyi before I strapped Sikelela on my back and held Oyi's hand going to the store. She was being her silent self once more. I go her ice cream and she was very happy to mess up herself and lick away the melting ice cream on a hot day. I

should call Sizwe before he cries that I don't give him any attention.

He doesn't like Sikelela as much because he stays with me and he doesn't. He doesn't understand and I asked him that if he moves that means leaving Nokuthula alone. He didn't seem to care one bit but wants to be here. I get home and I see Joyce standing by the door folding her arms.

"Mama!", Oyi rush to her mother and she looks at her.

"Look how you are making a mess off yourself", she darts her looks at me.

"Hello"

"Hello wokunuka akusiyo ingane yakho leh (This is not your child)", I just look at her.

"Where are her things?"

"Inside"

"Open up so we could go in and take those things", I stop by the door.

"She will be in our lives more often. It's best you start being nice", I say

"To who?", she says

“Everyone including me. As Kwenkosi said before. You slept with my man not the other way around”, I say

“I gave him a human that will always be his first born living child”, I see it pointless talking any further with her even though it's a hot dagger to take in.

“Ok”

Oyi looks between us licking her hands from the melting ice cream.

“Get her things I don't have time”, I go and get her things and go back handing her back pack to her mother.

“Mama I want to stay with Dad and aunty”, her daughter complains.

“Awufuni ngikusakaze ngempama manje mina woza Lahla leyonto(You don't want me slapping you. Come and throw that away)”, she grabs her as they walk out. I take my phone and make a call.

“Dali wami”

“Joyce was hee”

“What did she do? I will kill that woman”, he says.

“Qaphile don't say that”, I say

“Are you ok?”, I feel a bit of pain but I smile. It will just fade away

“Yes. I was letting you know and she took Oyi”

“I will see you ok? If she said anything please don't take it to heart”, he says

“Ok, I love you”

“I love you more Sthandwa sam” ,he hangs up.

I go and put Sikelela down and take my bag with beads inside.

I have made appt of bead work over the years. I look at it and rip everything apart and the beads fall onto the floor. I do to ever piece of them and the floor gets filled with the beads. I sit down and bury my face between my legs trying to breathe properly.

“Khethiwe”, I hear his voice but it echos in my ear.

I haven't moved from where I am and I am sure 20 minutes has passed. I didn't expect him to come after the phone call.

He comes and crouches Infront of me ontop of the beads that I am seated on.

“Sthandwa Sami”, he says He clears his throat.

“What did she say?”, I keep my silence with my head still between my legs.

“Khethiwe please I don't like seeing you like this”, he says.

“No matter how much I mother Mbewuyesizwe and Sikelela they would never be our biological children. They are not mine”, my voice is breaking.

I look up to him.

“Why do you love me when I fail you each time?”, I say

“I love you because I saw that purity you have. I love you for many reasons Sthandwa Sami. I knew no girl would love me as indoda iba indoda ngezinkomo zayo but with you I was just mesmerized and wanted to atleast know or see if you would give me a chance to even talk and you did. I love you and I am scared of waking up and maybe you are not next to me and I am stuck in that rondaval bruised from the beating I got from Wandile. ”, I laugh and he smiles.

“I thought you were dying”, I say

“Me too”, he wipes my tears and pulls me close to him.

“I love you MaNdosi. Lokho akusoze kwashintsa (That would never change)”

I love him too.

“Everything will be ok”

PART 3

CHAPTER 18

I left this place as a child and now I come back as a women. I left this place as I was close to being a mother and I come back with being a mother to 3 beautiful children. Yes they are not mine biologically and didn't come out of my womb but I take them as mine.

“I am scared”, I blurt that out.

Zaba looks at me and looks at Bhuti Dumisani who is next to him.

“We will just get in and talk to him”, Dumisani says it like it is something so easy. He doesn't know this man like I do.

“He is a hard nut to crack”, I say

“Hayi phela somshaya (We will hit him)”, Zaba says

“Zabanyathi!”, Dumisani says.

Zaba is a fire cracker and violence to him seems normal to him now. He is always ready to pull his gun out on anyone and so as Qaphile. The peace makers of everything is Nqobimpi or Phuthuma.

“There is a woman looking at the car”, I look out and my heart skips a beat looking at her after so many years.

“That is my mother”, I say softly.

“Lets go in”, Dumisani says.

We step out of the car and I take my bag and put it over my shoulder. It was hard leaving Sikelela for a moment but I am glad that Sizwe has warmed up to Sikelela being in his life. Oh those bundles of mine and so as Oyi. They have really grown on me and are grown now. Every now and then her mother drops off and claims she is tired and i should take over since I want to mother everyone and I don't mind. She is a really sweet child. Sikelela grows to look more and more like Nqobimpi as he grows and behaves more. He is 4 years old now. Yes time flies very quickly just in a simple blink and Sizwe is now 10 years old. Gatsa has two kids over the years and they are just a year apart. He is with the mother of his child and no they are not married but live together. Her sons names are Ntozakhona and Qiniso. Their mother is the most craziest woman I have encountered on but very sweet. She doesn't tolerate Joyce's behavior and mostly she reminds me of Kwenkosi so much.

Anyway. We enter the gate and my mother is standing on the stoep waiting upon us to reach her. We do so and I bow my head.

“Sawubona mah(greetings)”, Dumisani says.

“Yebo”, she replies.

“We are here to speak to the man of this house”

“If you are here to drop Khethiwe off we don't want her back, she disappointed us”

“We understand and we are not here to drop her off but discuss an important matter”, Dumisani says.

There is silence for a moment and I look up to my mother.

“Come inside”, we get inside the house. A lot hasn't changed. It is still just the same as the time I left it 8 years ago.

We get seated down and I hold onto my bag and my mother looks at me before she disappears and goes to their bedroom. I look at the door of what used to be my room. Where I slept with Nombukelo when she comes to visit just because she is afraid. She comes back with my father following her and she goes to the kitchen.

We stand up and these two greet him. He nods with a frown before stating that they could sit down.

They do just that and I am silent.

“I am Dumisani Ndlovu and this is my brother Zabanyathi Ndlovu. We have been sent by our Brother Qaphile who is

asking for permission to come and ask for Khethiwe's hand in marriage", I am silent listening on them.

"He has to pay damages. That boy didn't do that!", my father is angry.

"We understand baba and he will do just that during the negotiations.", Dumisani says.

"I want full 11 cows. Two goats to cleanse my kraal and another for the child"

"We will do just that."

I sigh of relief. I didn't think he would agree.

I am standing on a rock balancing my body by holding onto his shoulders so that I wouldn't fall. We are at the river and he is throwing the stones into the river as they skip over and over again until it plumps inside the water disappearing from our eyes.

"My father agreed", I say.

Qaphile said he wanted to send cows home last week and we had to get his approval since I left home in a sour note. He turns around to me and drops the stones that were in his hand before he picks me up from the rock and spins me around as I giggle before he holds me firmly in his arms and I kiss his face.

“I love you MaCele”

“I love you too Gatsheni”.

He places me down.

“I will give you the wedding of your dreams”, he says

“Where everyone will look at me?”

He kisses my neck

“Where everyone will look at my beautiful wife”, I smile.

I remember the day my aunt got married. I wished for that kind of a wedding where everyone just celebrates me. I didn't know that there were white weddings but living in the city I have learned about them and Qaphile said I can have them both if I want to and I want to have them both.

“Ngaze ngajabula.(I am so happy)”

“I am happy to see you this excited”, I giggle.

“Who wouldn't be excited Sthandwa sami”, he smiles.

He pulls me in his arms and engulfs me in them. I hug him right back. I can't believe I will soon be his wife.

“Mama! Mama !•••”, Sikelela keeps on tapping on my thigh.

I am sitting in front of the dressing table trying to tie my doek properly. He is being restless I know right now and he won't stop bothering me unless I give him the attention he needs.

"Yes boy"

He is speaking to me but his story doesn't add up. It has Nokuthula in it and I think some parts are just made up. Qaphile walks inside the bedroom and looks at us.

"Go and sleep with your brother", I say

"Good night", he pouts up for me to kiss him and I do so before he runs off and Qaphile closes the door.

"I am tired" he jumps on the bed and takes off his clothes.

"I was feeling a bit dizzy as well but I am fine now", I say

"You were working too hard"

"No I wasn't", I get off the chair and go to him. I land a kiss on his lips and he pulls me on top of him.

"Let's try for a baby", he says.

"You think it will happen?"

"It will", I sigh and get off him then sit beside him.

"I haven't gotten pregnant since the last time", I say

"Hey, I think everything will be ok now", he says

“Really?”, he nods.

“Really Sthandwa sami”, I smile and he kisses me before he lays me on the bed and gets on me.

“Your parents are here”, I say

“We will be discrete”, I nod as he goes in to kissing my lips leaving me wanting more of him.

My heart pluses in an excited way to his touch as he moves his hands under my night dress up to my pelvic area.

QAPHILE

I left Khethiwe to sleep after everything we did. I wanted to take a smoke just to calm down so I snuck outside and looked at the stars as I was smoking. I felt myself relax more and more as I am taking more and more puffs.

“What are you doing outside?”, it's Zaba.

The rest are still in Durban and I just came with this one.

“Just•••”, he stands next to me and I hand the cigarette over to him before he takes a puff.

We are both silent just in thoughts and exchanging a cigarette. When it is a stud I throw it away and he looks at me.

“You have grown”, he says.

“You are still 2 years younger than me”, I say

“Just two years.”, I nod.

“You will be the first one to get married. Not even Phuthuma is married. Dumisani even hasn't found himself a farm girl”, he says.

“He has. He wouldn't tell you”, I say

“Hawu, so he lied to me?”, Zaba frowns.

“Its non of your business”

“Anyway. I wish you luck Mfwethu. I really do”, he says.

“Thank you”, I nod.

We stay there for sometime before we go back inside the house.

KHETHIWE

A week passed and The date was set and everything was ready for iLobolo. Qaphile wanted things to happen as soon as possible for iLobolo and it did. I was very happy when everything went well and I was cleansed tooo by my family at the loss of my children. My aunt was very happy to see me and I was too. I had missed my family very much and I couldn't be angry at them for sending me away.

We left Msinga and went back to Durban with the children. I couldn't wait for Sikelela to start school the following year just

like all the other kids. We had taken a little trip in celebration of the successful iLobolo as Gatsa's woman would say. She loves things very much and you could tell she has taste in them very much but she is humble.

We are at a restaurant by the beach as we are watching over the ocean. The beach is my favourite place. I take out my camera and Zaba offers to take a picture and Sikelela invades my picture but we laugh about it. I pull him to sit down next to me.

"We may have never said this much but Siyabonga kakhulu MaCele(We are very thankful MaCele)", Phuthuma says.

The rest nod their heads and Qaphile holds my hand.

"I am happy that your going to be a Ndlovu now", Zaba says.

I look at Qaphile.

"I am the happy one", I say

I am really excited about the next chapter I am about to enter with Qaphile.

CHAPTER 19

We were back in Msinga once more. Yesterday it was Umgcagco which is the traditional Zulu wedding. I have never been so happy in my life and for the first time I saw Qaphile in his traditional clothes. His mother was crying most of the time. Since after the lobolo. Two cows were taken back to Qaphile's home so they could be slaughtered today. I would say that it was the biggest wedding Msinga has seen after my aunt's. He really gave me a wedding he promised to give to me the first time we met.

Today is the white wedding. I am at home in my old rondaval and the wedding will happen KwaNdlovu just like Umgcagco. I have bathed already and I am with Zaba's woman and also Gatsa's woman. They know more of this than I do and that is how they helped me with the planning and preparations of everything. Nombukelo was also here and it has been years since I last saw her. I will be the first person to leave this house in a Vail in my family. They only thought there will be Umgcagco and nothing else but Qaphile said I can have them both and we agreed on that plus I didn't know that at Home affairs it's recorded if you are married or not. The city, a person learns alot while living there.

I haven't seen Qaphile since yesterday. I haven't talked to him yesterday but I will see him very soon I know. The woman are on my room giving me the same advice they had given me since yesterday and I am obeying to what they are saying.

“Sanibonani bo mah we need to prepare Khethiwe”, Zaba’s woman says walking in.

They have been looking at her up and down the whole time she was here. She dresses nicely and wears mini skirts. Her legs allow her and she is a very dark beautiful slim woman. She works at some factory that does sewing. That is what she said to me.

“These people that Khethiwe brought here”, one says as they all walk out.

“How are you Khethiwe?”, she smiles.

“I am well. I just want to go now”

“You will. Where is your dress?”, I point at the chair where it is lying and she tells me to get dressed.

I do get dressed and she pulls the zip up for me at the back. It is big and very puffy. It was puffy by the side of each arm but off the shoulder. She takes white pearls and places them on my neck and runs her fingers on my shoulders once she is done.

“Come let's do you face”, she says with a smile.

She pulls me to sit on the chair and I do. She takes her small bag and takes out a pencil and does my eyes before she puts a peach eye shadow and red lipstick. She puts everything minimal and when she is done she gives me her small mirror and I look at Myself.

“Hah. Ayi ngingu Thokozile Makhathini mina ngiyayenza lento (I am Thokozile Makhathini. I did this well)”, she says.

It was weird at first to hear that her and Zaba’s sister share the same name and considering how Thokozile is like but she is a very nice person compared to the one I know.

“Come Khethiwe”, she says putting the veil over my head and doesn't cover my face.

I am no longer a virgin anymore. The women come in numbers by singing wedding songs. I have my flowers in my hand. Thoko holding my dress from behind so it doesn't get any dirty. We get outside the gate and I am placed inside the car with my father inside and mother. We haven't talked to each other much and I have given up on trying. The car moves and the people follow behind on foot. We get to the Ndlovu yard and there is a big white tent outside and some community men drinking Zulu beer, sharing it amongst themselves. I was told to wait before we are called in. My mother got out of the car as I stayed with my father in silence.

Thoko comes and tells us that we can now come inside. She helps me out and my father fixes his hat before taking my hand in his. My heart skipped a beat for once and I look at him. He doesn't return the gesture.

“Umakoti ungowethu

Siyavuma

Ungowethu ngempela

Siyavuma

Uzosiwashela aziphelele

Siyavuma•••”, the singing commenced.

We enter the tent and it's beautifully draped. I see Qaphile in a white suit Infront of the pastor. I smile just by looking at him and he does the same. We get to him and my father hands me over. The pastor prays and we close our eyes before we are told to open them again.

After the signing of papers we took some photos. I got a 6 piece Gold ring set for my ring. Oyi and her mother were also here but I don't know where Joyce disappeared off to. After everything Qaphile's mother came towards me smiling and she just engulfs me into a hug.

“Naze nayenza into Enhle Khethiwe (You guys did a great thing Khethiwe)”, she says and pulls off.

“Thank you”

“Death will do you apart now”, she says and I nod. Yes death will only separate me and Qaphile.

I go and find Nokwenkosi and she is all over me. I ask her to come and assist me in taking off the dress and she agrees. We go to the room we use when we are here. I get inside and she closes the door.

“How are you Khethiwe?”

“I am happy. I love your brother Nokwenkosi”

“I know sisi. Now all there is left is for you to have a baby”, she says

I stare into the mirror and she stops what she is doing.

“You will have your own children Khethiwe”

”What if I don't and Joyce gives Qaphile another child”

“Haibo we will kill them both if they do that again”, she says and I take off my Vail.

“You will have babies Khethiwe”, she says and I just nod.

She unzips my dress.

“You should sell those beautiful beads of yours”, she says

“I don't do them anymore. I broke them”, I say

She looks at me.

“Why?”, she asks.

“Its useless”

“Haibo Khethiwe you have great craft and you saw how people buy them and I am sure at the city they would've been sold them very fast...”

“I said I don't want to do them anymore Nokwenkosi!”, I snap.

She keeps quiet and I breathe out. I cover my face with my hands before removing them and Qaphile is standing by the door.

“Ngiyaxolisa(I am sorry)”

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she looks behind her and she touches my shoulder before walking out.

I turn from the mirror and I look at him. He comes towards me and helps me out of the dress in silence. I am also in silence. I don't know what to say but I didn't mean to be like that towards Nokwenkosi. I get out of the dress and he goes to the wardrobe and gets a dress for me and helps me slip in it. He sits

me down on the bed and takes a comb and some hair spray and he sprays my hair before he combs it out. When he is done he takes the doek and tries to tie it up.

“I will do it”, I say softly.

“I want to do it”, I let him be and he does it but not as tightly. He then places his hands on my shoulders and looks at me.

“I am sorry, I didn't mean to shout at her”, I say

“Its ok.”, he kisses my lips then breaks it off.

“Sofa silahlane wami”, he says and I fall into his arms. He brushes my back.

“Come let's go and eat”, he takes off the suit and changes as well.

He gets done and we walk out of the room. We are going to go to the city very soon and Fezihle is also going with us. He wants to work there as well and he has finished school already. I don't know why he didn't come along time ago but he is coming now.

We are back at the city and back home. The children came back with us. They are going to school very soon. Oyi lives with us during school time and holidays she goes to her mother. Her mother made it clear that she doesn't have time to prepare Oyi

to going to school everyday and Qaphile has a car or if she stays Qaphile has to get her a car. That woman is very demanding and it's getting to me sometimes. It's at the afternoon and they have just bathed and changed. I am at the kitchen cooking for them. Qaphile got tv and they only watch it every now and then but mostly play outside but not with other kids. It is not safe for them.

“Mama. Sizwe took my towel”, Sikelela complains.

“Come”, I close the pot and took his hand.

I went to their bedroom.

“Sizwe where is your brother's towel?”

“Mama I didn't take it”, he says

“Sikelela go and look for your towel in the bathroom”, I say

He rushes off to the bathroom. I pick up their clothes from the floor and out them in the basket.

“When you are done come and eat”, I say

They nod. I go and finish the pots before the door opens and Qaphile walks in.

“Dali wami”, he comes towards me and he hugs me.

“How was your day?”, I move around the kitchen

“It was ok. I bought a new camera for you ”, he said.

“Where is it?”, I say with much excitement.

“Its in the taxi.”, I nod.

“I think we should change the kid's school and they should go to town where there are white teachers”, I say

“I will talk to my brothers.”, ok.

“Baba!”, Oyi hugs Qaphile.

I dish up for everyone before we go and eat.

CHAPTER 20

The kids are off to school. I gotten time to talk to Nokwenkosi properly and apologize for my out burst. She was being nice and I shouldn't have out bursted in that manner. I was cleaning around the house while opening up the radio.

“MaKhethi!”, I hear someone call out for me.

I get out of the house and stand by the stoep with my hands on my hips. It is Thoko standing by the gate. She takes off her sun glasses and looks at me.

“Come and open up for me ”, she says

I go inside and take the gate keys before I go and open. I greet her.

“What are you doing here?”

“I didn't go to work. Zaba just dropped me off and I want us to go somewhere”, she says

“Where?”

“You will see. Just get dressed and I will drive”, she says pointing at Qaphile's Toyota spura.

We walk inside and she sits down as I bring some beverages for her while I go and get dressed. I wear jeans with a sweater on

top. I take my bag and we walk out of the house as I hand the car keys to her. I wonder where we are headed. We get in the car before she drives out.

We are in a museum. I don't know why did she bring me here but I am scouting around and looking at the history display in front of us.

“Are you ok Khethiwe?”, she asks and I turn to her.

“Yes I am ”, I say with a smile.

“How is your bead work? I heard that you are very good at it.”, she says

“I am but I stopped doing bead work”

“Why?”, she asks

“I don't have time for it”, she frowns.

“What do you have time for?”, she asks.

“Qaphile. I should be focused on my marriage than anything else.”, I feel a bit dizzy and I close my eyes for a moment.

“Well If you think so”, she says

“Yes”, she smiles.

“Come let's move this side”, she pulls me with her.

“How are you and Zaba?”, she smiles.

“I don't know where that man has been.”, She says

I am glad she is happy. I stop a bit from the walking and I bend a bit.

“Are you ok?”, she asks.

“I just feel a bit dizzy”, I say

“Did you eat?”, she asks.

“Not yet”, I look up to her and she holds me before trying to sit me down on the floor.

“Sthandwa sami”, I open my eyes and look at him.

He holds my hand and I look around our bedroom. I look at the worry on his face as I hold his hand back.

“Are you ok?”

“Yes I am”, I say softly.

I try to sit up and a pain surfaces at my abdomen. I moan as Qaphile tries to help me with up before he sits next to me.

“Where are the kids?”

“Phuthuma went to fetch them.”, I nod.

“Let me get you something to eat ok?”, I nod as he kisses my lips and walks out of the door.

He comes back with a plate of food and he feeds me the food till I am done before he goes and place the plate in the kitchen he gets in bed next to me and holds me close to him.

“Did you enjoy going with Thoko?”

“Yes even though it wasn't for long”, I say

He kisses my neck. He loves doing that when he sleeps next to me.

“I will take you back there if you like it”

“It was ok”, I say

“I have the photos from the last Film”, he gets off the bed and takes an envelope.

I sit up and get hands the envelope to me. I open it and it has Photos inside.

“Zaze zazine(They are beautiful)”, I say

“Not more than you”, I laugh and push him a bit.

He chuckles.

“I will have to take more”, I say.



Today it's Bhuti Phuthuma's birthday. It is hosted here at my house and it's something small and gathered for nothing big that could be exaggerated on. It's just the brothers and the kids as well as the 3 of us ladies. I am getting very well along with Thoko than Gatsa's woman though she is a very good person. It's just that Thoko is always and I mean always visiting or popping in and out to just see me. She refers to me as her friend. My city friend.

“Sizwe go and call your sister !”

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Thoko says.

“Can I have the candles?”, I ask.

They hand them over to me as I decorate them around the cake. I wipe my hands.

“We need a lighter to light the cake up”, Thoko says as she stuffs some chips in her mouth.

I take the paper plates that have the snacks on and I go and place them outside on the table at the front.

Fezihle and Zaba are playing with the boys. Oyi rushes inside the house to Thoko.

Music is enjoyed and so as the beverages that are here.

“Sisi” ,It's Nqobimpi.

“Yes?”

“Can I talk to you?” , He asks.

I nod slowly and moves away from where everyone is and I follow after him.

“Is it about Sikelela?” , I ask.

“I don't know” , he sighs and looks down.

“I don't know who to tell this to but I think it's best I tell you as you are living with Sikelela” , he says

“Ok” , he places hands in his pockets then scratches his neck with one hand before burying the hand in his pocket.

“I am HIV positive” , I look at him.

“What does that mean Bhuti?”

“I am not ok Khethiwe. I am sick” , he says.

“You will be fine right?” , I ask

“No, I am afriad not. There is no cure or treatment for it” , I feel my head spinning.

“I don't understand I don't know what to say. Did Sikelela’s mother have this thing?”

“No. She didn't” , I don't know what to say.

“We can go to the clinic tomorrow for you to understand it a bit. It's a virus MaCele”, He says.

“Ok we can go to the clinic. Don't you think you should tell your brothers too?”, I ask

“Not now. I don't want them worrying.”, he smiles.

I hug him and he breathes out.

“Kuzolunga Bhuti(Everything will be ok)”, I say

The celebration was very wonderful. We sang happy birthday for Phuthuma and everything was just well. We were sitting together outside as we were drinking our beverages of which mine was a cold drink so as the ladies. I couldn't get my mind on what Bhuti Nqobimpi has said to me. I hope that he will be ok and the nurses and doctors can give us solutions on how to conquer this sickness. The kids were with their fathers and Khethiwe was forgotten once more but they do live with me so I am not complaining.

“Are you ok?”, Qaphile asks.

“I am ok”, I smile at him.

I look at Nqobimpi and I just feel sad for him.

It's the next day and Nqobimpi came to fetch me and we went to a near by clinic. We got inside and we had to wait before a nurse attended to us. We got into a room and we were seated down.

“How may I help you?”

“This is my sister. I recently found out that I am HIV positive.”, Nqobi says.

“What made you go and test?”

“I wasn't feeling ok and someone I know suggested I come to the clinic and check”, he says playing with his hands.

“There is no medication for HIV or Cure for it. ”, the nurse says.

“I know, I just want it explained to her”, the nurse looks at me.

“HIV is a sexual transmitted disease. Meaning that it can be transferred from one person to another through sexual course. Also another way that we have recently found out is that it can also be transferred via blood. Meaning sharing of needles with someone who has the disease or if an HIV positive patient bleeds and you attend them without any protective gear and maybe you have a cut. That can also be ways of how HIV is transferred. Touching a person doesn't so the myths you hear about it are not true. You will get sick with time and I am afraid there is not much to do but try to eat healthy is the only option we have for you right now”, Nqobimpi nods bowing his head.

“If he is going to get sick will it be bad?”, I ask.

“Yes unfortunately.”, I nod.

We get done and thank the nurse for her time. We leave the clinic in silence and go to his car. We get inside and he starts the car.

“I will go to Msinga”, he says.

“Who will monitor you?”, I ask

“I don't know. We will see”, he says.

I am quiet in the car. We go and buy something to eat before going home to drop me off.



A few days have passed now and Nqobimpi has moved off to Msinga. He hasn't told his brother's why he is moving back home or that he is sick. I sometimes look at Sikelela and I find myself holding him a bit longer. Maybe it's because I am imagining the pain that his father must be going through right now. He needs his father more than anything else. I have been feeling dizzy when I don't eat and a bit better if I eat. It's the weekend and the kids are playing outside. I would be doing my beads right now but I don't want to. I have lost the love of doing them as much as I did them back then. There is only one thing we can do in life and that is 'Hope' for the best.

CHAPTER 21

It has been a few months since I have gotten married and Thoko takes me once just to go to the museum. I saw something that interested me and I thought why not make some history with the family. I asked Qaphile to buy albums for me and also some books where I can write things inside for the kids. For Sikelela and about his mother. Some fun things that they did and their photos of the kids. I have taken too many pictures over that time that Qaphile bought a video camera for me to use as well. Ah my husband is everything to me and so as the children. Its a hard time for the family. Bhuti Nqobimpi is getting sick and has lost weight. At this point he is at bed rest and can't do anything for himself. I used to call him and check if he is fine every day until he couldn't anymore. Qaphile's mother informed me that they were getting some herbs from inyanga(herbalists) but it wasn't helping and she couldn't take care of him which led me to leaving the city.

He dryly coughs as I am wiping his feet and I place the towel in the bathing dish before I cover his feet.

“Bhuti”, I say and he tries to breathe properly before looking at me.

“You have to tell everyone. We have to”, I say. He lets out cough once again. We are at the rondaval outside.

“Khethiwe they would•••They wouldn't understand”, he says

“Ngiyakucela Bhuti(Please)”, I beg.

He closes his eyes for a moment and signals for me to come by his side and I do so. I kneel next to the bed.

“Khethiwe•••My sister's are cruel.”, he takes a deep breath.

“You can tell them I don't have the power to do so” He says and I nod.

“I will be back”, I take the bathing basin and I walk out of the rondaval. I discard the water and make my way inside the main house.

“The porridge is ready for Nqobimpi. He is getting worse”, his mother says.

I know. I can see it and I am hoping something comes up and makes him better.

“I will take it to him”, I say

“Niyabona ukubuya nezifo zase madolobheni(You see bringing city diseases home)”, Thokozile says.

“Thokozile!”

She keeps quiet. I walked to the room I use here and I take my phone to call Qaphile. He answers the phone.

“Sthandwa Sami how are you?”, he asks.

“Sthandwa Sami kunento ekumele ngikutsele Kona (There is something I have to tell you)”, I say

“Ok what is wrong”.

“Nqobimpi is very sick”, I say

“He needs the hospital then. He shouldn't be there”, he says

“The nurse said there is nothing that could be done.”, I say

“Why is that?”, he seems a bit angry now.

“He has HIV Qaphile”, he is silent for a moment

“We will be there ”, he hangs up.

I sigh and sit on the bed before I walk out to go and feed Nqobimpi.



It's a very hot day and I just came back from doing some washing and also towels. Thokozile and Sizile made it clear that they don't want to nurse a sick person. They don't know what diseases their brother have but his mother has been very helpful though she is clueless. I get done hanging the washing

and I go to the rondaval. Qaphile's mother is feeding Nqobimpi some home made Amageu. He gets done and licks his lips after that.

"You are eating better today", His mother says.

"Kodwa Mntanami yini leh ekudla kangaka ?(What is eating you up like this my child?)", she asks.

"Its nothing to worry about. I will be fine ngiyathembisa(I promise)",he says.

She sighs and takes the jug with her while getting off the bed I greet and I go to fix his pillows and help him lay properly.

"How do you feel today?", I ask.

"I just need to see my brothers and Sikelela", he says.

"They are coming.", he coughs.

"Ngiyabonga Futhi Khethiwe (Thank you so much again Khethiwe)" ,he says.

"We are a family bhuti", I say

"Let me leave you for a while "

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he nods and I walk out of the rondaval leaving him there.

I see the cars park in the yard and I wait for everyone to get off and they do.

“Where is he?”, Phuthuma asks and I point at the rondaval as they pass me. I stand there waiting for Qaphile and he comes towards me.

“Go and see him”

“Mama!”, Sikelela and Sizwe hop out of the car.

They come to me and hug me all around. I take them inside the house leaving the brothers together.

QAPHILE

He is looking bad than the last time we came here. I didn't understand fully what was going on. He was ok just some time ago and now he is bed ridden. This is not the Nqobimpi I know who loves laughing. Who loves peace who is a conquer despite anything.

“I am sorry”, he says and closes his eyes as we look at him.

“When did you find out?”, Phuthuma asks.

“It has been some time. That's why I came here”, he says.

“Why didn't you tell us?”, Gatsa shoots the question.

“It wouldn't make any difference. I can't be cured and there is no medication nothing”, he coughs.

I look at my brother and he opens his eyes and looks at me.

“Qaphile please take care of Sikelela like you always do.”, he says.

“You are not dying”, I say

He chuckles.

“I am not. I will be better. Khethiwe is helpful, wagana laphaya mfowethu(You married a woman there my brother)” , I nod.

“I am feeling a bit better today”, he says.

“Thats good.”

We stay in the rondaval with him.

KHETHIWE

I was feeling those little cramps here and there but it fades away with some time. I was cooking supper with the help of the little ones and I made some soup for Nqobimpi as well. I took Sikelela to him and now he is at the lounge with the other children doing whatever children are doing.

“MaCele” ,I turn to Qaphile.

“Gatsheni, how are you?” , he sighs.

“I don't know why he didn't tell us anything ”

I just nod and throw the peeled potatoes inside the pot before closing it.

“Kuzolunga(It will be ok)He seems better today”

“If you say so”

“I will dish up just now” , I say

“No I will get Thokozile and Sizile to do so” , I nod.

“Ok” , he turns and walks out.

It's the next day and I am doing what I am usually doing. I am hopeful that he will be better and he has to be because Sikelela still needs his father present.

“Bhuti” , he looks at me.

“Its ok I forgot” , I say. I don't want to ask him questions. I will ask when he is better.

“Sikelela is going to start the big school next year.” ,I say

“He is excited he told me” , he chuckles then coughs.

“He is.He just wants the year to end”

“If I was an ancestor. I would bless you and Qaphile with your own children ” ,he says and I stop what I am doing before I carry on.

“Yeah. Kodwa sisakudinga uphila (we need you healthy)”, I say.

“I will be healthy and see my Sikelela off to school. I promised” ,he says.

I smile at him then clean his room.

CHAPTER 22

“Take this candle”

I open the lights and look at them squashed on the bed. Sikelela laying ontop of Sizwe with the others surrounding them. I didn't know where to start answering when questions were going to be asked my way. I didn't know how I would handle the whole situation and still say ‘Its ok’. He won't understand he wouldn't understand that is what I concluded. He is stuck in his own world of being happy and carefree of which he should be. Tears stream down my cheeks and I wipe them quickly before turning off the lights and closing the door.

The cries still echo in my head though they are not there anymore. I don't know where Qaphile has disappeared off to at this moment. I go to the lounge and everything has been shifted. She is seated on the mattress covering her eyes with the blanket just she could cry silently. She lost a child. Someone that came out of her womb. That she groomed to the person that he grew up to be. I know her pain and it feels the same. It takes me to the losses I have had. She may have 6 more boys left but he was also part of her life. I feel sorry for Sikelela who will grow up without his biological parents around. I feel sorry for Qaphile's mother. I feel sorry for everyone.

“Mah can I get you anything?”, she is not looking up.

I sigh biting my bottom lip preventing myself from crying in any manner. I move away from the lounge and I go to the bedroom. I close the door and I sit on the bed. I take off my shoes and curl myself while staring at the wall. I don't know where I should start with the funeral preparations or what I should do at this point. No one is here at the moment. I don't know where they all left to and left me with the kids and their parents. I don't know if they checking if really their brother is no more or he is still alive but in deep sleep. The nurse warned us and we had to be prepared but I was the one who was prepared. Non of them were prepared for his death. He said he would be ok and he made a promise to take Sikelela to school the following year. He made a promise to his son but he didn't fight to stay until he sees him off to school. He kept on thanking me. He kept on saying he would be there for his son no matter what and I believed that he would be there for him and would live longer. I did my end of the job but why couldn't he ? I hear the door opening and I wipe the involuntarily falling tears.

“Dali wami”, He says so softly that it is almost not audible.

I sit up on the bed and he closes the door coming towards me. Darkness consumes the whole room. He falls into my arms and he starts crying.

“It will be ok. He is resting now and is away from all the pain”, my voice is breaking as I am speaking.

His shoulders move as he is crying. He smells of nicotine as well. My top is getting wet but I let him be.

“I don't know what we are going to do but I am here for you Sthandwa Sami. I am not going anywhere”, I quickly say.

He was the the second person to be buried on the soil of these yards. My child was the first human to be buried. I couldn't explain what was going on to Sikelela but all I could say was ‘Baba will look after you from above’. I know that he is taking this well because he doesn't really know what is going on. He is only 4 years old and it can't register well in his mind. The funeral was dignified and everyone came to the funeral to say the final good byes. Gossips were flowing around that it's the city diseases that must have killed him as nothing herbal worked for him like it does for the others.

We were at the kitchen in the house washing dishes. Thoko was here as well helping me around. She came as soon as Zabanyathi told her what happened and the next morning she caught a taxi coming here. She has been very helpful because I didn't know what to do after everything. We had just finished

dishing up for people who come from far and after the burial people left.

“I am going to clean the rondaval”, I say

“Ok”, I leave her there and go to the rondaval.

I get inside and the blanket he was sleeping with is gone. Sizile burned it after the mortuary called us to come and fetch it after we covered his body with it. She said no one would use the blanket anymore. I placed the bucket on the floor and I went to the window and I opened it and wrapped the lace curtain properly. I go to Nqobimpi’s bag that had the things he came with inside. I opened inside and there was his clothes, Cell phone and wallet was also in there. I packed everything that is his in the bag that was laying around before I took the bag and shoved it in the wardrobe in the room.

I made the bed properly before I started sweeping around the room. I got done and then I went on my knees and started wiping the floor in all places in the room and after I was done I let it dry for some time before I took some red polish and went to apply it on the floor.

“Khethiwe”, I ignored the person calling for me.

“Khethiwe!”

“What?!”, I look up and it's Nokwenkosi.

“You don't have to clean the room now. We can do it tomorrow come and eat”, she says.

“I am fine I will eat. Where is Sikelela and Sizwe?”, I ask.

“They are playing around. Khethiwe listen to me”, I look at her.

“What is going on?”, she asks.

“About?”

“You are all over. Why did you stop doing bead work?”, she places hands on her hips.

“I don't like it anymore”, I say

“You used to love it and was great in it so why did you stop?”

“Qaphile and the kids need my time”

She scoff as she looks at me.

“Qaphile doesn't mind and I asked him. He said you broke all your beads”

“Yes”

“What is wrong?”

“Its nothing Nokwenkosi I just don't want to do it anymore”

“So you just woke up and don't want to do it?”, I bite my bottom lip.

“Its Joyce”, I say

“What did she do?”,she says.

I sigh and look down.

“She said I can't give Qaphile children of which she is right. The beads took me back to loosing Nkanyezi. It•••it••”,I sigh.

“Don't think that. Khethiwe I know Loosing a person is hard but it will be ok”, I nod and smile.

“Ok”, I turn around and finish my work.

I finished my work and went to the water drum outside to wash up before I went to the main house. I dished up and went to the bedroom. I entered and sat down on the bed next to Qaphile.

“Asidle (Let's eat)”, I say

I start feeding myself and he would feed himself as well.

“We have to sell Nqobimpi's house”

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Qaphile says.

“Don’t. Thoko said it would be a good investment to not sell it but keep it for Sikelela by renting it out. We will receive money”, I say

“Money is not a problem”, he says.

“I know Sthandwa Sami but she made sense.”, he nods and smiles before perking my lips.

“Unezidlathana muntu wami(You have some chubby cheeks)”, I hut his shoulder playfully.

“I always had them hawu Qaphile”, he chuckles.

“But you are beautiful”, I blush.

“Thank you”, we ate together until we finished the food.

We are back in Durban and it's hard to sink in that Nqobimpi is no more but we are getting it day by day. The dizzy spells would not stop but now they are worse than before accompanied by nausea. I have never felt like this before. Thoko has a day off from the factory so she said she will come and visit me. We are really getting along very well and she is now a person I can say is my friend. I was cleaning my house just so she comes to a clean house when I hear her shout.

“MaKhethi woza uzovula(Come and open)!” ,she shouts.

I take the keys and I go out to open the gate. She is in her shorts today with a vest. She is always stylish and her nails never forgotten on having nail polish. I lock the gate as she walks past me with a plastic in her hand.

“Yoh it's hot outside. I wish there was risho from the taxi stop to your home because I feel tired”, she says.

“Let me get you something to drink”, I go to the fridge and get some cold drink.

“I bought some juice and chips for the kids”, she says

“Thank you. They will be happy”, I go and give her the beverage.

She gulps it up.

“So Khethiwe tell me. When were you going to tell me, your friend that you are pregnant”, I look at her confuse.

“Pregnant?”

“Haibo I have a busy eye and this dizzy things you were having. I don't have to be a mother or doctor or nurse for that matter to know that wena umithi(that you are pregnant)”, she says.

“We can go to the clinic tomorrow”, I nod and touch my stomach.

“Feel how hard it is yerr”, she presses her hand on my stomach.

“Haibo Thoko stop it”, she does.

“Nami sengifuna uzaba Jnr(I also want Zaba Jnr)”, we both laugh.

“Let me leave you and your nonsense”, I say

Zaba fetched Thoko later and she left. The children came back and I went to wash their uniform. Oyi was telling me about her day as I was washing their clothes. Qaphile came back when they were in bed. He got in the bedroom and dumped the taxi keys on the headboard.

“Dali wami”, he gets on the bed and kisses my lips hovering me. I break the kiss.

“How was your day?”

“Tirering”, he sighs.

“Well rest while I get your food”, he nods and rolls off the bed.

I want to tell him what Thoko said but I am scared. What if I am pregnant and I loose this child again ? I am not prepared for that.

CHAPTER 23

I didn't know how to feel when I found out I was pregnant but excited wasn't one of it. There was a glimpse of happiness in me but for how long would it be lived for. For how long will this happiness be stretched for? When I found out I didn't tell Qaphile at first but I was forced to tell him now because I was showing. It has been months now in my marriage and I am enjoying it. Thoko still takes me to the museum from time to time when she has time and I really like going there. The kids are on holiday so that means all of them went to Msinga and Oyi will come back earlier and go to her mother. I haven't had any bad encounters with Joyce and I don't want to have any of those anytime soon.

I was just done with bathing and I went to the bedroom to get dressed.

“Dali wami”, I hear him call for me.

I quickly got dressed and went to the lounge. He is laying on the couch and came back much early today from the meeting that he said he would be attending. Him and his brothers have been planning on buying another route but in pietermaritzburg. I don't know the process of it but Qaphile has been talking about it all the time.

“How are you?”

“I am tired”, he says and pulls me to his lap.

“You smell nice”, he sniffs me as he pulls me close to him.

“I have just finished bathing right now.”, I say

“Mmh”, I look at him as he closes his eyes for a moment.

I am scared of mentioning the situation at hand. He will see that I am pregnant very soon and it's no use hiding it away from him.

“Qaphile”, he opens his eyes slowly and looks at me.

“Sthandwa Sami”

“I have something to tell you”, I sit properly.

“Ok”, his deep voice that I thought I am now used to is scaring me at the moment.

I breathe in and out before I let out a sigh.

“I am pregnant”

“Mah was suspicious”, he says and lays my head on him.

We are now squashed on the couch together.

“Are you comfortable?”, I nod.

“How are you feeling that...”

"I am happy Sthandwa Sami"

"And what if I fail you again", I say

"You don't fail. We will try until our ancestors bless us with our child", he runs his finger on my hair.

"Go and get your doek and comb", he says.

"Are you not tired?", he shakes his head.

I get off him and I go and take what he instructed. I come back and seat myself between his legs. He takes the comb and doek before he softly combs my hair.

"I just relaxed it", I say

"At the salon?", he asks.

"Yes, Thoko took me there", he keeps on combing.

"I love it", I smile

He gets done combing my hair and ties the doek on my head. It is secured and he does it better now than before. He is getting used to tying the doek on my head. I get up and sit on him again.

I woke up the next morning. The dizzy spells are not getting better but I know it is part of this. I am not feeling anything I had in my previous pregnancies. Qaphile is still rested in bed

next to me. It's a Saturday and he sometimes go to the rank or not. Him and his brothers work very hard to be where they are.

A knock surfaces from the door and I hop out of the bed. I take my silk gown and wear it before I go to the door. I open and it's a man that I don't know.

“Hi”

“Khethiwe”, I look at Qaphile.

He is attending this man and now I have moved away. I go to the kitchen and make something to eat for the morning. I would love to go to the beach just now. I want to ask Qaphile if we could go. He comes back after a while and looks at me.

“Who is that?”, I ask

“One of the drivers”

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he says.

“Oh ok. Food is ready”, I say

“I will eat just now. I need to sort something out.”

He goes to the bedroom and I look at him. What is wrong with him ?



“How far along are you?”, the nurse asks.

“I am not sure. I just know that I am pregnant”, I say

She nods.

“With the way it look. It looks like you are 4 to 5 months pregnant.

“But my stomach is not big”, I say with worry.

Qaphile holds my hand and I look at him before I look at the nurse.

“You are not eating well Mrs Ndlovu. Does she eat?”, the nurse asks.

“Sometimes and sometimes I have to feed her ”, Qaphile says. I look at him.

“I do eat”

“Please eat in order for your child to come out healthy”, I nod.

“Is there something that will happen to the child? She has lost 2 before” Qaphile says.

“We can do a sonar gram and see if everything is fine. We will also take in her blood to test it”, I nod.

We get done and leave the hospital. We are both in silence. We get inside the car and Qaphile starts the car.

"If everything doesn't go well will you have another child with Joyce?"

"No Khethiwe! I love you Njena and what would I be wanting from Joyce. You are my wife", he seems a bit angry.

"Polygamy is allowed back home", I say

"I am not taking anyone else as my wife Khethiwe and if we don't have kids it's fine. There is Sizwe and Sikelela", he says and I nod.

"Ok"

"Are you hungry?"

"Yes", even though I don't want to eat.

He passes by a shopping center and goes inside to buy the necessities of food before he comes back and hands a plastic to me. I smile and look at him. He slightly smirks with the anger now fading away.

"Ngiyabonga Gatsheni(Thank you)", he smiles while looking out of the window.

I take out the chips and I start eating on them. It takes me to the time he would buy nice things for me when I visited him at

the hostel. The days of the Hostel were brutal but I enjoyed them the most. Even now it still feels like a dream that a man like him would love me. He would say the same for himself but I think I am the lucky one here. To fall in love with this deep voiced dark skinned man who loved Khethiwe without knowing who Khethiwe is. I look at him again before placing my hand on his thigh and he sighed placing his hand on mine.

“Ngiyakuthanda Khethiwe(I love you Khethiwe)”, he says.

“I love you too Gatsheni”

He picks up a flower as we are walking and I stop my tracks. He fiddles with my hair before looking at me with admiration.

“Umuhle MaCele(You are beautiful MaCele)”, he says.

“Ngiyabonga(Thank you)”, I look down away from his eyes.

“Kwathi angiku khuzele Ntokazi(I want to court you)”, he says.

I look at him. He comes closer and hovers me intoxicated me with his nicotine smell and his perfume from the city.

“Ngiyakuthanda MaCele (I love you MaCele)”, my heart was beating fast.

My 18 year old eyes looking at this 21 year old creature Infront of me. I wondered how his parents looked. I have never seen a

man so dark yet his skin colour compliments his features very well. A man who has a very deep voice like he is the higher force above speaking to his people.

I stepped closer to him wanting him to kiss me again though I didn't know anything but I loved what he was giving me. The feeling of excitement that I get when he touches me. I stand on my toes as I hold his hands and we kissed once more. I am kissing a boy! I am kissing a boy again! I gently get myself back and look at him.

“I want you to take my virginity. I want you”, I say to him.

He is shook for a moment with what I am saying but relaxes again.

“I want you to wait for marriage”, he says

“I will marry you”, he wraps his arms around me.

CHAPTER 24

Nokwenkosi has left. She called me and told me that she is leaving going overseas and she got a job there. I was very happy for her more than anything. She worked hard to get where she is and their situation has gotten better as they all worked hard for it. Thoko is going to take me to go and buy clothes for the child. I haven't gotten bigger as I have anticipated I would be and my stomach is not as big and my first pregnancy was but I am far now with the months. I am always waiting for anything to happen and Qaphile remind me not to worry about anything so I try to not worry about anything. I take my bag and I go and open for Thoko handing the car key to her as soon as she reaches me. She gives me a quick hug and rubs my stomach.

“You don't get bigger than your cheeks”, she says.

“It worries me ”, I say.

“You shouldn't be ”, we get inside the car and she adjusts the seat.

“Eyi lamdoda wethu esinawo nokwenza nje izihlalo(These men and putting seats like this)”, she says with irritation.

She starts the car and drives off.

“Are you ok Khethiwe?”, is the question she always asks when we meet.

It's never ‘how are you Khethiwe’ but ‘Are you ok Khethiwe.’ I don't understand why she asks me this Everytime but I always give her the same answer.

“I am fine”, I smile.

“Thts good. Where are the kids?”,she asks.

“They are visiting Gatsa”, I say fiddling with my bag to get my phone out.

“Do you have your camera here? ”, she asks

I smile and take it out if my bag. I love taking photos with it and Qaphile doesn't mind going to print out the photos for me and get anmew film as it always runs out.

“It is here”, she nods.

I look at it and then take a picture of her. She quickly grabs it from me.

“Ah Khethiwe ”, I giggle.

“You are beautiful”, she smiles.

“I know.”

We get to town and she parks the car before we hop out of the car. We go to the store and she takes off her shades and puts them in her small bag. I am following after her.

“You will have a baby girl”, she says as we look at the children's clothes.

“I don't know that”, I say

“You are glowing than being ugly”, she has a valid point.

When I was pregnant with Nkanyezi I wasn't as good looking. I wasn't glowing and so as Qaphile's mother mentioning that I will have a boy child.

“Isn't it considered bad luck to buy clothes before I give birth?”, I ask

“What will the child wear? And do you think Qaphile knows what to buy?”, there again having a point in what she is saying.

I take the basket and she puts the clothes inside. This reminds me of Sikelela's mother when we went to buy things for him. Hours before her death. She would've warmed up to him even though she wasn't ready to have him but I believe that she would've loved him as how Nqobimpi loved his son. Soon enough Sikelela would be starting school and it has been something that he is very excited about.

“This looks nice ”, Thoko says.

QAPHILE

I throw the little stud away and Phuthuma comes my way carrying his clip board. I place my hands in my pockets and he stops Infront of me.

“Have you went for your round?”

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he asks and I nod.

“I did.”, he takes a pen and writes on his clip board.

“How is MaCele?”, he asks.

I sigh.

“I would be lying if I knew. ”, I say

He folds his arms and stands next to me.

“What do you mean by that? Khona okusolayo yini ?(Is there something you are suspicious about?)”

“I don't know if I make her happy enough. If I am doing everything for her and it's enough”, I say

“But Khethiwe loves you”

“I love her too and you know that Bafo kodwa ngicabanga ukuthi lento ya Joyce nami iyamlimaza. Kuyimanje njengoba sizoba nomtwana akajabule ngakendlela ebengicabanga ngayo(But I think that it's this Joyce issue that hurt her. Even now that we are expecting she is not as happy as I thought she would be)”, I say

“Khumbula ukuthi nalahlekelwa abantwana ekuqaleni. Unovalo okwamanje usazoba kahle (Remember that you have lost kids before. She is scared for now but she will be ok)”, I nod.

“And now that we are getting a new route you need to buy MaCele her own car”, he says smiling.

“I will do so Bhuti thank you”

“Let me go and check on Fezihle”, he says while walking away.

I am worried about Khethiwe but Phuthuma is right. She is scared and it is very understandable. Joyce and I were a mistake that happened resulting in a child. I don't want my wife feeling like she is second best all the time when she is not.

NOKWENKOSI

I had landed in Liverpool just a few days ago and the weather here is very cold. I left South Africa's warm weather for this but I am grateful for the opportunity ahead. I am all alone in a new place where everywhere I turn there are white people more than black. I have lived in the village for far too long and being in Johannesburg was preparation for me to come here.

I headed to the market to buy some vegetables so that I can go and cook. The coldness I could feel it in my bones and it was too much for me. I bought what I needed and my cell phone rang. I took it out of my coat as I answered.

"Nurse Ndlovu we need some staff here at the hospital quickly", I have gotten tired of correcting people in pronouncing my surname as properly as could be.

At home we don't have English names because my father hated it. He said that we are Zulu and black so why should we have a white person's name and we never had one. It is hard for people to pronounce my name especially the white people I work with that I have shortened it to better them.

I get home and change before I left to catch a bus to the hospital. I get there in time and make my way in.

"Ms Nokhwe", I turn around.

"Good day Doctor Barnes", I smile and check myself in as he does the same.

“Which parts of the world are you from again?”, he asks.

“South Africa”, I say

“I sympathize with what is going on there”, I scoff.

“Don’t. Your country started this”, I say

He is silent for a moment.

“Good bye Doctor”, I say.

He holds my hand.

“Not all of us are the same Nokhwe”, he says

“Its Nokwenkosi and thank you”, I walk away from him.

KHETHIWE

Nokwenkosi has called me and he told me how it is where she is. I just hope that she will be ok and comes back safe if she will come back. I am packing the clothes that Thoko and I had bought and they were quiet much. She didn't want to leave the store without buying majority of the stuff there. She even called Zaba to come and bring more money to buy and he did.

He loves her and would do anything for her that I had notcieed just like Qaphile. He does everything that makes me happy and

does his best as a husband and I wouldn't thank his ancestors for having him choose me. I sit down on the bed when I stumble upon my old bag that I came with here. The one that contains all the things from home and things that remind me of my family back home. I take out the bead bag that is made out of cow skin. My grandmother gave this to me when I had mastered how to do beading very well. At times I did miss home over the years because I felt like I didn't belong where I was. It wasn't my home but now I have my own home and a place that I could claim without being a wonderer. Qaphile gave me that and I would forever be grateful.

CHAPTER 25

The sharp pain that surfaced at the back and the wetness between my thighs was what woke me up. I couldn't find it in myself to look down or touch between my thighs and for my hands to come back bloody. I look at Qaphile who is peacefully sleeping in bed. I didn't know how we would handle everything if the reality of losing this child is coming true but the pain surfacing on my back is what was more painful. I quickly shook him and he groaned in his sleep.

“Qaphile Vuka(wake up)Something is happening”, I quickly say
“Sthandwa Sami what is happening?”, he says opening the light of the beside lamp.

“I am having pain on my back and I feel liquid under me.”, I quickly say

He sits up straight and looks at me.

“Why should we do?”

“I don't know I am afraid to look. ”, I say

“Let me call Zaba”, he says and I nod.

He quickly takes his phone and makes the call. I place a hand on my back and try to breathe in and out to try and make myself not feel the pain but it is there and very much sharp.

“Come let's go to the hospital.”, he goes and wears his pants and top and comes to help me out of the bed.

I look at it and it's just clear and wet which means the baby is coming. Nokwenkosi has told me this before and so as Thoko as well reminding me that the water will break when I am about to give birth. Qaphile helps me into a dress and all my wet clothes are discarded on the bed. He takes my bag and his car keys and picks me up taking me to the car. I am placed inside before he rushes off to lock the house and come back. The pain that is surfacing on my back is something that I could not bare at all. He gets in the car and we are off to the hospital after that.



Those were the longest hours off my life being in labour. The constant pain was helping either that I felt it all numb my lower body. I slept after giving birth, I felt tired and needed a bit of rest. The baby cries within the maternity ward was what woke me up later on. We are sharing the ward with 6-7 If not 8 other women who had just given birth. The only thing that is separating us is the curtains all around and beside us. I look at Qaphile who is holding our child in his arms. He is smiling and seems very happy than I am feeling.

“Dali wami”, he says when he seems me all awake.

“Hi”, he comes close with the child.

“Your mother is awake.”, he looks at me and smiles before holding my hand.

“Ngiyabonga MaCele ngokunginika indodana (Thank you MaCele for giving me a son)”, I smile.

“Let me see him”, I say.

He lays the baby in my arms and fiddles with my bag getting the camera before he takes a picture of us. I didn't feel anything. I didn't feel the love I had for Sizwe and Sikelela when I first held them in my arms. It was different with this one. I had always wished for a child and now that I have a child in my arms I don't feel the mother's love that I should have. I look at him fisting his tiny hands and squirming. His eyss are shut closed but I know that he is alive and breathing. Maybe it is because I am tired and I feel like I need more rest.

“He has big eyes”, Qaphile says.

“Really?”, He nods.

“What should you name him?”, I ask

“I named him Snazonke. It is because I have everything with you in the world”, He says.

I love the name that he has given him. I couldn't stop smiling after that statement. I gave the child back to him and he gladly took him.

“Awu Popayi wami ”, he chuckled after saying that.

My bed side is filled with treats. Nice treats and a fruit basket bought all by my husband. His brothers are here now filled withing the room with Thoko and Gatsa’s woman. They are all over little Nazo and Sikelela can't stop asking when he can touch the child as well. He wants to hold him in his arms. It reminds me off Oyi when she once held Sikelela in her arms because he was crying. I asked them to seat him on me before giving him the child and he smiles looking at me.

“Nami mama Sengingu Bhuti omdala?(I am now a big brother too mama?)”, he asks in facination of holding a child in his arms.

I am sure somehow in his head he thinks this is a doll with the way he is playing with him.

“Yes wena Mfana wami(Yes my boy)”, he is thrilled to hear that response.

“He wants someone to control now”, Zaba says and they laugh.

“Please leave him alone”, I quickly say.

“How was labour?”, Thoko asks.

“It was bad but now I am ok”, I say

“We still need you to make more Little Ndlovu's with Qaphile”

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Phuthuma says.

“We will wait just a bit”, Qaphile says.

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We are back home. I was taught the things I already knew about taking care of a child. The kids will be back as off next week as they have school during that time. Qaphile left to go and asses the issues at the taxi rank and I am stuck here at home doing some home chores and making food for Nazo.

I hear his sharp cry from the kitchen as I am warming up his bottle and I cover my ears and bang the bottle on the kitchen table.

“Yini ! Yini! Ufunani ! (what do you want?!)”, he doesn't stop crying.

I take the bottle and I go to the bedroom. I just put him down to be recently and he is making noise.

“Keep quiet I am trying to make some food for you”, I quickly say but he doesn't keep quiet.

I take the hot bottle and shove it in his mouth.

“Drink so you can keep quiet. You always cry”, he spits it out crying more than ever.

“Makhethi!”, It's Thoko. She drops her bags and quickly takes the child from my arms.

“Haibo Khethiwe what is wrong with you?!”, she takes the bottle and feels it.

“This is God damn hot you shouldn't feed him that ”, he tries to hush him.

“He is my child ”, I say

“I don't care he is a child.”, I click my tongue and go to the other room and I shut the door locking myself inside before I threw myself on the bed.

A knock come from the door.

“Khethiwe open up here!”, Thoko shouts.

I could still hear the screaming sounds. I scream as well before taking the pillow and cover my ears.

“Khethiwe open here or I am calling Qaphile!”, I ignore her.

She should just leave me alone and shut that baby up.

“Khethiwe it's Me Qaphile”, I open my eyes to the knock and sound of his voice.

It is dark outside and I don't know what Thoko did with Nazo. All I know is that I don't want him near me at the moment.

“Khethiwe open up”, I sigh and get off the bed slowly before I go and open the door.

He is looking at me as I look down.

“I am sorry”, I quickly say.

“Why? What did he do?”, he asks.

“He was crying too much and I did try to feed him”, I say

“By giving him a hot bottle Khethiwe ingane ishile manje!(The child is burnt now!)”, he grabs my shoulders quickly and pushes me on the bed roughly.

He takes off his belt and Phuthuma quickly gets in the room before anything further could happen. I cover my face and tears stream down from my eyes.

“Bafo no. This is your wife you can't do that no matter what?”, Qaphile clicks his tongue throwing the belt on the bed before walking out.

Phuthuma helps me sit up on the bed as I cry.

“He was crying too much Bhuti”, I say

“It will be ok Sisi. He is fine. Qaphile will come back when he has cooled down ok?”, I nod.

“I love Qaphile. I don't want to upset him”, I say

“I know sisi. I know you love him” ,I nod.

“Let me go and check on him”, he leaves me there and I cry while laying on the bed.

I know it is short but I will make a continuation for this one.

PART 4

CHAPTER 26

“Nazo stop running around !”, he stops his tracks.

“Mama Sikelela yanJaha(Sikelela is chasing me)”, he says standing Infront of the bathroom frame.

“Are you back chatting me?”, I place my hands on my hips looking at him.

“Run Nazo!”, Sikelela appears.

“Sikelela stop playing inside the house and Nazo go and clean those toys you left on the floor before I come and smack you now !”, I shout

He looks at me biting his bottom lip before Sizwe comes and takes his hand.

“Come let's go outside”, He says.

I huff and remove my hands from my hips and carry on with the washing in the bath tub.

“I could hear you all the way from the gate”, I lift my head and look at him.

“He doesn't listen to me ”, I say

“He is only 3 years old Khethiwe”, he says

“Sikelela could listen to me by then”, I say and throw the next load in the bathtub

“Are you going to love our kids?”, he scoffs as he says that.

“What do you mean ?”, I ask

“Nazo is an example”, he says.

“I don't hate him”

“Fix yourself ngoba kuyonakala manje.(Because it is getting messy now)”, he says.

He moves away and I look at the empty door way before I sigh and carry on with my duties. I have been trying to get along with Nazo but each time he just irritates me more as I see more of his face or hear his voice. Everything just irritates me so much. I finish washing and I take it and put it in a dish after rinsing and I go outside. The toys are all packed up from the floor as I passed the lounge. Sizwe is carrying Nazo on his back while Sikelela is running after them.

“Where is your father ?”, I ask

“He left Mama. He said he left something for you”, Sizwe says and I nod.

I go to the washing line at the back and I hang everything up. After I am done I go back into the main house and I go and take Nazo's food to feed him. I go outside and stand by the stoep with the bowl.

"Nazo come and eat", Sizwe brings him over and I take him.

I go inside the house with him and put him on my lap before I start feeding him his porridge.

"Open your mouth", he does and looks at me as he chews a bit before opening his mouth again.

"Mama", I look at him.

"Mmh?"

"Mama yaxolisa kuthi eh he futhi Sikelela yanjaha, yaxolisa mama (Mama I am sorry that eh he and Sikelela was chasing me, I am sorry)", he is trying to piece his words together.

He fiddles with his tiny fingers as I make him open his mouth for another spoon before I spoke.

"Stop bothering me ok?", he nods and I give him another spoon again.

After I am done I let him go and play with his brothers. I wash the dishes before I go to the bedroom and there is a box on the bed. I go to it and I take it into my hands and open inside. It is our wedding picture frames and big. The last picture we had

was small but this one is big. I run my fingers on the glass. It feels like yesterday when Qaphile and I Got married. Where he kept his promise of marrying me since we were young. I hear a car outside and I put the picture on the bed and I go to the door. I wait for the car to park before he hops out of the car with two plastics in his hand. Nazo rushes to his father and he is picked up with one hand as they walk towards me. I move out of the way and let him in.

QAPHILE

Khethiwe is a woman who is sweet, Kind , caring and very selfless above everything else. She is the woman who is the glue to this family. Our motivation to everything we do because she takes care of us and our children's needs the most. I fell in love with that character but it started fading slowly and surely. She is not the same Khethiwe anymore. She snaps quickly and gets irritated by the little things that Nazo does. We have always wanted a child together and she wanted one the most and we got blessed by our ancestors and this happens. I don't know what to do and I have tried everything I could. It is like

she is crazy at this point. The shouting is too much and I can't handle it. I need my wife to be the person she once was.

“Do you like it?”, I have placed Nazo on the floor and he ran out of the bedroom.

I can see she has opened the gift I presented to her and maybe she will be ok and remember the promises we made to each other and I never intend on breaking them.

“It's beautiful”, she smiles widely and sits on the bed.

She holds the frame in her hands and runs her fingers along it.

“It feels like we got married yesterday”

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she says.

“We were happy Sthandwa sami”, she looks at me.

“We still are ”

“We are not entirely happy”, she frowns.

“What do you mean? We are married. We have a child”

“But we are not enjoying our marriage like we should be enjoying it. Sthandwa Sami what is wrong?”

“Nothing is wrong. I am fine Qaphile”, she throws her hands in the air and I hold them.

“Angilwi (I am not fighting)”, I say

She keeps her silence and I sigh.

“I am worried. You have changed”, I say

“I didn't change. I am ok”, this is pointless.

“Ok”, I kiss her forehead and hug her.

I don't know what to do at this point.

KHETHIWE

It's early hours of morning and I am looking at him as he is searching for the taxi keys so that he would leave as he is done with eating. I pull my gown together and tie it properly before he finally finds the key.

“Sthandwa Sami”, I say and he looks at me.

“I will try. I don't know what's wrong with me but I will try fixing it”, I say

He comes towards me and holds my shoulders.

“I just want you to tell me what is wrong and be honest so that we can find a solution”, I sigh.

“I don't know how to say this”, I bit my bottom lip.

I look away from his eyes.

“Tell me ”, he says and I sigh.

“I•••I”, I look at him.

“I will be ok", I smile.

He looks at me for a while before he sighs and closes his eyes. I couldn't tell him that I just don't feel anything for Nazo. I don't know how to love Nazo . That would be much trouble.

“I will see you then ”, he kisses my lips before he rushes out of the house after that.

I am left standing there like a lost somebody. What kind of person is irritated by their child this much. Their mere presence is just too much to suffocate me.



Later on the day the boys are all playing outside which gives me time to sleep and breathe for a while. I love sleeping more than anything now. I have never really been a person to do so but now since the past 3 years I feel like it's the only place that I find peace in it and escape the real world for a moment. Where I can forget that Khethiwe actually exists.

“Khethiwe!”, someone shakes me out of my sleep.

I groan and open my eyes sitting up and I rub my eyes and look at Thoko. She has a worried look on her face.

“How long have you been sleeping?”, she asks.

“I don't know. What are you doing here?”, I ask

“You are my friend nje”, she says

“Oh”, I stretch myself.

She looks at me for a while before she takes my hand into her's.

“You know I love you so much Khethiwe. You are a sister to me now and this worries me your behavior”, she says.

“What behavior?”

“You act like a crazy person sometimes”, she says

“I am not Crazy Thokozile !”,

“You see? You are shouting for no reason. Maybe we should take you enhlanyeni(To a mental institution)”, I shoot her a look.

“I am not crazy and I am not sick!”

“Uthakathiwe ke(You are bewitched then)”, I cove my ears. She removes my hands.

“I don't believe in traditional things. I have prayed for you but it doesn't seem to work. I work close to a mental institution and

ngathi yazi angiyobuza kuza abanjani (I said you know what let me go and ask who can come there)and I want you to go there and maybe you would be better. I see people who get helped”

“I don't want to leave my kids Thoko they will lock me inside”, I cry.

“You are not ok Khethiwe. I have seen it since I first saw you but now you are just worse and I asked you if you are ok everytime”, she says.

She runs her red pained nails through my hair.

“I am ok Thoko. I will be ok”, she hugs me and I carry on crying on her chest.

“Phephisa sisi. Everything will be ok. You are going to be much danger to Nazo. Do this for him and Qaphile if you and him hate it then I will leave you”

She carries on brushing my back.

CHAPTER 27

I was seated on the bed as I waited for Qaphile to walk in after talking to Thoko. It's at night now and the kids are already in their bed asleep. I am waiting in anticipation of what Qaphile would say, I don't want to go because I know that I am not crazy as they make me seem. I am ok in my defence and I haven't noticed any changes about myself. I am still the same Khethiwe known to be.

The door opens and I look up to the both of them as they walk in. Qaphile comes forth and crouches in front of me before taking my hands into his and he signs. I look at Thoko who is standing by the door looking at us with a bit of a worried look on her face.

"Thoko raised some issues that were very important", he says

"I don't want to go, I don't want to leave", My voice is breaking.

"It's beneficial for everyone Khethiwe.", Thoko says

"Qaphile I am ok. You know me better than anyone", I place my hands on his face and he signs.

"You are not the same Khethiwe.", tears stream down my cheeks.

"Please Babakhe please", I beg.

“I don't know this thing but I don't want to give it a try. Anything to help you sthandwa sami.”

“Lets pack your bag”, Thoko says.

“No Qaphile No, please I am sorry!”, I keep on crying. I go on my knees to his level before he stands up.

I am begging him and crying as Thoko and himself pack my things into a suitcase.

“I am sorry Gatsheni please”, He doesn't listen to me.

They get done and Qaphile picks me up. I hold onto him as I am crying. I don't want to let go of him, he shouldn't leave me in a place that I don't know. I am not one to be with crazy people that I don't know. I do know that I am not crazy at all.

Everyone is here. I don't know why they are all agreeing to this madness. I haven't tried since we came here. I ran out of tears when I was crying and begging in the car. I feel drained as it already. Phuthuma comes and sits next to me as the rest are at the reception lady. I am quiet staring at them giving me away to this place.

“Sisi••”, he says and I look at him.

“We care about you. This comes from a very good place”, he says.

“Nizongilahla?(Are you abandoning me ?)”

“No, we would never do that”, I would the corner of my eyes.

“Khethiwe Ndlovu”, we look up and the nurse is calling me.

“Come let's go”, He takes my bag as we stand up.

We go towards her and she smiles looking at me.

“There are tests that need to be done and you will see your psychologist tomorrow and later on you would go for a psychiatric evaluation.”, She says

“Will she be ok?”, Zaba asks.

“She is in good hands. I am glad you brought her in”, the nurse smiles.

“Am I staying with crazy people?”, I ask softly.

“It's people suffering disorders. Not alot of black people believe in mental health issues than white people. You are our first black patient in this institution”, The nurse says.

I look at her.

“Come let's go and show you your room”

“Can I talk to her for a while?”, Qaphile asks and the nurse nods.

He takes my hand and we move a bit far. He pulls me into his arms and I heave a deep sigh.

“I love you Khethiwe. Everything I do is for you to make you happy.”, he says

“I won't be happy here”, I say

“Do it for me then Dali wami”, he says

I just not slowly feeling a lump suffocating me.

“I will see you everyday. I will visit everyday I promise”, he says

“You promise?”, I ask

“I promise Sthandwa sami”, I nod.

“Come let's go”

We move from each other and he takes me back to the nurse. I say my good byes before we walk away. They disappear from my eyes as we walk further through the passage. They are dark well maybe it is because it is night time. I breathe in and out already feeling very scared and agitated. We get to a room and she opens. There is an empty bed with White sheets. The room has one cupboard and then there is a window looking out into the garden. The nurse goes and closes the curtains. There are burglar gates attached to the window frame.

“You may rest.”, I nod as she walks out and I slowly sit myself on the bed.

I start sobbing after that.

Morning came early. It felt weird to not wake up and go prepare Qaphile for work. The door opens and the nurse walks in and she smiles.

“Good morning”, I just nod. She is not the one from last night.

“Have you bathed?”, I shake my head.

“Ok, go and bath and I will breakfast so long. Is there anything you don't eat?”

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she asks.

“Fish”, I say

I couldn't master the method of removing the bones properly since I came here.

“Ok, let me go get your food.”, I nod.

She takes me through the passage as I have my things in my hands leading me to the bathrooms. I get there and I thank her. She tells me to bath and she will take me back. I get to see the shower once again. The last time I used it was the Hostel days. I

quickly get myself bathed before I hope out and get dressed quickly. I am done and I am escorted back to my room. I sit patiently looking out the door window after I am done doing my bed. The room is brightened up and upon me looking at the garden outside. It is beautiful and can't certainly be missed.

“Here is your food”, I thank the lady. It's something I am not used to and have never eaten before.

I eat anyway and I am done. I get sent to see a psychologist after that. I am scared and nervous, I just want to go back home right now.



I had the most today. I couldn't keep up with anything. I will see the psychologist and go for evaluation again. The psychologist was asking me for questions to tell her about myself. I was uncomfortable talking to someone I didn't know and she said I will get used to her with time.

“Mrs Ndlovu your husband is here”, the mention of Qaphile being here gives me relief.

I am escorted to him at the garden. He is smoking his cigarette. There are other people also here. I feel like I am out of place seeing white people around us right now. He gets done and throws the stud away before rubbing his hands and pulls me into his arms.

“Dali wami”

“I want to come home Qaphile”, I say

“Give this a month”, I sigh.

,

“The boys are missing you ready”, he says

“Don’t tell them where I am”

“Okay”

We seat ourselves down on the bench. The states around us make me feel uncomfortable as we are seated. When visiting time was over I was taken back to my room.

“So Khethiwe tell me more.”, she smiles at me.

“I met Qaphile on my aunt's wedding day.”, I say

“You love him?”, I smile

“He is everything to me”

With much pride in my voice. She smiles looking at me.

“Tell me about the kids. You mentioned the kids”, she says.

“They are 4 of them. 3 boys and a girl”, I say

“Who is the oldest?”

“Sizwe”, she nods and writes down on her book.

“When did you have Sizwe and is your husband the father?”, she asks.

“Sizwe is my brother in law's child Phuthuma,he doesn't have a mother”

“What happened to the mother?”

“She doesn't want him”, she nods.

“The second one?”, she asks.

“Oyintandokazi. She is my husband's child with Joyce”,I say

“How old is she?”, she asks.

“10 years”

“So your husband cheated with Joyce?”, I nod

“Tell me if it gets too much for you”, she says

I nod. She hands over the tissue to me.

“So all of these children are not yours?”

“Sikelela is my brother's in law's son Nqobimpi. His mother died after his birth and his father got sick and died. Snzazonke is Mine”, I say

“He is your first child I presume”, I shake my head.

“Nkanyezi is••”

*

I am looking outside the window. It has been two weeks since I came here and retelling the story of how I Lost Nkanyezi to me and was hurting. I didn't want to carry on because I was crying. Qaphile has been seeing me everyday as he promised. He did see me today as well and just seeing his face calms me. The doctor told me that I am suffering from Depression and post trauma as well. I didn't understand her. I sit there thinking of Nazo for the first time since I came here. I am danger to him. Maybe it's best I stay here and harm no one.

“Mrs Ndlovu your husband is here”, I look at the nurse before we walk out.

He is seated on our usual bench and he stands up and hugs me. I fall into his arms and he holds me tightly. We let go of each other and sit down.

“How are you?”, he asks.

“The doctor said I have Depression and Post trauma.”

“What is that Sthandwa Sami?”, he holds my hand in his.

“She explained it though I couldn't hear any of the things she said”, I say

“But you will be ok”, I just nod.

“I hope so”

“I trust that. The boys miss you”, I sigh and close my eyes.

“I don't think I will come back home. They say I am not stable and ok so I want you to tell them I love them.”, I say

“What do you mean Sthandwa Sami?” ,he shifts

“Please burn everything that will remind them of me”, I say

“Sizwe is old now and can understand”

“Please Qaphile”,I swallow as he looks at me with a frown.

CHAPTER 28

It has been two months being here in this place and I am starting to get used to being here. I am starting to get much comfortable I would say. Qaohike visits me every day and updates me with what is happening outside this place. My ancestors blessed me with a great man like him. I do didn't think he would keep up seeing me everyday but he does come in everyday and sit that time with me before he has to leave.

“Look at you!”, It's Zaba.

I see them from a distance. He didn't come alone today. Even Thoko is here as well.

“MaKhethi”, she comes and hugs me.

“I am such a bad friend. I should be visiting you everyday”

“It is fine. How are you?”,I ask

“Well you are going to be an aunt that I would say”,she says with a smile on her face.

“You are pregnant?”,she nods.

“Ngaze nganibongela(I am happy for you)”, we share another hug.

We settle down and we all talk. By the way Thoko is talking she is hoping that she has a baby boy by the sound of things but marriage is not mentioned. I don't think they are there as yet. They consider themselves “Young” for that.

“How are you feeling now Khethiwe?”

“The doctor says I am making some progress”, I say

“And we see it MaCele”, Phuthuma says.

I just nod.

“What will you name the child?”, I ask

“If it's a girl maybe something with a Z and if it's a boy•••”, Zaba interjects.

“Sakhile”, he says

“That’s a beautiful name”, I say.

“You need to get better and come back home”, Thoko says

“I will see ”, I smile lightly.

They say their good byes when it was their time to leave. I was escorted back to my room. I found the TV already open for me. I recently have been given access to it and that's basically what I do all day. I watch TV and see Qaphile. The doctor's visits have subsided to only twice a week.

NOKWENKOSI

I have went back home once in these 3 years that I have been working here and I have adjusted to my surroundings of even though I sometimes miss home but life seems better here and so as the pay as well. Today I wasn't working and so as the following day. We have been dealing with more tuberculosis cases more than anything. HIV/AIDS wasn't as rapidly rising as back home and we have been updated that Medication will be introduced to the world soon. It's a relief as well. I just wished that Bhuti held on long enough to get the medication and he would've been better. I wish they told me sooner and maybe just maybe we could've worked something out. Something's I am not told or I find out later about them now that I am far away. I haven't talked to Khethiwe in a while and so I called her a few days ago but it didn't go through. I would try later on today and see if she is still well with the kids. I am seated at the patio of where I am living while reading a book. Tea is the most drank thing in this country and I sometimes think it's because I couldn't adjust to the cold climates so I thought maybe that is the reason they drink tea.

A knock surfaces from the door and I stand up from where I am placing the book on the chair and walk inside my space. I go

and open the door and he is standing there rigid while looking at me.

“Dr Barnes how may I help you?”

“How are you my lady?”

“I am well thank you”, I look at him with a frown

“May I come in?” ,I let him in.

“You do hide yourself”, he says

“I don't have any friends. My friend is back home married”, I say as he settles on the couch.

I go and get him some water. I don't have tea in my house.

“I don't have tea”, I say as soon as I place the glass.

“I don't drink tea. I am not British”, I frown

“You mentioned your friend is married”, he says

“What can I help you with?”

“I am keeping you company Nokhwe”, he says

“Its Nokwe”, I emphasise.

“What are you if you are not British?”

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I ask.

“I came to study here and got a job here. I am Italian”, he says

“Oh I see”, he smiles as he looks at me.

“You know what they call you in French?”, I shake my head.

“Belle”, he says

“What does that mean?”

“Beautiful”, he says

“Okay. I think you should leave”, I say

He stands up and comes towards me.

“What would your father say if I wanted to marry you?”, he asks coming closer.

“He wouldn't approve.”, I quickly says running out of breath.

“Why?”, he is close. His blue shirt opened a few buttons revealing his slightly hairy chest. He has rolled up the sleeves and has white pants on.

He is too close and too tall.

“Be••because I am black and you are white”, I say

He chuckles.

“I am not white. I am Italian”, he says

“You are not umzulu either”

“How about we try”, he lowers his head and perks my lips.

“Doctor”, he lifts my chin up.

“It's Dante amore”, he says

“It's Nokwenkosi”, he chuckles

“I will see you tomorrow”, he says

He moves to open the door.

“I have waited 3 years now amore It's time we got married don't you think?”, he says

“You have to pay dowery back home for me and it will cost you”, he chuckles.

“Anything to have you”, he walks out.

I breathe out. My lips have just touched of another man's. He is white and something my father wouldn't approve as much. He has been trying with me but never went this far and so close. A white man! Gosh Nokwenkosi you didn't come here for that.

I go and put the glass away and get back to my reading.

QAPHILE

I am at the taxi rank. I couldn't live with the kids alone so I saw it best that they all go back home and live with my parents all 4 of them. I have just come from doing my round and I hop out of the taxi. I want Khethiwe to be ok and if seems as if she is trying to get back to her old self. The faster she does that the better. I miss having my wife around the house, it's quiet and not as warmly as before.

“Qaphile!”, It's Joyce.

She doesn't bother me as before. I made sure she knew her place as the mother of my child only and nothing else to me. She got the message as well.

“What can I do for you Joyce?”

“Can't I greet you?”, she asks.

“How are you ?”

“I am ok. You are always disappear during the day”, she says

“I have things to do”

“Oh I see. Let me leave you”, she has some away from me.

CHAPTER 29

THE PRESENT DAY

I look at him and he smiles at me and pulls me to lay on his chest and kisses my forehead.

“I love you Dali wami”

“I love you too Gatsheni”, he has stayed longer today than before.

“How are my grandchildren?”, I ask

“You have to come back Now Sthandwa Sami. Atleast bond with them”, he says

I sit up and look at him.

“They don't know me”, I say

“Well they so know you from now on”, I sigh

“Qaphile this is not easy”, I say

“It wasn't easy having you not present beside me for all these years Khethiwe”, I sigh and look at my hands.

“You are needed and Nokwenkosi is back from overseas”, he says

I nod my head slowly at that moment.

“Ok we can go”, he smiles and kisses my cheeks.

“Come”, he takes my hand into his and we stand up.

We make our way hand in hand inside the institute and the nurse approaches us.

“Her bag is all set up”

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she says

I look at Qaphile and he doesn't say anything.

I have been here for far too long. I got out after a few months of being here the first time but I relapsed after I had my daughter and after that I saw it best that I stay her for so long. They grew up without me and I have missed everything in their lives. Their weddings, them growing up and also losing Thoko as a good friend. She was amazing and may her soul rest in peace where she is. After her death Zaba couldn't move on. He didn't find another woman but raised his son on his own. He loved Thoko more than anything and he blamed himself for her death from above what Qaphile told me. What broke me the most was hearing about Sizwe's death. He was so much to me. He was everything to me and the fact that I lost him drove me to a deep pit hole I never thought I would come out of but I learner. Learner that losing people in your life is part of life. It stings but you have to hold on and move forth. It's time now I

go home and be with my husband. It's time now that I get to know my grandchildren before I kick the bucket and leave this earth.

My suitcase is brought to me and everything is inside. I look around the place. It has changed over the years from back then. Upgraded and posh to be exact. Qaphile always gave me the best of everything and I would be forever grateful for such.

“Come”, I say my good byes after signing out and we walk to his car.

It's big and beautiful. Not the Toyota Supra that we used to use to drive around the city of Durban in. He puts the suitcase in the boot and comes to open the door before helping me inside. He closes the door and then goes to his side and gets inside. The car drives off and light Maskandi music is playing. He changes it and plays softer music. Jazz to be exact and I bobble my head back and forth listening to the tune. I look outside the window and the outside looks very different from the past. It's magnificent. Qaphile holds my hand and locks it in his.

I keep my eyes closed while bobbling my head back and forth to the music.

“I still have your old Cameras”, he says

I open my eyes and look at him.

“I thought you three them away”

“Those are our memories Khethiwe. That's where all our pictures were taken from”, I nod.

“Ok”

We get to a quiet area. More quiet than the township. I see that we are in a white neighborhood right now. Qaphile drives into a house and the gate slides open and he drives inside. He hops out after parking the car and he comes to my side.

“Come”, he helps me out of the car.

I am nervous as we hop out. I look around the place .

“Where does Fezihle live again?”, I ask

“Boughton.”, I nod.

We walk inside hand in hand and I look around. It is very traditional with a modern touch. The house is spacious and beautiful inside.

“This is your house Mkami. You can do anything you want with it ”, he says

I smile and turn to look at him before I embrace him.

“I love you Gatsheni”

“I love you too Sthandwa Sami”, he kisses my forehead.

“Come let me take you to the bedrooms”

I nod as I follow after him. He takes me to the bedrooms and I look around them. There is proof that they get used once in a while.

“Oyi does visit more often than Nazo and the rest”, he says

“I don't think they all will remember me”

“That's ok”

“How was the funeral ?”, I ask

He told me that Afika recently lost his daughter and they had just buried her a few days ago.

“Thats why you had to come back Sthandwa Sami”

I turn around and look at him.

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