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1

"I love you daddy! You are my heroeeee! I love you daddy. Oh yeahh" my phone rings on top of it's lungs if it has one. I roll over to the other side to turn it off. That is my alarm song by the way. It annoys me so much, I hate it Infact that is why it is used as my alarm song. Every morning it is my motivation to get up and switch it off.

I have texts from my mother. Tell me why was she awake at 3am?

She's informing me about a family meeting. Meetings meetings meetings!

That's all they know. I hate gatherings. They waste my time. My people aren't who I'd choose over shopping or sleeping. They bore the life out of me.

I get out of bed and head to the en-suite bathroom. Whoever said money can't buy happiness was probably high or drunk.

Imagine taking a pee while looking down at the city of Johannesburg through your bathroom glass wall. Priceless.

I flush and walk to the hand sink to wash my hands. I need new nails. I open the cabinet and take out my face treatments and apply them. A productive day ahead requires a beautiful face. I could never do well without without my facial treatments my face is full of betrayal. I could miss one day to apply these and the consequences make sure to last for 4 months. I do not take my chances I always make sure I take care of it.

I hear my phone ringing from the other side. Its not even 10am yet what does that human being want from me? I finish treating the face and go to take my cell.

It was mom. This better be not about the family gathering. I call her back. She answers on the second ring.

Melisa: "It's not even past 10am but you are already away from your phone" what happened to greetings?

Me: "Hi mommy. How are you doing?"

Melissa: "I'm good. Can you please bring 5L of cup cakes when you come. Maddy was going to bring them but her car broke down she'll arrive late" tell me what makes her think I will arrive early let alone asking if I'm coming at all!

Me: "Can't Lucas and his wife bring them? Or uncle Robert, he'll love to I know cause I am not sure if I'm coming this was short notice."

Melissa: "No Lexi. If you participated on the family group chat on WhatsApp like everybody else you would know this isn't short notice. I need you here by 1pm we are the hosts I can't go around asking family members to run errands for me like I don't have my own child who can do that for me"

Me: "But mom Lucas and his wife live near a bakery"

Mellisa: "So do you. Get up, get ready and go order the cupcakes then go buy snacks and refreshments"

Me: "Ok Send me a list"

Melissa: "I'll send it just now"

She ends the call. I sigh and drag my annoyed ass to the bathroom.

I take a quick shower and lotion as fast as I could and then go to the closet. I'm already late. I just take the first clothes I lay my eyes on. Its Saturday, a cloudy one so I pick jeans and a round neck tee and ankle-strap heels. I do not wear flat shoes, I'd rather walk bare foot than to wear them. I do not feel good in them. Nomvelo, my best friend is one of the people that doesn't understand my disfavor of those shoes.

Speaking of that little devil. She is the person to help me buy all the things my mom is about or have sent already in that list. I finish dressing up and make my face up. Just natural make up. I don't want my aunt Mary to make comments about my make up throughout the gathering. We're not each other's favorites.

She likes giving out orders and I'm not the one to take orders  
Every time.

...

Melissa: "Now tell me. Did you die?" She says when Mvelo and I  
get in holding a 10L bucket of cupcakes. She hugs Mvelo first  
and then me.

Me: "I had to pay extra R100 to get these. Why 2 buckets  
anyway? Is the whole of Jo'burg and Cape Town coming here?"

Melissa: "Your cousin William is coming to announce something  
big and your father has something to tell the family too"

Me: "Every year" I mumble under my breath.

Melissa: "Mvelo my dear. I'm glad you're here. How's work?"

Mvelo: "Work is great. I love what you did with this kitchen"

Melissa: "Oh you noticed. Thank you my baby" she says giving  
me a look that's supposed to make me guilty but its not  
working. I grin and take a sip of my drink that I have just fixed.  
I'm a ginaholic

Me: "So where's everyone?"

Melissa: "They are coming." We hear laughter. Its them. God  
forgive me but I do not like these people. They all act like  
they're above everyone, even God.

Aunt Mary is the one to walk in first. Why couldn't she just stay  
in the lounge with her brother and the others?

She greets and hugs with my mom. Mvelo follows and she pause and looks at me.

Mary: "Look at you. So thin and pale. Do you eat? Or sleep even?"

I look at mom. She shakes her head. I sigh.

Me: "I've been going to the gym." I have never set a foot in that sweat smelling place.

Mary: "And spending nights looking for a job right?" I take a sip on my mug and nod. She grins. "Good" she says and turn away to leave. I scoff and roll my eyes.

Melissa: "Don't mind her"

Me: "Its sickening mom. She doesn't get tired. How is it any of her concern that I am skinny and pale?"

Mvelo: "Just ignore her. Come let's go upstairs I need a top from your clothes this is passing the chilli air through"

Melissa: "Be quick. I could use an extra hand here"

Me: "Where's Gugu and Zipho?"

Melissa: "I gave them a day off Lexi."

Me: 'Okay. No need to look at me like that"

We go up. I open my wardrobe.

Me: "You know

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I feel like Mary hates me because of how I came about"

Mvelo: "That would be stupid of her"

Me: "She has never been nice to me ever since I was a kid but I did not see it then but after mom told me about my original identity I started feeling Mary's treatment was more about who I am."

Mvelo: "Your parents love you and that's all that matters"

Me: "I can't keep up with her bullying"

I pull out a jacket and give it to Mvelo.

Mvelo: "Just bear with her just for today." I nod. "I'm going home tomorrow"

Me: "What do you want me to do with my life tomorrow? This is the 7th weekend of you going away"

Mvelo: "We'll go out for breakfast and then I'll leave later. I'm building a house remember?"

Me: "Yeah. But this is too much"

She laughs and pull me out.

I hear Luc's voice. I rush to the lounge. Our eyes meet. I run to his arms. He picks me up and spin me around.

Lucas: "Ek het jou gemis"

Me: "I missed you too." He put me down.

Lucas: "Don't lie. You haven't called me in 2 days"

Me: "I know and I'm sorry. Hey sis" I greet his wifr. She gets up and we hug too then she goes to the kitchen.

Me: "And greetings to everyone. I'm sorry I just haven't seen him in a while." They all greet back. They are dressed like they are going to a royal function. Every person is sitting next to their partner. Did I mention I am the only single 25 year old McVeigh? Nobody in this family has made it to 23 without a wife or a husband for the past 50 years. I broke generational marriage blessing. Possibly because I have "black blood" running through my veins.

Lucas: "Come help me out braai the meat outside. I was waiting on Liam (Will's annoying twin brother)". Him and I are the black sheeps of this family. He got married and divorced within a year. You can take the pig out of mud but you can't take the mud out of it. He's a womanizer and he shall remain that until he finds "the one". If such really exists.

Mvelo: "I will go help in the kitchen"

Me: "Come on"

Luc: "The meat only needs two hands. Let her go" Mvelo rolls her eyes and walks away.

They used to date in high school. I only found about that on our graduation day. He bought her a present. And said he was making up for the past. I thought they just liked picking up on each other. Little did I know.

Luc: "Your father doesn't look happy" he says after we put meat on the braai stand. I take a seat on the camp chair.



Me: "Yeah. He seems deep in his thoughts"

Luc: "Any idea what could be bothering him?"

Me: "No. There's only way to find out; ask him"

Luc: "When everyone has left"

We talked about everything and anything. I missed him. Everything feels right around him. He's my best friend. Lisa, his wife did not understand our bond at first but she ended up adjusting to it.

Mom came out to tell us to bring in the meat. Everyone had arrived.

We all seat around the huge table and say grace before we devour. This sight of love birds being all over each other annoys the hell out of me.

Britney: "So, Lexi. Anyone important in your life yet?"

Me: "Hi Britney. I haven't seen you since your wedding." Luc clears his throat.

Britney: "Really? Feels like yesterday. So when are we attending yours?"

Me: "My What?"

Britney: "Wedding silly" I laugh.

Will: "Honestly speaking. Haven't you found a man?"

Me: "What am I gonna do with it? Pet it? Take it for walks? Do I feed it? Bath it?"

Mary: "You are the only 25 year old single McVeigh do you

realise that?"

Me: "Was this gathering about asking me that? can we focus on this mouth watering food and stop asking me questions?"

Will: "You need someone to live your life with. You do not work, you live in a penthouse, you shop everyday, you travel. All of those expenses are taken care of by the family business. You need a husband"

Me: "And how is that any of your concern because that money is of my shares?"

Britney: "It is bringing down the company. You should be saving this money to invest but no. You always check into expensive hotels every weekend!"

Me: "Don't you dare raise your voice at me. Why are yiu watching my life anyway? Don't you have anything concerning marriage to do?"

Will: "We found you a man" I sarcastically laugh out loud.

Me: "Are you on drugs? Mom? Dad? You knew about this?"  
Their stares instantly created knots in my stomach.

Mary: "Its for the best"

Me: "Best for who? Who told you I'm attracted to men anyway?"

Melissa: "Are you gay?"

Me: "That's not the point mom. I don't want a man! Dad?"

Marcus: "What in this life have you ever did without protest? You were begged to go to varsity, you are still begged to attend

meetings concerning the family businesses. Now, you're 25 and not even once have we seen your boyfriend or heard about him" I'm afraid to eat this food. It has a dangerous drug on it.

Me: "You people are unbelievable"

Will: "If you can not take this man we have for you. I'm asking you to move out of the penthouse and uncle Marcus is claiming back his shares. Do you know what that means? No monthly income for you"

Me: "I would rather live on the streets than to let you people bully me." I gulp the rest of my gin down. "Moving me out of the penthouse and convincing my dad to take his shares back won't make that bastard child yours Will. You shoot blanks genius"

His wife gasps. I get up and head out. At least he did not say they will take my cars. If I sell 2. I will have enough money to pay rent wherever I'm gonna find a place.

Me? A man? Marriage? Funny. I need a job. Where can I find one in this big country?...

2

I'm depressed. That's all I can say. I thought I would wake up to an email inviting me to an interview but my phone is as dry as Kalahari desert. I tried sending out my CV over the weekend after that 'Find Lexi a husband' gathering. I spent the whole of yesterday on my phone searching for possible work vacancies. Most of available posts were what I'm not interested in.

God knows I need a job asap.

I sigh. I'm so stressed I just want to sleep for the whole year. And Mvelo being away is making this whole thing worse. I take my phone and text her when is she coming back. She's the only friend I have. And in hard times like these I could really use her presence.

Oh...She's a CEO where she works maybe she can find me something. I text her again. She calls instantly.

Me: "Hey pumpkin"

Mvelo: "How is depression going?" She laughs.

Me: "I find it very disturbing that this amuses you"

Mvelo: "Who wouldn't be? My best friend is finally gonna know what real life is. I'm flattered"

Me: "I have no clue how to survive in real life!"

Mvelo: "You gonna learn. So you want me to find you something at work?"

Me: "Yeah. When are you coming back?"

Mvelo: "I'm preparing as we speak. I will be on the road in an hour"

Me: "Please drive fast I miss you"

Mvelo: "I've been gone for a few hours chill your tits. Check you email I just sent you interview tips"

Me: "Will that require me to interact with human beings?" She sighs.

Mvelo: "If you're really serious about not wanting that arranged husband for you. You better get yourself used to the human species because that is everywhere in work environment" I groan.

Me: "I hate my life!"

Mvelo: "I love you. Let me finish up here"

Me: "Thank you for loving me. You're truly an Angel. Are you gonna find me a job?"

Mvelo: "I will find that out this evening when I arrive"

Me: "Thank you"

Mvelo: "Nope not yet cakes. And...I just sent you emails you can send your cv to."

Me: "As long as it is not cleaning jobs"

Mvelo: "Beggars Can't be choosers Alexis McVeigh" I am a natural born chooser.

Me: "Bye. I love you"

Mvelo: "Ofcourse you do. I love you more" I laugh and hang up.

10 years of friendship. It all started at the restrooms when she found white girls forcing their stinky hands into my hair. I have always been a quiet person so took that into advantage and bullied me. Mvelo came through for me. Ever since we've been inseparable. We're literally each other's breaths.

My whole upbringing I have always been made to feel awful about my race. My hair was too fluffy to be white and my skin was too bright to be black. I have never felt welcome anywhere. When filling in forms I always had to choose black until the 8th grade, that's when the 'Coloured' column was introduced.

All the remarks that were made about me made me prefer my own space and avoid humans at all costs. When I finished high school I was happy I am finally going to hide myself at home till eternity. Little did I know my parents were sending me tertiary. I cried and threatened to kill myself even. My dad begged me, I now know it was for my own good to go get that qualification but it just didn't feel right at that time. It was not exciting that I had to start a new life, in a different environment with different people who will also question why both my parents are white but my hair looks like this. I've had it tough. And I hate that now I have to work and face humans every single day!

Since I went to tertiary I introduced myself to wigs. They literally saved my poor soul from annoying questions.

The door open as I drown deep in my thoughts. What if the only jobs available are cleaning jobs? What am I going to do? She stares at me for a while and gets in. She tosses her bag over to the couch and walk straight to open the curtains. The sunlight rushes to sting my poor eyes.

Melissa: "Is this how you look for a job?" She picks up an empty bottle of Drostdy hof wine. "Alexis."

Me: "I was stressed okay" I drank myself to sleep last night. It is not easy to go from hero to zero. I have never worked a day in my life. Dad took all my cards on Saturday. I'm only left with my bank hard that has maybe a few thousands in it.

Melissa: "You should be out there applying for jobs not drinking"

Me: "What kind of jobs?" She sighs heavily and pull off the duvet. I'm exposed. She signals me to get up. I do. She fix my bed while I watch and she sits on top when she's done and pats the space next to her. I sit. I feel like throwing up. My head is heavy. I need to go see a Dr. With what money though?

Melissa: "Honey listen. Your father and I aren't always going to be around. The day will come and God shall remember us and take us. When that day comes. We do not want to leave you here to suffer. Us wanting you to find a job is a way of us showing love"

Me: "Love? You're kicking me out of this place mom, dad took all my cards, he's taking my shares. How is that anything close

to love?"

Melissa: "Do you know how much this place cost?" I shake my head. "Over a 2million but we bought it because you wanted it. You can not blame us for always giving you what you want, that was the parents in us. Look what it did to you? You have never worked, you don't even know how to turn a washing machine on, not to mention cooking. You're ruined baby. We overspoilt you and it's about time we fix our mistake and put a stop to that" I could feel my cheeks get wet.

Me: "So I'm going to live on the streets?"

Melissa: "No. You have about 3 months to be here. You will not have help anymore. Starting from now, clean this whole place and then bath, print your CV and go look for a job. Do you even have one?"

Me: "I made it on Saturday" My first ever Curriculum Vitae.  
"Where can I look for a job?"

Melissa: "Everywhere. Woolworths is always looking for packers" I laugh.

Me: "Yeah nice one"

Melissa: "Do you have a better job in mind?"

Me: "I am a professional magazine editor"

Melissa: "Then go to every magazine company out there"

Me: "Where are they?"

Melissa: "My goodness. There's internet on your phone. Google directions. If you have not found a job in 3 months that



William's man will come and marry you. We have no choice but to agree"

Me: "This is about it? Punishment for not being married?"

Melissa: "Start by folding those clothes. I will stop by later to see how you cleaned and hear about how did you go on job hunting"

She kiss my cheek and stand up to leave.

I screamed my lungs out soon as she closed the door.

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After folding my dirty clothes I was collecting from the floor. I neatly packed them into a basket and went to the laundry room.

I'm here. I don't even know where to start. I leave the basket there and go to the kitchen. It is not as dirty just a floor with minor stains.

I search for the cleaning equipment. I find it after opening every cupboard door before me. I can do this.

After an hour I am done and ready to go find how does a machine work.

There are laundry places out there

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there is one on the 2nd floor. Why wouldn't I want to support a local business?

I go to my room to take a big bag and come back to pack my my dirty laundry. The kitchen and the lounge look good. Cleaning isn't so hard afterall but I don't see myself scrubbing floors every day.

I take the lift. Its always empty on weekdays.

Me: "Hello" he bites his kota and nods. "Uhm, how much does it costs to do laundry?" His stare is uncomfortable. Maybe if he wasn't chewing and he wore a fitting shirt this sight wouldn't be disturbing.

Him: "I only do laundry for people who live in this building" where do I live? Out of space?

Me: "I live here. On the penthouse" he observes me and takes another huge bite on his kota.

Him: "You are Marcus McVeigh daughter?"

Me: "Yes"

Him: "I expected her to be..." he clears his throat.

Me: "White? No I'm not completely white. How much do you charge for your service?"

Him: "Please put your bag on that scale" he points at the far end of the counter. I do as per instruction. "It will be R150"

Me: "Do you have a speed point?"

He shakes his head and takes another bite! I'm annoyed. "Ok let me leave these here I will go withdraw money"

Him: "You can pay using EFT. The details are right before you"

He says and get up. He's so huge. He takes my bag and walks into a door then closes it behind him.

I don't want to lie, his kota looks tasty. I finish paying and wait for him to get back.

Him: "I do not wash underwears" I did not even see him get out. The kota caught my attention.

Me: "I'm sorry. That must've gotten there by mistake. Its clean" he nodded and gave me receipt.

Him: "You can come get it after 4pm"

Me: "Where did you buy that?"

Him: "And you say you leave here?" He shakes his head.

"Ground floor"

Me: "Thanks"

I see a vacancy post on the wall as I walk out. He needs an assistant. I would take such a job if I had a gun to my head.

I take the stairs down to get myself the kota and take a lift back to my world. What a Classic kota this is.

I put it in a plate and sit infront of a TV. Its quite tasty if you ask me. How come I didn't know about this place?

Its not like I know more than 5 people who live in this building anyway let alone shops.

I finish eating and text the girlfriend about how far is she and take a nap after she responds that she's near.

I will start looking for a job tomorrow morning. Monday is a good start to do anything but today isn't that Monday not while I just heard that I have 3 months to find a job or else I will have to marry a stranger.

I would stab his ass on a first date and go to jail once.

...

My phone rings. Disturbing my beauty sleep. I am deep in my sleep but I can hear it kill my eardrums. I extend my hand to get it on top of the coffee table.

I check the time first before answering. Its 3pm. It doesn't feel like I have been sleeping for 4 hours at all. Time flies.

Me: "Hey boo"

Mvelo: "Please buzz me in"

Me: "Why? Don't you have your ID with you?"

Mvelo: "No I'm with8 someone"

Me: "Who is it?"

The line died. I buzz her in and wait. Who could she possibly be with?

I get up and prepare something to drink.

A couple of minutes later. I hear the lift beep. She walks out followed by a taxi driver, I can tell by the way he's dressed. I rush to her.

Me: "Did your car break down?" I hug her. "Or were you mugged?" She looks at me confused. "Hello" I say to the taxi driver.

Him: "Nkosazana" He extends his hand for a hand shake and we shake hands.

Mvelo: "Why would you assume my car broke down?"

Me: "Why would you take a taxi then? I'm sorry my brother how much does she owe you?"

Mvelo: "Lexi" she warns. "Uhm...babe this is your competitor Alexis Sabathile McVeigh. Lexi, this is my boyfriend Nduna Mlangeni" she says with a very wide smile that I feel like washing it off with punch.

Me: "Nice to meet you Sir. Can we talk?" I pull her straight to my bedroom. I slam the door closed.

Me: "What the hell?" She shrugs. "You have a boyfriend?"

Mvelo: "Yes I do"

Me: "For how long?"

Mvelo: "8 months?"

Me: "Are you kidding me? You've been lying to me for the past 8 months?"

Mvelo: "I didn't want you to stress over my failed relationship again. I needed to be sure its solid first before I tell you"

Me: "What proved it is solid?" She hesitantly waved up her left hand. There's a ring. She's marrying him! God please send your angels, even Maria if you can.

My best friend just agreed to marry a Zulu man that is wearing omega sandals, Brentwood, uzzi tee and a leather jacket in this heat of Jo'burg summer.

Mvelo: "I love him okay? He makes me happy and he's looking forward into knowing you because he knows you're a biggest part of my life so the least ypu can do is be nice"

Me: "He's a taxi driver right?" She looks at me disappointed.

Mvelo: "He runs a carpenter business. Not all Zulu men drive taxis nor owns one"

Me: "He's wearing a taxi rank uniform"

Mvelo: "Its not a taxi rank uniform. Most Zulu men prefer to wear like that." She doesn't see anything wrong with her horrible choice in men. She's defending them.

Me: "What happened to dating educated men, men in suits?"

Mvelo: "Love doesn't give a single care Lexi. When you come across the one, even the universe favors you. Who they are and what they are doesn't have to matter. As long as they are everything you've been praying for and vice versa. I'm not expecting you to understand that as yet my friend but one day, that special guy will pop out where you least expect it. You will fall inlove with this man and the world won't understand but

that won't matter to you because it will all be making sense to you"

I look at her. She's in love and nothing shall change that.

Me: "As long as you're happy" I say.

Mvelo: "I know you don't mean that" ofcourse I don't.

Me: "Couldn't you atleast go for a Venda man or Malawian?

Zulu men are the most complicated breed or so I've heard"

Mvelo: "Nduna isn't your usual typical Zulu man" she says as we follow each other back to the lounge.

He's relaxed. He has a remote in his hand and SS4 is playing.

Like that isn't enough. He has his "Uyawudlala uWasaphu" shoes on top of my coffee table that I worked so hard to make it shine this morning.

Nduna: "Your house is beautiful Sabathile"

I give Mvelo the look.

Mvelo: "She prefers Lexi baby"

Nduna: "If I said; Run Sabathile run! Wouldn't she run?"

Not a typical Zulu man she said.

Me: "I'll go order something to eat"

Nduna: "No raw fish please. And you shouldn't eat fish its not good for your teeth nkosazana"

Okay that's it. I'm out. I take my car keys and bag.

Me: "Feel at home" although he did that without me having to say it. But I had to say it just for the culture.

A whole Shaka warrior into our lives. I'm defeated....



3

Today I woke up and decided to take this seriously. I printed my cv and hit the road.

Spending the evening with Mvelo and her rude Nduna really helped. I realized one thing; I have no clue about real life.

Nduna took us down the memory lane of how he grew up. I didn't know that people actually go to bed hungry. He said that will be me very soon if I don't look for a job, that's how harsh he is. He has these crazy superstitions he surprised me every second he opened his mouth.

The only friendly and sweet thing he said is that we should have a schedule of who sees Mvelo when. Although I know I will get robbed but it is thoughtful of him.

Why are receptionists so rude? I've submitted my CV to 4 companies but already I feel like giving up because they've been giving me hell.

My phone rings once and automatically answers and connect to the Bluetooth. This always make me answer calls I have no interest in but lucky today it is Lucas.

Luc: "My baby"

Me: "Hey best broe in the world. How are you doing?"

Luc: "I'm good. Tell me girl where are you?"

Me: "On the road. I'm sending out my cv"

Luc: "You're really doing it?"

Me: "Yup."

Luc: "Okay. I'm here at your place. What time will you be back?"

Me: "I am driving to the last drop off, I will be there in...45 minutes. Don't eat my food please"

Luc: "You mean the pasta?"

Me: "Lucas! Order it before I arrive because I swear to God I will..." he laughs and hang up.

What does do to a brother like this?

...

I get in and I'm hit by a fresh smell. I left this place a mess. He cleaned up. What would I be without him? It is squeaky clean. It wasn't this clean yesterday after I cleaned. The Kimberly boys boarding school really train him well.

Lucas: "You sure as hell took your time"

Me: "Mid-day traffic" I put the pizza box on top of the counter and drink down his juice. "I feel like dying"

He picks the pizza box up and leads the way to the lounge. I cast off my heels.

Lucas: "Don't die yet" I throw myself on the couch.

Me: "Have you ever drove around Johannesburg begging those moody ugly ladies on front desks to take your cv?"

Lucas: "Yes I have. I just wasn't driving I had to wait 30 minutes

for a bus after submitting each CV or walk to the next hiring place. You're lucky he didn't take your cars away"

Me: "I swear to God I would tell him straight to disown me." He was very harsh on training Lucas to a 'man' but somehow I think it helped him. He has his own successful businesses and a farm that he just bought. He is exactly the man father was training him to be.

Lucas: "I'm just proud you went out there and took action. And I will cross my fingers you get a job and disappoint Will and his mom" I laugh.

Me: "Can one unfamily a person? I wanna unfamily them when I find a job" he laughs.

Lucas: "Chill. Mmmh this pizza is nice"

Me: "This is my daily meal. Now tell me, why aren't you at your house?"

Lucas: "Because Lisa would prefer to see less of me around her" I laugh.

Me: "Is she pregnant?"

Lucas: " I think so. She cried the whole day when I told her she must test. She said I'm indirectly saying she's fat"

Me: "The bun is in the oven! I'm gonna be an aunt"

I get up and dance. He increases the volume and joins me...

...

It been a week since I sent out my cvs and not once have I been

invited to an interview. I'm left with 2 months and 3 weeks to move out the penthouse. Sigh.

I am meeting with my dad today at lunch. I haven't spoken to him since the day he came to take my cards. And I would be lying if I said I am looking forward to that lunch. I am not in a mood for being lectured.

On the other hand I have seen my bestie once this week. It is official. I do not like Nduna. It was a lot better when I was in the dark about the whole thing. She would disappear only on weekends.

My life literally revolves around her and my parents. Well, not anymore.

I take my phone and get into my emails. Nothing relevant. I sigh and put it back down. This job seeking stress is weighing on me. Maybe if I knew more people I would have found one by now. There are no vacancies at Mvelo's so I'm pretty much doomed.

My alarm goes off as I position myself right to sleep. Why does time fly so much recently?

I prepare myself for the road and take the lift down when I'm done.

I spot the fat dude from the laundry sitting on the chairs by the pool eating his kota. How huge does he wanna get? His stomach is hanging out as usual. Don't men have big clothes to

accommodate pot bellies or he just doesn't want to wear fitting clothes?

He sees me staring and wave. I wave back. He goes back to his kota with no care in the world and I continue walking to my car.

Fuel money is gonna be the reason why I go broke. Just by driving to Midrand and Fourways yesterday my tank is almost empty.

I stop by the garage and fill up then drive to waterfall. My dad doesn't do lunch at public places. His building has it's own special cafe on top and that is where him and his hard working employees dine.

There is no one lazy at McVeigh holdings. Its a competition. Everybody wants to be Marcus's favorite and recognized employee and I guess that's what keeps this company number 1.

Everywhere I go I get the same exact stares. Its like I'm a rare human being.

Me: "Your people's stares are making me so uncomfortable"  
she brings her eyes up to see me. She does a little chant.

Buhle: "Baby girl. Look at you! Could you blame them?"

Me: "They know me there's no need to stare at me like that"

Buhle: "You're a walking doll Barbie" I laugh. They used to call me that growing up.

Me: "Oh please. I'm here for lunch with my dad"

Buhle: "He must be in office. Coffee?"

Me: "No thank you."

Buhle: "Same old Alexis. How is job seeking going?" Is there anyone who doesn't know about this?

Me: "Its going very well thank you. I have 2 interviews next week"

Buhle: "That's good. All the best my love"

Me: "Thank you." I fake a smile. "Let me go before I'm lectured about punctuality" we laugh and head to the lift. I press the cafe floor because he could be there already for all I know.

Indeed he's here already but luckily he just arrived. He unbuttons his blazer and take a seat. I greet and pull my chair.

Marcus: "You drove all this way in shorts?"

Me: "Yeah its hot"

Marcus: "This is a professional environment Lexi. What do you want my employees to think of you?" I chuckle.

Me: "I couldn't care less really. It is 33°C today I do not want to find myself fainting"

Marcus: "You will not survive the real world with this stinking attitude. Do you know that?"

Me: "People are not allowed to speak their minds in that world?"

Marcus: "They are but not every time"

Me: "Mmmh" he calls the waitress and order "the usual" that is

Jacobs coffee. No matter how hot it can get, you will find him drinking it. Typical white man.

Waitress: "What will you have miss Lexi?"

Me: "Black rose with tonic water and a slice of lemon"

Marcus: "Candice. She'll have anything none alcoholic"

Candice: "Yes Sir" she says and fly away. I'm dumbfounded.

Marcus: "You are looking for a job yet drinking? If you want a sophisticated job of which I don't know where you will find without experience

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you need to have a cleat system"

Me: "I haven't drank anything alcohol since Tuesday last week"

Marcus: "Keep it at that"

Our drinks arrive. We thank the lady and I take a sip on mine. It tastes good. Whatever this flavor is.

Me: "Is this a friendly lunch?"

Marcus: "Yes. And, I'm taking 2 of your cars"

Me: "Why? Dad my cars are-"

Marcus: "I don't wanna hear it. You will not take job seeking seriously if you still get to the parking lot and see that you have 3 cars"

Me: "What is going to change if you take them?"

Marcus: "You think by taking them I mean taking them home?"

Oh no honey I am taking them back to the dealer"

Me: "Dad"

Marcus: "Yes. You got to grow and figure things out on your own"

Me: "Well this isn't the way of doing it. What happened to sitting a person down and tell them about a major change that's about to take place in their lives like any other parent would do?"

Marcus: "You're not the person to be sat down. I tried that so many times but you get a chance to say no when you're decently asked to do something. Being soft on you has to be my biggest mistake over the years and I regret it. If you wanna keep the cars you will have only one week to move out of the penthouse. You are not a little girl anymore, you can't run from the society forever just because you're mixed. That is who you are, face it baby face it. Curse the hell out of anyone who tries to feel the texture of your hair, punch them in the face if you have"

Me: "It's not easy daddy you know that"

Marcus: "I wish you took after your mother. She was such a fighter" I immediately stop crying.

I hate that woman. I resent her. She repulse me. If she's still alive I would run her over with my car if I saw her. If she's dead I'd go burn her grave.



What kind of a woman gives her child away? Sometimes I wish mommy never told me about that woman.

My dad was having an affair with her. She was one of his bright students my dad said. Unfortunately she fell pregnant.

One day when mommy woke up on a beautiful Sunday to water her flowers before she gets ready for church she found a picnic basket with a present wrapped in a pink baby throw.

She looked around and picked me up. There was a birth certificate underneath and a natal card.

She said she walked around trying to see if there was anyone nearby who could be the one that dropped me off but she saw no-one.

My dad lived here in Joburg by then and my mommy was in Standerton. She said she called him and told him about me. He told her to not take me any where he's coming.

Arriving home he confessed to have been having an affair and I was the results of that affair. My mommy being the person that she is she said she was broken her husband had broken their vows but she was happy she was having a girl child. She kept me and raised me like her own. She loves me. One thing my Zulu mother couldn't do.

I always preach to Nomvelo that no matter the circumstances she must never throw her baby away. What if my mommy was

a wicked woman and killed me? My baby pictures could tell I was a mixed baby. And in those days these races weren't each other's favorite.

Me: "I don't want to be anything like that woman. Who is going to fetch the cars?"

Marcus: "I'm not sure yet"

Me: "Thanks for the lunch"

Marcus: "We are not done"

Me: "I have a job to find dad. I'm starting at this very instant to try to grow and figure things out on my own. Have a lovely day"

I pay my bill and walk away.

I receive a call as I drive not knowing where I'm heading. I'm crying. I want the universe to swallow me already.

Me: "Hello"

Caller: "Alexis Sabathile McVeigh?"

Me: "Yes how may I help you?"

Caller: "I'm calling from Mashaba carpentry. We would like to invite you for an interview at 2pm. Apologies for calling at such notice but our receptionist just resigned with immediate effect"

Me: "Uhm...please send me the address and I will be there"

Caller: "Will do. Goodluck"

Me: "Thank you"

She hang up. Thank you thank you Lord. I turn the wheel and drive straight to my place.

I call Mvelo as I arrive to my place. I'm on the call with her as I run around my closet looking for clothes decent enough for an interview. None of my clothes are suitable. I come across a two piece aunt Mary bought me to wear at her husband's unveiling. I hate to say it but this would do. I spray it and put it on. I undo my hair and comb it out. Today is that day I wear my crown proudly.

I call mommy as I drive to Fourways where the interview will take place. She wishes me luck. All that I need.

I arrive there. I greet the lady at the front desk.

Me: "I'm here for an interview"

Her: "Please wait there. Mr Craig will be with you shortly"

Me: "Thank you"

I go and take a seat.

I take my phone out and chat to Mvelo. She's telling me that Nduna sent a letter yesterday. He means business. I hope he's not planning on making my friend quit her job and send her to the bundus to look after his mom.

I feel a grip on my hair. Whoever that is must not test me!

Her: "If only you were black and this-"

I found myself on top of her punching her face out.

I feel strong hands pull me up. People are screaming. She's crying on the floor. I hear someone shout "call the police!" Another is shouting "Call an ambulance!"

I am crying. I am terrified, what did I just do?

The police come in. If this was about robbery and shooting involved they would've arrived 4 hours later.

He turns me around and cuff me.

Sergeant: "You have a right to remain silent ma'am" Ofcourse I do.

And I will use my right until I die cause I have no explanation for what I just did.

Why did she touch my hair and say that though?

4

I hear footsteps approaching. I didn't sleep a wink. I want to go home. I want my mommy. And most of all I want to die!!!

And then shortly a police officer appear. He hits his baton against the steel burglar. I clench my teeth. They've doing this since I arrived here and to say the least its pretty annoying. Police officer: "Alexis McVeigh?" I nod. I have no strength to speak. I am hungry and dehydrated. I cried all night.

He unlocks and open. "You're free to go" oh thanks heavens! I promised God I will never ever do anything that stupid ever again I guess he heard me.

I pick my heels and walk out before he changes his mind.

"On your left" he shouts as I pass the left door. I give him a weak smile and turn to it. I see my dad sitting down reading a newspaper. I called him last night he didn't pick up. How did he know I'm here? Oh well...

He sees me. He puts the paper on the other chair and meets me halfway. I sob in his chest.

Me: "I didn't mean to. She started it"

Marcus: "I know my love. Let's go home and we'll talk about this"

The police officer hands me a glass of water. I drink it down and thank him.

On our way home he keeps glancing at me. I have no energy to entertain a conversation right now. I just spent a night in jail with no food, no shower, no covers. Only a glass of water.

I adjust my seat back and close my eyes.

Marcus: "Do you know that your chances of finding a job have just decreased?"

Me: "She started it"

Marcus: "When I said you should punch them in the face I didn't mean put them into hospital"

Me: "I lost control okay? All the past scenarios just came flooding into my mind and I lost it" He chuckles.

Marcus: "I must say I'm impressed though. I've always known you had it in you but next time please learn to control your temper"

Me: "There'll be no next time. I will go back to wigs. They save me from unnecessary interrogations and drama"

Marcus: "Apply at retails. They do not take criminal records that seriously" he must be kidding. That place is full of humans.

Me: "Retail is hard labor dad"

Marcus: "Exactly! Have you ever done something hard in your life?"

Me: "I thought this was about me fighting out a way to provide for myself not training about hard labor"

Marcus: "The days are running out. Remember that"

Yeah right...

She squashes me and complain in my ear soon as we get in.

Melissa: "She deserved it. Who the hell does she think she is touching your hair? I could just go and hit her with a bat in the head"

Marcus: "Whoa slow down. We don't want her thinking its okay to go around beating everyone"

Me: "I did exactly what you told me to do"

Marcus: "Well I didn't think you would really do it"

Melissa: "He told you to beat people up?"

Me: "Yeah. He said if someone touches my hair I must curse the hell out of them and punch them in the face if I have to" she looks at dad disappointed.

Melissa: "You amaze me sometimes"

Marcus: "I was just giving her a life advise, I didn't really think someone would want to touch a 25 year old's hair I mean that's absurd and pure disrespect"

Me: "Well they do daddy"

Marcus: "I really I had no idea. Let me get back to work I will you my loves later" he kisses my cheek and kisses mom's lips.

For as long as I've been here I've never seen or heard them fight. I know they do but Luc and I have never witnessed that. And for that, they are my couple goals. They have always

portrayed love before us. They call each other these sweet romantic names and I find it very cute.

As much as I have witnessed so much love between the two, it has never changed my outlook on relationships. I love seeing other people love each other, it just doesn't seem like my boat to sail. I am completely cool with the choice of spending the rest of my life alone, except everyone around me Ofcourse.

Mvelo was beginning to get me and then her Brentwood wearing prince charming came around now she won't preaches about how beautiful love is at every chance she gets. She even suggested I start looking the other day. Imagine!

Melissa: "I made you lunch. Baby go upstairs and take a shower I will be making you food"

I leave them snuggling over each other.

I need to soak myself in a tub and wash off all the dirt I might have got in that creepy stinky cell.

I connect my phone to the charger and go to the bathroom. Even at home I have an en-suite bathroom. Advantages of being the only girl: you get whatever it is that you ask.

I mix all the necessary bath salts and take a pee while the tub fill up.



I strip naked and get into the water soon as they are enough. I lay low and let my body absorb the bathsalts and the warmth of the water.

Mom comes up after 10 minutes to give me my food. I thank her and take it.

Me: "I think I will take a nap afterwards"

Melissa: "Put on your romper okay? And I will get rid of these" she says picking up my clothes. "They will forever attract bad luck. Your father and I trying to get the girl to drop charges but her mother isn't hearing it"

Me: "Its okay. Maybe this is one of my lessons about "the real world"." She chuckles.

Melissa: "Don't be silly"

Me: "For real. Do you think they'd still interview me?"

Melissa: "I doubt. She's the COO and her mother is the CEO." I let out a heavy sigh.

Me: "She must teach her daughter some manners"

Melissa: "I think you should go and apologize personally"

Me: "Not happening"

Melissa: "For the sake of peace and to soften her to drop the charges honey. Life is really tough with a record"

Me: "Fine I'll go" she smiles and pinches my cheek.

Melissa: "That's my girl"

She heads to the door and quickly turns.

Melissa: "Call Mvelo, she came here crying last night. She must be sick worried"

Me: "I will."

She nods and walk out. I take my food and dig in. I love my mother's cooking. I wish she cooked everyday. She's currently on leave and I wish I was here full time but I only spend weekends with them.

I finally get out of the water. It is pretty much exactly I needed. I feel as good as new. I switch on my phone and apply lotion. Text messages come in flooding. I dress up in my romper. Mom bought it on my birthday in February, it has a tail even.

I get in bed and take my phone. I go straight Mvelo's texts. She's really worried wherever she is, so many texts and missed calls. I ring her up drop before she answers. I'm out of air.

She calls immediately with her office phone.

Mvelo: "Tell me you're okay" she says soon as I answer.

Me: "Yeah I'm good babe. How are you?"

Mvelo: "A mess. I need to see you. I've never been so scared in my life. Didn't they harm you in that place?"

Me: "No they didn't. Calm down"

Mvelo: "I can't. I know her, she's very disregarding of other people she thinks she breathes flavoured air that one"

Me: "You won't believe I have to go and apologize to her"

Mvelo: "That's messed up. I hate that bitch but I second that maybe it will get her to drop the charges" I sigh.

Me: "Yeah maybe. Let me sleep I will call you later"

Mvelo: "Penthouse or parents house?"

Me: "Parents house"

Mvelo: "Okay I'll see you later"

Me: "Ok sweets. Bye"

Mvelo: "Bye"

...

The following morning we wake up and head downstairs for breakfast. Mvelo slept over. We spent the whole night talking about her Prince charming. She is inlove and nobody can convince her otherwise.

He is sending his uncles next weekend for lobola negotiations. He is pretty much determined to make Mvelo his wife. So next week we're off to KZN, New Castle. I've only been there once and I'm happy we're going there next week.

None of the parents are in sight. They must be on the Thursday daily prayer. We eat breakfast over a light conversation and we go upstairs to prepare for leaving.

Me: "Can you please drop me off at the hospital? I can't afford to drive any car from now on. Its costly"

Mvelo: "No problem. We can do it the other way around even. I will ask Nduna to pick me up after work"

Me: "What kind of car does he drive?" She chuckles.

Mvelo: "BMW X6"

Me: "Mmmh. Atleast he's not driving a Toyota corrola 1990 like his fellow brothers" she laughs.

Mvelo: "I told you he's different"

Me: "He is as arrogant as them. He's no different. They are all the same" she hands me a lipstick. I apply it.

Mvelo: "You are the very fine one to judge Zulu people Sabathile" I laugh.

Me: "Don't even dare woman. By the way having this little Zulu blood in me does not mean I should look past their flaws. They are the oppressive tribe and that's it"

Mvelo: "Maybe you're right. Maybe you're not. We should visit my grandma at Nkandla and you shall explore the Zulu culture and it's people maybe then you'll see what kind of people they really are"

Me: "New Castle is my limit. I'd never go further than that."

Mvelo: "We gonna go anyway"

Her phone rings. Her smile widens.

Mvelo: "Babakhe" wtf!!!! This Nduna is trying so hard to steal my friend away from me.

I take our bags and lead the way out. The parents drive in as I lock. I leave the key hanging. Oh my car is here

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dad must've been the one to fetch it from that company.

Oh she's alone. She gets off the car.

Melissa: "At least I found you here I was driving like a crazy woman"

Me: "What for?"

Melissa: "To find you guys here. Did you eat?"

Mvelo: "Yes we did. Washed the dishes we used even" we usually don't so yeah it's an achievement.

Melissa: "You did? You girls are growing up. Come back here after work okay"

Me: "Mvelo has plans with her man"

Mvelo: "I can cancel"

Melissa: "What? Oh no. Go have fun. We can spend time tomorrow evening, that's if you and man doesn't have plans"

Mvelo: "That sounds great. I'll bring the snacks"

Me: "Don't even look at me I'm broke"

Melissa: "Nobody is looking at you. Go before you're late. Lexi, approach that young lady with remorse okay?"

Me: "Yep"

Melissa: "Alexis"

Me: "I will mom stop worrying"

She smiles and wave us goodbye as we reverse out...

...

I open the door slowly. The first thing my eyes come across is a leg hanging from a sling.

This isn't her.

"What hell are you doing here?" I jump. I did not hear the door open. I'm still puzzled by this injured leg.

Me: "I-"

Woman: "Are you here to finish my daughter? Do you see the damage you caused?"

Me: "What? No. I'm here to apologize"

Woman: "We do not want your filthy apology you crack head. You can keep it for the trail day. You better start getting yourself prepared for jail girly or to never work again in your life. Get the hell out of here"

I walk past her heading out. I do not remember doing anything to her leg...

I drive to my place. I thought my parents were bluffing about the hardship of finding a job with a criminal record.

I just read some scary things here on the internet written by people with records. I am a first offender, shouldn't that get the companies to reconsider?

I arrive. I take the lift and get off at the 2nd floor. I see a lady coming out with a laundry basket. We smile at each and I head inside the laundry.

Uh the vacancy post is still here.

Is he always eating this thing? My God.

Me: "Greetings" he nods. He's not much a talker I've concluded.  
"How are you?"

Him: "I'm good. I had no electricity. I just put your clothes in the machine. I kept your underwears in the bag" I laugh. I keep forgetting to double check when bringing the laundry.

Me: "I'm sorry those are new I must've picked them up with those clothes" he nods and feast on his Russian.

I rub my palms together. I'm nervous.

Him: "Anything else?"

Me: "Nope. Keep well" I walk away. What am I doing?

I turn around swiftly.

Me: "Actually yes. Have you found an assistant?"

Him: "Not yet"

Me: "Where can I submit my cv?"

Him: "You want to work here?"

Me: "Yes" he laughs. "I'm serious" I walk to thr counter.

"Look...what's your name?"

Him: "Philani"

Me: "Yes Philani. I'm in a very tight spot, my father cut me off

and said I should look for a job or they find me a husband. And then I was called for an interview on Tuesday, things got out of hand I ended up involved in a physical fight with the COO of that company and laid charges. You know how it is out there with a criminal record"

Philani: "It actually isn't. That's a minor crime" he open a can of coke and gulps it down. "But, you can work here while you look for a job."

Me: "Really. Thank you thank you thank you" I squeal around.

Philani: "Here. Fill this form and then hand me your ID, tax number and bank statement if you have it with you"

Me: "It's in my phone."

Philani: "You can email it." He writes down the email and give it to me.

I send the documents and fill the form.

Me: "What do I do now?"

Philani: "Would you like to start?"

Me: "Yes. What do I do?"

Philani: "Get in"

Me: "Oh yes"

I walk to the far end where the entrance is.

Philani: "You can start buy putting in the clothes a green basket"

I stare at him blankly.



Me: "Uhm...one little problem, I don't know how those work"  
He sighs.

Philani: "Ofcourse you don't" he gets up from the chair.

Me: "What do you mean ofcourse?" I say following him to where the machines are.

Philani: "You probably had about 20 maids at your house doing your laundry, making your bed, running you a bath and making you breakfast"

Me: "They were 3 actually"

Philani: "Same difference"

Me: "My salary, how much are we talking?"

Philani: "What does this button do?"

Me: "I don't know"

Philani: "I thought as much. Let's focus at teaching you things that will lead to you getting your salary."

I have a job. Alexis McVeigh, a whole employee. My parents are gonna be so proud. Can't wait to disappoint Will and his goons...

5

Turns out Philani is very much of a chatterbox. This 3 days I've been with him have been hilarious. He's literally a comedian and was very patient with me.

I told my parents I found a job and didn't get much into details. They're McVeighs I doubt they consider my job as a job. They were happy and couldn't wait to hear about it all. Pity this weekend I couldn't be with them. I had to drive straight to New Castle after work yesterday. I hate the fact that we also work on Saturdays. I like having my weekends to myself.

Mrs Nduna had to leave on Friday to start with the preparations.

And she outdid herself. I want to chow all this meat right now. She slaps my hand away. I laugh.

Me: "I can't help myself"

Mvelo: "Please behave."

Me: "Are they gonna eat all this food?"

Mvelo: "What do you think?"

Omuhle gets in running.

Omuhle: "They are coming" she whispers in excitement. She's Mvelo's little sister. She's 20 and she could take your eyes out if you are not careful she's too hyper for a 20 year old.

Me: "Oh my God what do we do now?"

Mvelo: "We stay here until we are called"

I peep through the window.

Me: "Oh my freakin God. They are going to finish this food for real. Look at those stomachs"

Mvelo: "They could see you"

Me: "I doubt. They all have glasses on. I don't see Nduna there"

Mvelo: "The mkhwenyana doesn't come to the negotiations dummy"

Me: "Oh. At least his people have sense of fashion"

Omuhle: "I thought I was the only one who had a problem with his sense of fashion" They were still not yet to the rondavel. Those bellies must be heavy as hell.

Mvelo: "Well I love him and his sense of fashion. It goes well with mine. You should see us walking hand in hand. Me in my female suit and heels and then him on his Brentwood and uzzi vest. Priceless" we had turned to look at her. She's is love struck.

Me: "As long as there'll be a white wedding"

Mvelo: "There won't be"

Omuhle and I scream. We immediately stop and get off the cupboard when aunty.

Aunty: "You two hood rats. Where's your respect?"

Omuhle: "We're sorry aunty. Mvelo just told us there won't be"

a white wedding"

Aunty: "So? Get your own men and have your own white weddings. Make yourselves useful and go make up the bed where I was sleeping"

Omuhle giggles and go away.

Aunty: "Coconut. Pass me the salt"

Mvelo: "Hha aunty. That's babomkhulu's food"

Aunty: "You will make him another one. I'm starving" I give her the salt. "Let's thank the man above you know what salt is. Go make fire outside"

Me: "Its already been done"

Aunty: "Then go put more woods. Mvelo make me tea. Don't just stand there and watch me like you've never seen me before"

I head to the door. Mvelo's mom gets in, she takes my hand.

Dumisile: "Why aren't you girls ready?"

Aunty: "That one must put more woods on the fire and Mvelo is making me tea"

Dumisile: "Not today aunty please. Come"

She pulls us both to Mvelo's bedroom.

Mvelo: "I don't even know why you guys had to tell her"

Dumisile: "You know your father loves his sister"

Me: "Her and aunt Mary have a skill to ruin everyone's mood" we laugh.

Dumisile: "That old witch. I got to give it to Melissa for being able to put up with that woman's shenanigans"

Me: "Its not like she has a choice." Mvelo looks at me smitten. "What?"

Mvelo: "You look crazily beautiful in that" I turn around and look at myself on the mirror.

Dumisile: "Look at you. Mvelo dress up I need to take a picture"

Mvelo: "I'm so nervous"

Me: "You're bound to be" I take out her dress.

Dumisile: "I'll go get Omuhle. Your uncle might come to call you in any time now"

She walks out. I assist Mvelo put on her dress. It fits her perfectly. Nduna done chose a very beautiful, successful and selfless woman here. The dress is maxi, same design as mine but different color. It hugs her perfectly.

We're now crying looking at our reflections in the mirror. We hug tightly.

Mvelo: "Do you think I'm making a good decision by getting married?"

Me: "No because I'm gonna see little of you when you're married but in other terms, yes. You love him, he loves you. You're happy. And you're smart, I know you wouldn't have agreed to marry him if he didn't keep your peace intact and

you're smart enough to let go when he starts interfering with it." She giggles through the tears and we hug again.

Omuhle: "Okay love birds cheer up" we laugh.

Mvelo: "Put on your dress and stop meddling"

Omuhle: "I saw Nduna's car outside"

Mvelo: "They are driving it"

Me: "He should've came too"

I take powder and powder Mvelo up.

Dumisile: "Its time. Put those things over your shoulders. Lexi remember, no eye contact"

Me: "Noted" we laugh.

Dumisile: "Let me quickly take a picture" we pose. The shutter clicks more than once and then uncle Bhova peeps his head in and we follow him.

Omuhle walking infront

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me behind her and Mvelo at last. We get to the rondavel.

We sit on a grass matt by the door.

Uncle Bhova: "These are the beautiful flowers we have in this home. Which one amongst them caught your son's eye?"

The man gets up and walk to us. He crouche before Mvelo and hand her a towel.

Man: "This one"

Uncle Bhova: "Mvelo, do you know these people?"

Mvelo: "Yebo baba"

Uncle Bhova: "Okay you may leave"

We get up and follow each other out.

Me: "Have you met them before?"

Mvelo: "No. They saw me in pictures I believe"

Me: "What happens if they choose the wrong one?"

Mvelo: "They get fined but that hardly happens"

I nod. There's fresh air in the kitchen. We warm up the meat and dish up.

Omuhle: "Your trick worked. The rice is still hot"

Me: "That's all I know about cooking" we laugh.

Mvelo: "My offer still stands. You will not live off takeaways till the day you die"

Me: "I will visit you every afternoon when you're married so that I take notes when you cook"

Omuhle: "You mean to tell me you can't even cook a boiled chicken?"

Me: "I've never tried"

We served the people. Thinking that after finishing off here we have to drive to Joburg made me wanna cry my lungs out.

We washed dishes afterwards. Time moves faster when you don't want it to.

We lied on the bed facing the ceiling.

Mvelo: "I'm so lazy to drive"

Me: "That makes the both of us"

The door creak open.

Omuhle: "I'm going to miss you guys" we sit up straight.

Me: "Leaving already?"

Omuhle: "Yes. I have an early test tomorrow"

Mvelo: "Uhh. Good luck babe" we share a group hug. The car horn honks outside.

Omuhle: "That's my cue. Drive safely. I love you both" she blows us kisses before she closes the door.

Mvelo: "We should also get going"

Me: "I'm still enjoying being here"

Mvelo: "Please stop being a baby. Let's go"

We pull our luggage to the car. We are using mine. We go back inside to bid the parents goodbye.

After our teary goodbye we finally hit the road. I wish we weren't leaving...

...

As usual. I'm late again. I take a brief shower and put on the nearest clothes. I make cereal and take my phone. I get on the lift. Philani is gonna have me for breakfast today.



Philani: "Punctuality babes punctuality!" He says as I step in.

Me: "I'm sorry. I didn't hear my alarm"

Philani: "I've taken 4 loads already. You owe me"

Me: "Oh yes I do. Thank you. You're the best" I give him the bowl.

Philani: "Go get us decent breakfast"

Me: "By decent you mean kota?"

Philani: "No. I mean your kind of decent breakfast"

Me: "That's the best news I've heard all day"

Philani: "Its 07:30" I chuckle.

Me: "Whatever" I take his card. "You consume every thing right?"

Philani: "Yes. Except bacon"

Me: "Okay"

I start off by checking if the machines were still going on and then leave.

My phone rings as I get off on the ground floor. I take a shuttle.

Me: "Mommy"

Melissa: "I already hate the idea of you working if I won't get to see you on weekends"

Me: "Weekends are the busiest my love"

Melissa: "We are having lunch today at Laura gardens. Will you be able to join us?"

Me: "Who's 'us'?"

Melissa: "Me, your father, Lisa and Lucas"

Me: "I'll see if my boss agrees of which I doubt he will. Hi, 2 chicken mayo sandwiches, fries and creamed coffee Please"

Melissa: "Are you an assistant?"

Me: "Something like that. Large coffee please"

Melissa: "What's the name of your company?"

Me: "Its...its Hamptons"

Melissa: "Oh. Never heard of it"

Me: "Me neither. I'll call you later to inform you if I will be able to come or not"

Melissa: "Ok my baby. Love you"

Me: "Love you more"

"Sir please pay up or I will call the police. As a manager of this store I have a right to lay charges against you"

Guy: "Someone will be here shortly with my wallet"

Manager: "I'm not playing with you my guy."

I walk over to their table.

Me: "Hi. The traffic is insane. I couldn't find your wallet I found the card instead. Morning ma'am"

Manager: "Are you his assistant?"

Me: "Uhm yes ma'am. I'm deeply sorry for the inconvenience. It's all my fault"

Manager: "Go get the speed point" she says to the waitress. The guy is looking at me crazy. I send my eyes far away. The

waitress comes back with a speed point. I pay up. They walk away.

Guy: "Thank you so much. It's hard being my kind in such environments."

Me: "I know right."

Guy: "Please jot down your banking details so I will replace your money"

Me: "No need to. I don't know when will I be down and need help. I was doing it out of goodness"

Guy: "Thank you. Where have you been? That white lady almost killed me. If it wasn't for this beautiful lady I'd be behind bars as we speak" he says to his assistant I assume. My order gets called. I leave them to fetch it.

I take a shuttle again back to the building.

Philani: "I was about to call the police"

Me: "Oh please. I borrowed R100"

Philani: "I saw. Our boss is coming today. Be nice"

Me: "I'm forever nice"

Philani: "Be extra nice because he isn't"

Me: "I'll just hide in the laundry room"

Philani: "He wants to see you and check if everything is still going on good. Mmmh this tastes good"

Me: "I know right. So, what am I expected to do when he comes?"

Philani: "Give him a Colgate smile and offer him coffee. Black one"

Me: "Is the Jacobs his?"

Philani: "Yes baby. With only 2 teaspoons of sugar" he is so white.

Me: "Only satans drink that coffee"

Philani: "He's a bit of that"

We laugh. We eat over a silly conversation. I text mom that I can't make it to lunch.

I receive a text from Mvelo that she's taking me out for dinner later. She's the best.

Philani excuses himself. I steal his fries. I am certain I have gained a few pounds. We eat in this place. Takeaways after takeaways.

"Greetings" I jump and almost spill my coffee.

Me: "Really? There was no need to thud the counter"

Him: "Apologies princess. I would like you to clean my clothes got me" he puts his bag on the scale and remove it before I could see what it costs.

Me: "Can you please put the bag again?"

Him: "Maybe if you took your job seriously you'd have seen how much it weighs"

Me: "Well I was still looking for a pen"

Him: "Why isn't your pen in your desk where you can see it?"

Me: "Can you please put the bag there again and stop acting all righteous"

He smirks and place it again. "Okay you can move it. That'll cost R200"

Him: "Strictly Surf for my white tees and then OMO for my caps and jackets. And my clothes can't be mixed with other people's" See why I can't stand this kind? So now his clothes must be washed seperately?

Me: "I'm afraid we don't do that here"

Him: "Can I have coffee?"

Me: "This isn't a coffee shop"

Him: "Sabathile McVeigh can I please have coffee? Strong with 2 sugars please"

Me: "As I've said this isn't-" oh God no. No no no!

Philani: "Sir. You're here early."

Him: "Yes I am. I have somewhere to go later. Am I gonna get my coffee Sabathile?" I gulp.

Me: "Yes. Uhm yes sir. Coming right up"

I storm to the kitchen. My hands fail to hold the kettle steady. I hope he doesn't fire me.

The water boils quicker than expected. I make his coffee and go back. He's now in busy on the computer. Yep he's wearing the famous shoes but the carvela ones.

Me: "Here you go Sir"

Him: "Thank you Sabathile"

Me: "Alexis"

Him: "Ok Sabathile. Nice to meet you. I'm Bhekisizwe samaNcube" whatever the hell that is.

Me: "Likewise. I'm sorry about-"

Bheki: "Please go help Philani"

With pleasure.

Me: "Why didn't you tell me he's black?"

Philani: "Who?"

Me: "Our boss! Do you know how mean was I to him?" He laughs

Philani: "Wow. Maybe that's why he's nice today. Why would you assume he's white?"

Me: "Because of Jacobs. Ugh I wanna jump out this window"

Philani: "Who told you black people do not drink Jacobs?"

Me: "Its too bitter for our taste buds"

"Sabathile?"

Me: "Why the hell did you tell him that name?"

Philani: "Its on your documents girly"

Bheki: "Sabathile!"

Me: "Coming!"

I find him holding his both hands before chest with a smirk on his face.

Bheki: "Please get ready we're going to buy the equipment"

Me: "I am ready"

Bheki: "Let's go then"

He leads the way out.

Bheki: "Ehh Sabathile, can you drive?"

Me: "With all due respect. I prefer the Lexi name"

Bheki: "With all due respect. This is my mouth and my voice so I will say what I like with it. Sabathile"

Its official I do not like him. I get on the passenger seat.

He takes out a can of play and lean on the car and drinks it slowly and passionately and greets everybody passing by.

This is one weird person. I need this job so I will be patient..

6

He walks in with takeaways. I take a quick sip from my cup to finish all the remaining coffee-vodka. Don't judge please. A girl needs to plug at least once a week even if it means stealing her boss's hidden vodka that she found cleaning. Yes I cleaned yesterday after 5 hours at the mall getting the equipment.

Although it is not something I'd rather do for the rest of my life but I am getting there. This place is squiky clean than I've ever seen it so I guess that's good progress on my cleaning skills.

Bheki: "Sawubona we Sabathile" I sigh.

Me: "Goodday Sir" he smirks.

Bheki: "Food" he says placing it on top of the counter.

Me: "Thank you"

Bheki: "Where is Philani?"

Me: "He went to get some things from the shop. He should be back anytime from now"

Bheki: "This place looks different and smells nice"

Me: "I cleaned" he frowns looking around and then gets back at me.

Bheki: "Its good to know you can clean with those wizard nails"

Me: "Yes" I take the takeaways. "Are you gonna be staying?"

Bheki: "Yeah if I want to"

Me: "Okay. Please make yourself at home I'm busy with something here"

Bheki: "I have a few errands to run. The 2 new machines will



arrive at 6pm make sure you're here"

Me: "But I knock off at 5"

Bheki: "Today you'll knock off at 6:30. I'll pay for that hour and a half"

Me: "Fine"

Bheki: "Have a good day miss" yeah whatever get lost.

Me: "Thank you sir. You do too" I hope you run to a very big man and he beats your ass. He smiles.

Bheki: "Thank you"

He turns around to leave. He's not wearing those shoes today. At least he's into sneakers.

I reach for my phone on the charger and call Mvelo.

Mvelo: "My baby"

Me: "Can you please create posts there? I need a job"

Mvelo: "What has prince charming done now?" She's so obsessed with this kind in a way that she found it amusing that Bheki made me stay in the car for 30 minutes straight waiting for him to finish up drinking his Play and then forced me to drive and kept calling me that sick name.

Me: "I really miss my Mvelo not this hopeless romantic person" she laughs. "Well Bheki the boss ordered me to knock off at 6:30 so I don't think we can still meet"

Mvelo: "Are you kidding me? I miss you. We'll have our little picnic at my house. Do you have fuel money?"

Me: "You know I don't"

Mvelo: "I'll eft you"

Me: "No just uber me"

Mvelo: "Okay my love. Wine?"

Me: "My life is too complicated to drink wine I want something strong"

Mvelo: "You're going to work tomorrow"

Me: "More reasons for something strong"

Mvelo: "I give up on you child...oh your mom called she said your phone isn't going through"

Me: "I blocked her calls. They say they want to come to my work place and you know I can't let that happen"

Mvelo: "But she's never judged you"

Me: "Dad, aunt Mary, Will and the Whitney will"

Mvelo: "So are you going to avoid them forever?"

Me: "No but I'm planning on avoiding them until I have enough money to move out."

Mvelo: "Okay babe. Let me go fire someone. Hardest part of my job" I laugh.

Me: "I'm sorry sweetie. You signed up for it"

Mvelo: "Yes I did. Bye"

Me: "See ya"

I hang up and chuckle.

"Someone's inlove" I jump.

Me: "Oh please. Love is overrated"

Philani: "No its not. You wouldn't be smiling like that without a man"

Me: "Well I am because men are good for nothing but disappointment in my books"

Philani: "What's his name?"

Me: "Who? There's really no man"

Philani: "The man who broke your heart. I want to pay him a visit" I laugh.

Me: "And do what? I'm pretty sure you wouldn't hurt a fly"

Philani: "True but I can break someone's neck"

He takes a seat next to me. "I thought you were broke"

Me: "I am. Boss man brought this"

Philani: "Don't touch it!" I startle.

Me: "Why?"

Philani: "It could be a bomb" I sigh.

Me: "Really Philani? I almost fell off the chair"

Philani: "I see him once a month if God reminds him he owns this place. He doesn't bring nothing but his arrogant self."

Me: "He's not that bad come on"

Philani: "I've worked for him for 7 years now. This place is starting to feel like mine, well it was until now because he's showing little interest"

Me: "Can we please eat now?"

Philani: "I think he likes you" I gag.

Me: "Eww. Very eww I don't date and even if I was I wouldn't

date a man that considers honchos and chicken licken as lunch"

Philani: "There must've been no KFC where he was. It's his favorite but this is meat who cares where is it from?" I raise my hand. He huff and take out the food. He bought spa letta creme soda tiny cans. God what planet is this man from? Who drinks green fizzy drinks?

Me: "I'll down my food with that flying fish" It is "some things" Philani went to buy. He's as corrupt as I am but a bit better because I doubt he's ever stolen that vodka.

Philani: "You're ungrateful"

Me: "I am not but I will not drink this thing. I only drink diet coke alcohol thanks"

He chuckles and pass me my 6 carry pack. I smile alone and kiss it.

Me: "Hello my love. This here is my true love and whom I'd marry"

Philani: "God save your child"

Me: "I was saved the he created the brewers of any alcohol"

He laughs and we eat. He's wearing a fitting shirt today. I was hoping we'll talk about going shopping for fitting clothes today but he will just defend himself with this shirt so we'll talk when he has one of those t-shirts on...

...

"Hello. Ma'am? Hi" It felt like a dream until I came to my senses that it isn't. Someone is actually here.

I open my eyes. Indeed there is. I clear my throat and try to get up but my body fails me.

Me: "Uhm Hi. Here to deliver machines?"

Man: "Uhm yes. I'm sorry we're late we had a bit of crisis"

What does he mean late? If he's late then what time is it? I search for my phone. When did Philani leave?

I find a note.

'I put everything in your bag' I pull my bag from under my chair.

I find my phone. No no no!

There are numerous missed calls from Mvelo. Its close to 8pm.

The man clears his throat.

Me: "I'm sorry. I'm just...please come in"

He calls someone.

Man: "Please sign here"

I take the clipboard and sign. I attempt to get up again and the miracle happens, my body lets me .

I open the burglar and they wheel them in. They say their goodbyes. I lean against the wall and listen to my pounding head.

I finally decide to take my things and lock the burglar guard. I hear heels click on the floor. She attacks me with hug.

Mvelo: "I was so worried sick about you"

Me: "Got drunk and passed out"

Mvelo: "You were drinking at work?"

Me: "Yes."

Mvelo: "Lexi!"

Me: "Its not like my boss will find out or anything"

I pull her out.

Mvelo: "Still. It is not allowed"

Me: "Yes ma'am. It was just this once"

Mvelo: "Well I hope so."

She double checks if I locked and leads me to the lift.

Me: "Are we still going to your house?"

Mvelo: "No we're going to the penthouse. We'll have dinner and then watch a movie"

Me: "With our phones off?"

Mvelo: "Why?"

Me: "Because Shaka's warrior never stops calling" she laughs.

Mvelo: "That's funny because he complains about the same thing"

Me: "I was here first I have all the rights to call whenever"

Mvelo: "And I'm his fiance"

Me: "Whatever"

We arrive at the penthouse.

Mvelo: "You're improving. Its so clean in here"

Me: "Yes plus now I know how to use these machines"

Mvelo: "They were never complicated you were just ignorant"

Me: "Thanks for reminding me. What are we gonna eat?"

Mvelo: "I feel like something greasy and spicy"

Me: "I shall forever be battled by how you consume so much fat but never gain any weight "

Mvelo: "That makes the both of us honey"

Me: "No I do gain"

Mvelo: "That's because you eat and sleep and you hate stairs"

Me: "Well excuse me for not trying to faint"

Mvelo: "They have great impact trust me. Bring the shower snacks" all the time! She laughs and run to my room.

I find her in her undies.

Me: "Can you be the one to bring shower snacks next time?"

Mvelo: "No"

Me: "Okay. Fetch the shower drink and glasses please because I took them out this morning" she looks at me defeated.

Me: "Don't just stand there. Go" she waves her middle fingers in the air. I wave mine back and pour the snacks to the bowl. I

strip naked and walk to the bathroom. I turn off the taps and light the candles.

She gets in and pour the champagne to our glasses and then joins me on applying our go to scrub.

Me: "I miss such nights you know"

Mvelo: "Me too and Nduna is granting me as many as I want because we are getting married soon"

Me: "That breaks my heart"

Mvelo: "Come on. We'll have our time but not as much as we used to"

Me: "Can't I like, move in with you guys? I promise I'll be a good kid" we laugh.

Mvelo: "You know that home is wherever I am"

Me: "I do babe. You know it bruises my ego to admit this but I'm happy about how the Shaka's warrior makes you happy. And to see that he's willing to love you for the rest of your life is insanely beautiful and I'm happy for you" she hugs me.

Mvelo: "You don't know how happy am I to hear that"

Me: "I love you"

Mvelo: "I love you more"

We finally soak our selves on the warm water and she tells me about her bedroom experiments. Call me crazy but I love hearing about those. I want it but the problem is that its from men and I could never survive those artificial penises.



Sometimes I regret not going home on my first year Easter holidays. I wouldn't have met that villain.

He found me peaceful

Advertisement

trusting and innocent and decided to shake all that up.

My very first love and probably the last made sure I never look at men the same. Wherever he is he must be celebrating because he succeeded.

You know when you're young and naive. Seeing beautiful intentions in everyone who shows you love. I fell for that trap. He was so sweet, caring and I concluded he was the love of my life. I had never seen him in our building before and I was so smitten when he asked to buy me ice cream which turned out to be an ice cream date. We talked for hours and killed ourselves with ice cream.

That was the beginning of our little union. We did everything together. He was working as a chartered accountant, he had his shit together which made him more attractive.

I fell real hard for him. Our relationship was all bliss until September that year when I was packing for our mini baecation in Durban. I received a call from a number I couldn't realize, she was crying hysterically saying I killed her husband. I didn't

understand until she mentioned: "If it wasn't for you home wrecker and your Durban trip Paul would still be alive"

I was broken twice. A man kept me in the dark and then died leaving me to deal with myself and guilt of dating a married man. Up to this day I haven't forgiven myself for his death. I hated the fact that I am exactly like my mother. The fact that I didn't know and that I didn't fall pregnant doesn't make it okay. I gave an innocent woman sleepless nights.

If he wasn't taking me to Durban he'd still be alive. He left his wife and their unborn baby.

I vowed to myself to never fall inlove. I vowed to die alone because men never have good intentions which made me hire someone to do a background check on Nduna with my last money because I can't let anything like that happen to my friend who's the biggest part of my life....

The house phone rings.

Me: "Go get that"

Mvelo: "It must be our food"

Me: "Perfect timing cause I'm dying"

She gets out and take a gown.

I get out too and remove the stopper. I put on the gown and take the bowl, glasses and an empty bottle of champagne.

That's us. We could drink 3 drums in one night.

She runs in.

Me: "What's chasing you?"

Mvelo: "Its not our food"

Me: "Who is it then?" She bites her upper lip.

Mvelo: "Bheki"

Me: "Tell me you didn't grant him access"

Mvelo: "Let's just say he's on 10th floor now"

The lift dings. "Or not" she runs back to the bed room. He has flowers in his hands. Holy ghost please burn him up right now! He turns around quickly.

Bheki: "Ntombi emhlophe please excuse me for budging in so late. I see you're even in your undies. Please go dress up I'll be here"

Me: "This is a gown"

Bheki: "An outsider can not see you in your sleep wear nkosazana. I'm in a bit of a hurry so please put clothes on"

Me: "Or you could just say what you need without looking and leave"

Bheki: "Great. I brought you these flowers to thank you for staying up until late for the delivery guys and to take the keys. You have a day off tomorrow you can go and buy yourself something nice"

Me: "Thank you. I'll go fetch keys for you"

I walk to the bedroom.

Mvelo: "What is he saying?"

Me: "That this is an underwear."

Mvelo: "Well it is. These are the kinds of robes to wear to sexy bae"

Me: "Oh God it's contagious" she laughs and tosses me the big gown. I put it on and take the keys.

I find him still in the same position.

Me: "You can turn around" he does.

Bheki: "Is it snowing in your bedroom?"

Me: "What? Why would you..." its the gown. I laugh. "This is what I could find" I give him the keys.

Bheki: "Bye bye"

Me: "The flowers"

Bheki: "Oh yeah" he hands them over. They look fresh from the garden.

Me: "Thank you"

The lift closes.

Mvelo: "He's so romantic. See? Zulu men aren't bad at all. Or men in general"

I put the flowers on the counter and pretend I didn't hear that. "So. What's the story behind these beautiful fresh flowers?"

Me: " A Thank you for staying up late for the delivery guys" we stare at each other and bust out laughing.

Mvelo: "If only he knew it was unintentional"

Me: "He doesn't need to know that"

The phone rings again. I get it. It's our food...

...

The sun rays pointed straight to my skin causing me to wake up.

I find a note and a card on top on the cabinet.

'Go pamper yourself. It's been long' I smile and get up. I fix the bed.

I text mom after.

'Morning Queen. Lunch?'

And then text daddy. Just a greeting.

I haven't seen them in a while and I miss them so much but part of growing up includes being scarce right?

I take a quick shower. Its 9am I'm already late. I need new clothes and 11am isn't a good time to start shopping. Plus I'm taking my car with me today. I miss her.

I apply little make up and head for the lift. I pass by the work place to check on Philani.

I arrive on ground floor and everyone is talking about missing flowers.

"What a terrible person that is. Mrs Kavinsky worked so hard growing her flowers"

"Why couldn't that thief steal these ugly ones"

"The security must check the footage"

"They did. The thief had a black plastic over his head and 9 people checked in at 10pm"

Such a coincidence that Bheki came here at 10 with fresh flowers. He's sick in the head I swear. I call Mrs Nduna.

Mvelo: "Why do I still have so much money in that account?"

Me: "Zulu men aren't that bad huh?"

Mvelo: "Who have they killed?"

Me: "Those flowers! He stole Mrs Kavinsky's flowers" she laughs.

Mvelo: "Its the thought that counts. What a gentleman"

Me: "You're possessed. Thanks for the card looney"

I hang up and text Bheki.

'Really? Do you know how much she loves those flowers?'

My phone beeps as I drive out.

'I only took 10, I left the whole 5 she must stop being dramatic and selfish'

He doesn't even see anything wrong with it....

7

It's been 3 weeks. My life is...I wouldn't say best but I'm happy with what I'm learning each day on the "Real world". I'm actually happy my parents decided I should get a glimpse outside my usual little world.

I got my first ever salary last week and I still haven't used it. I want to move out of the penthouse before the due date. The money I earned is enough to get me an apartment to rent next month when I get paid again.

Philani and I went for shopping last week Friday. I thank the lady that just moved in, he was going to give me hard time when I told him he should get new clothes. He has a huge crush on her apparently. I thought he was gay. I was really surprised when he told me he thinks he likes someone.

We have not seen nor heard from Mr Bheki since the day after he stole Mrs Kavinsky's flowers. Nomvelo is stressed she convinced me to call him but fortunately it went to voicemail. I can see she thinks I will somehow fall inlove with this Bheki and I've decided to let her be.

We've been going up and down the flee market buying things for her Nqiba masondo (A ceremony that is done after lobola negotiations. The bride gifts her in-laws with groceries and blankets). Nduna is probably dying of cancer but don't wanna

say it. Umembeso will be next month and then their wedding will be in December. I don't understand the rush. Where am I gonna get money to sew dresses for 3 occasions in a row? They better find me a better job at least before the wedding. I need to look my best, that'll be my wedding too.

Today is Monday, my day off. I love that part. I love days where by nothing can get between me and my sleep. Though Mvelo will come during lunch. We're going to check out her dress that she'll be wearing on the Nqiba masondo.

Nduna is thrilled that'll they'll be matching.

I roll over to the side and take my phone. I have 4 hours to get ready. I have to do the most annoying thing in the whole entire world: cleaning.

The intercom buzzes. That better be not someone who's here to visit.

I get up to check who is it.

'Did you send me food?' I text Mvelo as I walk to the phone.

Me: "Lexi"

Person: "Hey Lexi. Please grant me access"

Me: "Sis Buhle?"

Sis Buhle: "Yes open up"



I haven't seen her since that day she came to tell me she will not be working for me anymore: daddy's orders.

I buzz her in and fly around picking things up. Maybe my dad sent her to check if I'm able to keep this place clean. It's not that bad.

The lift dings and parts. She gives me a huge smile and opens her arms. I throw myself in.

Me: "I missed you so much"

Sis Buhle: "Not more than I did" she squeezed me one more time before letting go.

Me: "Where have you been?"

Sis Buhle: "Cape Town. Your father found me a job there"

Me: "He's such a..." she warns. I laugh. "For real. Why would he send you so far away. Its not like I would've dragged you back here to clean this place"

Sis Buhle: "Right? But I'm here anyway I decided to come and see how my baby is holding up. I can see that you're getting there"

Me: "Yes I'm trying. I can even use the machines now"

Sis Buhle: "I'm proud of you my love. Going anywhere today?"

Me: "Yes with Mvelo. She's getting married"

Sis Buhle: "Get out of here!"

Me: "Unbelievable, isn't it? Zulu Prince charming stole her

heart"

Sis Buhle: "I should get a dress ready. Also a gift. I will stay here and turn this place upside down"

Me: "You don't have to do that. You can come with us. It'll be fun"

Sis Buhle: "Girlie. Bath and fix yourself and leave. I see you've been cleaning but I know there are some corners you didn't touch"

Me: "You love spoiling me"

Sis Buhle: "I love you that's why"

Me: "I'll order us breakfast"

Sis Buhle: "I missed your expensive food. I struggled with that house delivery app"

Me: "Uber eats or Mr D food"

Sis Buhle: "The one with a walking burger" we laugh.

Me: "That's Mr D food"

Sis Buhle: "Go away please"

I laugh and walk to my bedroom. My phone rings. It's Mvelo. I throw myself on the bed and answer.

Me: "Love of my life"

Mvelo: "Don't eat it! I didn't send it"

Me: "What?...oh the food? No I thought whoever was downstairs was someone you sent to deliver me food"

Mvelo: "I almost had stroke. Is that the reason you're up early?"

Me: "No. I wanted to clean"

Mvelo: "Ok good. I might show up early"

Me: "Okay. There's Sis Buhle"

Mvelo: "Give me 2 hours"

I laugh. We're insanely fond of her. She's been my nanny since from grade 10 when aunty Dorothy died. So when I moved in here, my dad said she will come with me.

She's literally my second mom or older sister.

Me: "Okay. Let me bath and do my face"

Mvelo: "Bye babe"

She hang up. I look my reflection on the mirror. I need to redo my hair. My weaves are gonna start floating soon.

I change the linen and tide up.

\*\*\*

I did not realize my hot tub obsession until now that Mvelo is here waiting for me to dress up. There's no time to do my face anymore.

Mvelo: "You look hot"

Me: "I get it you want us to go but really?"

Mvelo: "Lexi. We're going from here to the designer and then back here. And besides oversized t-shirts and heels are the it thing recently. Where's your mickey bag?"

Me: "In my closet?"

Mvelo: "Yup I'll get it. Choose the hair you're wearing"

Me: "White?"

Mvelo: "You know every color was made for that beautiful face" I chuckle. She's such a smooth talker. She disappears to the closet. I put on foundation quickly and yep we're ready to go.

Mvelo: "Seems like baba Mlangeni is coming with us"

Me: "I am so not in the mood to be called Sabathile today"

Mvelo: "He won't. Let's go"

Sis Buhle was born for this thing. She turned it around and it looks as good as new.

She finished and bathed then buried herself on the couch and watched her weird reality tv shows.

She blatantly refused to come with us so we let her be.

Me: "Are we gonna find you here?"

Sis Buhle: "Nope. I am going to my mother's house around 3pm"

Mvelo: "Oh no we'll be back by then"

Sis Buhle: "You'll find me here then"

Me: "Thank you once again for stopping by"

Sis Buhle: "Don't sweat it" we laugh and walk to the lift.

Mvelo: "Nduna is here to fetch us"

Me: "Doesn't he have work to do?"

Mvelo: "He probably doesn't"

We get off at the ground floor. I'll see Philani on my way back.

My phone beeps.

'We'd like to see you today' its from my mother. This change seems to be effecting them more.

'Okay I'll stop by later' I respond.

Nduna: "My beautiful bride and her beautiful best lady"

Me: "Maid of honor"

Nduna: "Right. How are you doing today maid of honor? I haven't seen you in a while"

Me: "I'm good how's yourself?"

Nduna: "Very good. So are you still gonna go back inside to put on pants?"

Mvelo: "No. She's dressed"

Nduna: "Only the t-shirt?"

Me: "Its a t-shirt/dress. Can we get in the car?"

Nduna: "Is it? It's so nice being a woman" he opened the doors for us.

Me: "Thank you sir. Now tell me why do you wanna come with us?" I ask as we drive off.

Nduna: "Because I wanted to spend time with you my loves. I'm taking you out for lunch afterwards"

Me: "Really? Where? KFC or honchos?" Mvelo burst out laughing.

Mvelo: "He's not Bheki"

Nduna: "Bheki?" He looks at me on the rearview mirror. "Is that sbari?"

Me: "Oh please. He's my boss"

Nduna: "I can't wait for you to find a man"

Me: "I'm not looking"

Nduna: "Well I will look for you. I do not like this thing of sharing my wife's attention"

Me: "You signed up for this. She comes with a package"

Nduna: "A very annoying one. It would've been better if she had a child not you magogo"

Mvelo: "Baby! You guys"

Me: "I wish you gain a few extra pounds 3 days before the ceremony so that the shirt won't fit"

Nduna: "No need to be evil. Mvelo tells me you want us to pay for your wedding dresses"

Me: "Yes. I'm broke"

Nduna: "Tell me when you've found the designer" I smile.

Me: "You're sweet. You can take us to KFC no problem"

Nduna: "I'm taking you to chicken licken actually"

Mvelo: "Noway!"

Me: "Its nice"

Mvelo: "Are you kidding me?"

Nduna: "We'll buy wings"

Mvelo: "I prefer Zinger wings"

Me: "As long as it is meat"

Mvelo: "You're a betrayer"

Me: "Thanks"

Nduna put on metro. He's not that bad indeed and he hasn't called me by that name so I guess we're good...

...

I hate how much "let's grab a drink" always turns out to be a huge freakin mess. All we had to do yesterday is fit the outfits grab lunch and then come back home. I was so surprised Nduna let's Mvelo drink or even knows such beautiful places for classic people.

We no reservations but we ended inside. He has connections apperantly.

Here I am. Its 9am and I'm still in this bed looking for any possible hero to come and bath me and carry me to work.

I hate those love birds. I hear the lift dings.

Me: "I hope you got me hangover treat" I say with my insufficient voice. My phone rings. The bag is across the room. Whoever that is might like to wait a bit because I'm still gathering my strength to get up.

I hear a knock.

Me: "Come in" oh look who remembered he has employees and a laundry business. "How did you get in?"

Bheki: "I pressed penthouse and the thing moved"

Me: "Lies. Philani told you the access code"

Bheki: "You're late for work"

Me: "I am. My mom uhm..."

Bheki: "Can I bring the laptop here and you redo our logo. Upgrade the whole thing. I want to renovate the place"

Me: "Uhm no need to do that. I'll take the shower quickly then I'll be down in a minute" I try getting up but my covers trip me. This happens everytime infront of people I'd rather not have them see it.

Bheki: "Can I wait in the lounge?"

Me: "Yes you can" he's so polite today.

I get up after a little struggle to untangle the duvet. I rush to the shower.

I come back to find my bed already made and there's humming from the closet. I slowly open.

Sis Buhle: "Hi sweetie"

Me: "Hey. You're here again"

Sis Buhle: "Yes. Why are they with black heels?"

Me: "I came back really drunk last night I'm sorry"

I pull black fila sneakers. My knees will definitely not handle heels today.

I put on a dress. Anything tight will not do. I need all the fresh air I could get today.

Me: "Did you find someone in the lounge?"



Sis Buhle: "No. Who was it?"

Me: "My boss. I'll see you later"

Sis Buhle: "Bye"

I take my bag and my phone and walk out. I find him sitting on the high chair.

Bheki: "I hope you don't mind I took a seat and poured myself water"

Me: "I don't. We can go"

Bheki: "You can work from here. You don't look okay"

Me: "I had a rough night"

Bheki: "Yeah that's why you have to work from home. Just put your panties on and then help me pull this together"

Me: "You want me to be naked?"

Bheki: "Not naked naked but put on your sleepwear"

Me: "Pyjamas"

Bheki: "Yeah that"

Me: "Is it part of my job or you're just asking a favor?"

Bheki: "Its..." he clears his throat and chuckles. "I came to ask a favor. You women are good with this but I will include it in your salary"

Me: "Now we're talking"

Bheki: "Will you never ask a favor from me?"

Me: "Nope. I know how to handle my business"

Bheki: "You could never be too sure. Your taps might start acting up and I specialize in that"

Me: "I have a personal plumber thank you"

Bheki: "Let's get down to work"

Me: "Where's Philani"

Bheki: "Helping the guys pack"

Me: "Did you wake up and decided to redo the place?"

Bheki: "Yes."

I take the laptop and head to the lounge area.

Me: "Why?"

Bheki: "Its about time. I just opened the place. I never put too much effort but its making tangible profit. So its only best I show it some love"

Me: "Mmmh. So, what colors should be included on your logo?"

Bheki: "Yellow and blue?" I laugh.

Me: "I'm sorry but really?"

Bheki: "Don't laugh. Suggest those you think are the best" he pauses. "Know what? Just make it your own baby. Do whatever you want to do. I'll stop by to see the results"

Me: "You will regret that"

Bheki: "I won't"

Me: "Why are you so nice today?"

Bheki: "Because I want you to help me Lexi"

Me: "Oh you know that name?" He smirks

Bheki: "I do. And from now on I vow to never call you by that other name"

Me: "Ah thanks heavens"

Bheki: "Have a lovely day ma'am"

Me: "Thank you Sir" he smiles and turn away heading to the lift.  
I prefer this desperate him.

I text Mvelo. I will need her input...

...

Trust time to go from 10am to 5pm in 4 hours. I am not really looking forward into seeing my parents. I feel like there's a meeting, they would all give up their left ears to see where I work.

I knew it! He's here. His presence could only mean one thing: nuisance.

I park behind his car. Ugh mom is something else. Why would she let me come here knowing that this devil is here too.

I get off with goodies I bought. I won't even bother taking the laptop. My stay won't be long anyway.

Me: "Greetings"

Melissa: "Is that my baby?" She shouts from the kitchen.

Me: "Yes" I laugh and hugs daddy.

Marcus: "Did you just take a bath?"

Me: "No I naturally smell fresh"

Marcus: "You sure does"

Me: "Where's Will?"

Marcus: "Upstairs taking a bath."

Me: "He's sleeping over?"

Marcus: "Yes"

Melissa: "And he's getting married" the excitement in her face.

Me: "So fast?"

Melissa: "Yes. A King always needs a queen baby" she says hugging me.

Me: "That's why he's always divorcing."

Marcus: "Lexi!"

Me: "Its true. You know it is. When is it?"

Melissa: "On the 30th"

Me: "It would be very selfish of him to expect me to attend this one too"

Marcus: "You can't miss a wedding"

Me: "Its his 3rd wedding. What's so special about it?"

Melissa: "Alexis you will attend the wedding"

Me: "I won't. I'll send him a gift. Nothing too extreme though I'm broke"

Marcus: "I thought your job paid you well"

Me: "Yes for my needs daddy"

Melissa: "Okay. We did not call you here to discuss Will's 3rd marriage. Your father and I have a little something for you"

Me: "I thought no more gifts"

Marcus: "Don't be silly" he picks a portable box from aside and hands it to me.

Me: "What is it?" I chuckle nervously.

Melissa: "Open"

I open it. Its my car keys and my cards.

Me: "What does this mean?"

Marcus: "What do you think it means?"

Me: "You're giving it back?"

Melissa: "We've endured so much pain seeing you being alone out there trying to figure everything out on your own. When we found out you work at laundry, we realized you're exactly where we wanted you to be"

Me: "Mom..." I hug her. "And I'm doing pretty fine you guys. I'm so glad you thought of introducing me to real life"

Marcus: "Now you know how it goes on the other side of the world. You can clean even"

Me: "Yes I can"

We form a group hug.

Marcus: "You can come be my p.a."

Me: "I am enjoying my job"

Melissa: "I am proud of you"

Marcus: "We are proud of you"

Me: "Thank you my loves"

"Just in time"

We let go. I sigh.

Aunt Mary: "I thought I'd miss you"

Melissa: "We weren't expecting you"

Aunty Mary: "Ofcourse you weren't. Oh Where are my manners. This is Ronnie, Lexi's soon to be husband"

Us: "What?"

Aunt Mary: "Yes. I will not let you humiliate us"

Me: "Well you dragged feet" mom and dad look at me surprised.

Melissa: "What do you mean?" I gulp.

Me: "I am seeing someone"

Aunt Mary: "You are?"

Me: "Yes."

Aunt Mary: "My boy please go make yourself something to eat in the kitchen"

I wanna puke! What does aunt Mary take me for? A man who wears such big jeans? Really?

Marcus: "So, who's the lucky guy?" Oh oh.

Me: "The lucky guy?" I fake laugh. "I wouldn't really say that"

Aunt Mary: "We're waiting on the name!"

Me: Its...its Bheki samaNcube"

Aunt Mary: "What on earth is that?"

Me: "My boyfriend"

Melissa: "We'd love to meet him"

Me: "No! I mean it's only been for a few weeks"

Marcus: "That's why we need to see him. We'll get to judge if he's perfect for you or not"

Aunt Mary: "This Saturday will do. Everyone will be around"

Me: "He's a very busy man. That's too short notice"

Aunt Mary: "If he doesn't show up on Saturday then you're getting married to Ronnie."

Melissa: "That will not happen. Love please reprimand your sister. She's too involved in my daughter's life its sickening"

She says and pull me outside. Well done mommy.

My phone rings.

Me: "I got to take this"

She nods and I walk the opposite direction. Why didn't I think of Philani though? How am I gonna explain this to Bheki? He will probably laugh and think I'm crazy....

8

I hate it when I need someone so much and they don't answer. Does she even have any idea how much I need to talk to her?

"Lexi? Supper is ready" mom says after attempting to open. I just came here and locked myself in. I can't stand aunt Mary and her questions about "my man". It's like she sees through me.

Me: "Okay. I was bathing I'll be right there in a minute"

Melissa: "Ok hurry. I don't want you driving at night"

Me: "Yes mom"

I hear footsteps fade away. I look through my pyjama dresser and find a romper. This will do. I put it on. This weather is crazy. When I arrived it was warm but now we're June. I'm so glad thunder found me this side. It gets really traumatic to be at the penthouse. I can't stand lightening.

I ring Mvelo again. It goes to voicemail. I hate this life.

I find everyone already eating.

Aunt Mary: "You'll never change"

Me: "What sin have I committed now?"

Will: "Arrived late in the table"

Me: "I told mom I will be late"

Marcus: "Kenneth will drive you. It's late now"

Me: "I'll be fine dad"



Melissa: "Not up for discussion. Men are very wicked these days. Crime rate is shooting high, especially car theft"

Me: "But you're letting a man drive me"

Marcus: "I'll drive you then"

Will: "Worry not uncle. I will"

Me: "Let me just leave now. Its just a few minutes after 8"

Melissa: "Lexi no"

I get up and rush to the kitchen. I take the bag that has my food.

Me: "FYI I do drive from my place to Mvelo's at 2am so worry not. And besides I wanna pass by my boyfriend's place" mom smiled.

Melissa: "Why didn't you just say? But that food is enough for the both of you"

Me: "Thank you my love"

Marcus: "Tell him we're looking forward to seeing him"

Me: "I will" I faint smile and walk out with mom and dad.

I put the bag on the passenger seat.

Marcus: "We're proud of you"

Me: "Because I have a man?"

Melissa: "Who cares about that? Mary is going through menopause. We would never choose a man for you"

Marcus: "Your happiness comes first baby. Aunt Mary and Will are fighting a losing battle. I am happy though you have a man"

now" I shouldn't have lied!

Me: "Let me love you and leave you"

We do a group hug and then I get into my car. They watch me drive away...

...

The intercom buzzes. He's early. I get off the high chair and buzz him in.

My phone rings when I sit back down.

Me: "Finally you remembered I exist"

Mvelo: "I'm sorry honey. Nduna's brothers and their wives arrived unannounced I had to cook I didn't even realize my phone is dead until now" what kind of people are those.

Me: "Oh I'm sorry love. I hope you told them to inform you next time"

Mvelo: "I sure did. I don't see myself doing all that I did last night. Are you okay?"

Me: "No. I lied. I lied terribly."

Mvelo: "To who and why?"

Me: "My family. Aunt Mary brought a size 32 man that wears size 44 pants and size 15 shoes, he was supposed to be my husband until I lied and said I have a man."

Mvelo: "Let me guess? They want to meet him?"

Me: "Yes and guess who I said that man is"

Mvelo: "Philani"

Me: "I should've thought of him. Bheki" she laughs and screams. "I need to rent a man that'll play Bheki"

"Am I dead?" My heart skipped a beat.

Me: "Uhm let me call you later babe"

Mvelo: "Who's there?"

I hang up and turn to face the entrance. Why didn't I hear this thing beep?

Me: "Hi"

Bheki: "Am I the Bheki you're talking about?"

Me: "Nope"

Bheki: "Why do you look like you just saw mamjiji then?"

Me: " And that's supposed to be?"

Bheki: "Tikoloshe"

Me: "I don't know how people look when they've just seen him...or her. You may take a seat"

Bheki: "Thank you. I love your romper"

Me: "Thanks"

Bheki: "You look like a real bunny. You just need to walk like one now"

Me: "You're jolly today"

Bheki: "Its a beautiful morning. I ate my favorite food and drank my coffee"

Me: "Nice" I push the laptop to him. His eyes wanders on it and then he smiles.

Bheki: "Is this it? Did you study graphic design?"

Me: "Its a talent. Do you like it?"

Bheki: "I love it. Its not done though, is it?"

Me: "Nope it's not"

Bheki: "Okay. I will make payment before the day ends"

Me: "No no no. You don't have to do that. I would also like you to do something for me"

Bheki: "Don't tell me you're about to ask me for a favour"

Me: "No I'm not. You're paying me but not with money"

Bheki: "Swallow your pride and ask for that favour because I'm willing to pay you. With money"

Me: "I don't want money. I need you to act like my boyfriend"  
he chuckles.

Bheki: "Why would you want to play your boyfriend?"

Me: "Because I don't be in an arranged marriage"

Bheki: "Where's your real boyfriend?"

Me: "I...we broke up a month ago. Are you gonna help me?"

Bheki: "What's in it for me?"

Me: "Are you kidding me? I am remaking your brand"

Bheki: "I will pay you for that. What is gonna be my payment for playing your boyfriend?"

Me: "Bheki. Don't pay me. Your payment will be me doing this for free"

Bheki: "No I don't want to not pay you." Oh my God.

Me: "Why are you complicating things?"

Bheki: "Because I want you to ask me nicely"

Me: "What is nicer than this approach? My parents want to meet this boyfriend on Saturday"

Bheki: "You've got 3 days to get me to agree. Please finish up here. How much are you going to charge me?"

Me: "Are you for real?" He smirk.

Bheki: "Yes. Text me your prize. I've got a meeting to rush to"

He heads to the lift. It parts. He gets in and waves me goodbye before it closes. Wow...

\*\*\*

First thing I did this morning was send this project to this bully of a man.

He sent the remaining half of payment. I can't believe I have to beg him to be my pretend boyfriend.

I am meeting with the parents. My cars arrived in the morning. I was doing fine really. My favorite was with me so the stress had toned down.

I am late. As usual. I know my dad is pissed.

Me: "Traffic!"

Melissa: "What kind of traffic is this? Its 12:40"

Me: "People are going to get food. Nice tie"

Marcus: "Its one of the 100 you bought on my birthday"

Me: "Oh I never found time to open the box. Have you guys

ordered yet?"

Marcus: "No. We wanna order a platter" Mon called a waiter over.

Me: "As long as it has meat"

Melissa: "How about this one? It has wings, ribs or steak, garlic bread, fries and salad"

Me: "Aren't there other options instead of garlic bread?"

Waiter: "There are buns and briyani"

Me: "I'll have briyani thanks"

Waiter: "Beverages?"

Marcus: "A bottle of wine please"

Me: "I'll have a granadilla juice" they both look at me. "Or a chocolate- vanilla milkshake"

Waiter: "Coming" he walks away. They are still looking at me curiously and I'm not going to entertain them.

Me: "So now I can shop like crazy?"

Marcus: "You don't drink anymore?"

Me: "Its Wednesday."

Melissa: "I'm impressed. Well you can't shop like crazy. You will receive your monthly allowance but you will have a financial adviser"

Me: "I don't need that. I can spend my money wisely. I have been doing that for 8 weeks now"

Marcus: "I'll give you 2 months to see if you really can. If you spend it foolishly then the financial adviser is coming for you"

Me: "Your girl learned her lesson. Worry not"

Melissa: "So you haven't thought about becoming daddy's pa?"

Me: "Having a job as fancy as that is everyone's dream but working for Marcus Mcveigh isn't my dream. No offense"

Marcus: "None taken" we laugh. "You really like that job?"

Me: "I do. My colleague is good to me, so is my boss"

Melissa: "You can't work there for your whole life"

Me: "I might get lucky and get a job. Some employee might look past my criminal record"

Marcus: "You will get a job baby. Assault cases aren't that much of a blockage"

Me: "You might never know"

Melissa: "Stop stressing"

Our food arrives. It looks as good as it looks on the catalogue.

We thank the waiter and he leaves.

Me: "This is worth getting fat for"

Melissa: "I couldn't agree more"

We look at dad. He's already digging in.

My phone beeps.

"That's my location just in case you wanna come ask me nicely because if you hire someone to pretend to be me I will sue you for deformation of character"

Is he kidding me?

...

My phone rings as I drive to this lodge. I have never come to this part of Jo'burg. I've read about it in the news about it's crime that never ends and pubs in every corner. And they were not telling lies I've passed more than 6 in 30 minutes. And this lodge seems like pub too. So many cars. They can't be guest's only.

I answer.

Me: "Why have you abandoned me?"

Philani: "You know I'm your boss's right hand man"

Me: "Right. I forgot. Have you knocked off?"

Philani: "Yes and in bed. My day starts at 5 tomorrow. Thanks to you for finishing that project in time"

Me: "It was just a remake of a logo Philani there was no reason for delay. I'm sorry though. You should've told me to drag feet"

Philani: "You should come help me inspect"

Me: "Is that the reason you'll wake up at 5?"

Philani: "No. Paint will be delivered at 6."

Me: "Ohh ok. What softens a man's heart?"

Philani: "Food. Warm home made food"

Me: "Anything else beside food"

Philani: "Alcohol and soccer dates"

Me: "Okay thanks. Bye I'll see you tomorrow"



I hang up before he complains about something. I get out of the car and head inside.

T

I ask around if they know someone called Bheki. They send me to a very tall scary man. I tell him I'm here to see Bheki, he leads the way. Indeed there's a very beautiful place here that sells alcohol.

The scary man points at Bheki amongst very beautiful half naked women. He sees me and gets up smiling.

Bheki: "You came"

Me: "Yep I did. Do you live here?"

Bheki: "No but I spend most of my time here. Come"

I follow him through the corridor. He better not pimp me out.

He unlocks the door and turn on the lights.

Me: "Is this your room?"

Bheki: "No. My boss's. He won't mind that I'm borrowing if for a few minutes"

Me: "He must be a nice boss"

Bheki: "He is." He sits down.

Me: "I will get straight to the point. Its getting late. I am here to ask you nicely to be my pretend boyfriend" I give him a weak smile.

Bheki: "This isn't nice"

Me: "Bheki please"

Bheki: "You're stomping your feet at me?"

Me: "No...I mean, I'm desperate why are you giving me hard time?"

Bheki: "Because if tables were turned you wouldn't even want to hear me out"

Me: "That's not true"

Bheki: "Okay." He pours himself juice.

Me: "So, are you gonna do it?"

Bheki: "Not until you become all romantic. This dry humping isn't sexy. You coming here with no flowers or box of chocolates. I want something tangible that'll convince me"

Me: "You want warm homemade food?" His smile widens.  
Damn!

Bheki: "Now we're talking."

Me: "When?"

Bheki: "Tonight" he has a mental problem.

Me: "Its 8pm"

Bheki: "Perfect time to cook for 2"

Me: "And where will I buy the ingredients? I'm 50 minutes away from my house"

Bheki: "My boss's kitchen has almost everything. We can go check it out" God please save me!

Me: "Okay. Let's...Let's check it out" he gets up and head to the door on the left.

Its a portable beautiful kitchen. He hands me the apron. I put it on.

Bheki: " Should I start chopping onion? There's every kinds of meat in here"

I put my bag on a chair and play with my fingers.

Me: "Look Bheki

Advertisement

I can't cook. I can only do eggs and noodles"

Bheki: "Spaghetti?"

Me: "I don't know how to cook it"

Bheki: "Okay. Get that pot with a dot"

Me: "You aren't surprised?"

Bheki: "Its not like you can't learn. Stop looking like a wet chicken and pass me the pot. You can do the chopping since I'm the one cooking now. Take note of everything I do."

I chuckle and pass him the pot.

Me: "You can have the apron"

Bheki: "That's for dramatic people nkosazana. Men like me cook in their white shirts and walk out without a stain. Orange juice or milk?"

Me: "Milk?"

Bheki: "Yes. I thought your father was a farmer"

Me: "Yes but I've never seen him being one. People actually drink milk?"

Bheki: "Yes we do"

Me: "Don't your boss mind?"

Bheki: "He's very understanding. Or you want wine?"

Me: "No thanks I'll have juice"

I take the veggies and start chopping....

•••

Its been quite a busy 3 days. I finally asked nicely enough for Bheki to agree.

We spent this past 3 days teaching one another about our interests and everything that's necessary to know about the person you're involved with.

I hear people laughing. That must be him. Mvelo came here to 'fix me up' I must say she pretty much did exactly that.

I take one last look on the mirror. I look like I'm going out with the president.

Mvelo: "You will see flaws. Bheki is here" she says hugging me from behind.

Me: "Thank you friend"

Mvelo: "Anything for my maid of honor"

She takes my hand, we walk out.

Me: "Where is he?"

"Right here"

My God help me. What on earth is he wearing!

Bheki: "You look ravishing."

Me: "Thank you. But sandals and an overall to a formal dinner?"

Bheki: "Didn't you say something mustard and white?"

Me: "I did"

Bheki: "Did I fail to get the colors right?"

Me: "No but Bheki I was expecting something formal, we talked about this"

Bheki: "Yes we did but I didn't say I will wear those wankinki things"

Me: "And what is that supposed to be?"

Mvelo: "Tight suits"

Me: "But overalls? My aunt will not take you seriously"

Bheki: "Well masiphume kimi lesosalukazi somlungu (that old white lady must leave me alone). First of all kuzomele ngikwitize mina (I'll have to speak gibberish) to please her"

Mvelo: "Okay calm down guys. Lexi these overalls are very trending"

Me: "Who meets their inlaws in overalls"

Bheki: "Me. Are we still driving or we are taking an uber?"

Me: "Whatever that'll get us there"

Bheki: "We'll use my grandma's broom to fly. let's go"

Mvelo shakes her head as I attempt to speak.

...

The drive to my parent's house is quiet. Only Maskandi is messing with my eardrums.

Thank God we're here. I hop off first.

Bheki: "Hello? Do you want me to get lost and end up to a butcher house?"

Me: "We don't have a butcher house"

Bheki: "Aren't we supposed to be walking hand in hand?"

Me: "No"

Bheki: "You know my bed is very soft. I could always go back to my place"

I sigh and wait for him. He reaches me and takes my hand.

This house doesn't look like there's dinner anywhere.

Me: "Mom!"

Shawn comes running and barking. Bheki hides away.

Bheki: "Hhei futsek" he keeps barking at Bheki. I'm holding in a laifu. "Hhaibo we Sabathile awukhuze inja yakho (stop your dog)" I laugh.

Me: "His name is Shawn. Shawn, this is Bheki. Stop barking" he stops and come to me.

Bheki: "Why would you name a dog Shawn?"

Me: "Its my dad's" I lead the way to the porch

Bheki: "He could've named it Spoti or something"

Me: "This is a suburban dog"

Bheki: "Sure as hell it is. It doesn't even understand futsek."

Me: "Please behave my stomach hurts"

Melissa: "I was about to call you"

Me: "You didn't say we'll eat here"

Marcus: "I saw the beautiful stars shining and thought they'd be very beautiful to eat under"

Me: "That was very thoughtful of you"

Aunt Mary: "Did you ride a scooter on your way here?"

Me: "Huh?" She points at Bheki. "What? No. This is the man who is behind my smile. Bheki Ncube"

Melissa: "Welcome to the McVeighs Bheki"

Bheki: "Thank you madam" they shake hands. Madam?

Melissa: "Call me Melissa please"

Bheki: "Thats against my culture ma'am"

Marcus: "Come on. I'm Marcus and I am very fine with you calling me that. How are you son?"

Bheki: "I'm good sir, how are you?"

Marcus: "I'm great. Just aging"

Bheki: "Nice home you have here, a lovely family too. I must say you did a great job raising this Angel. I never knew such cloth was cut for me. A whole barbarian"

Me: "Stop it"

Melissa: "Please take a seat. The food is getting cold. I prepared every kind of meat just in case you have allergies"

Bheki: "Who? Me? That's for white people..." he pause. "I'm

sorry" my parents laugh.

Marcus: "I couldn't agree more. I have a black friend. I've never heard him say his kids have allergies"

Bheki: "Exactly. Kwamaimai we eat beef stew, chicken, mutton and goat all in one plate and we don't fall sick."

Aunt Mary: "So Lexi you went for a black man?"

Me: "Yes"

Bheki: "I gave her no choice. I'm a very smooth talker. She wouldn't give me a chance because she was scared aunt Mary will disapprove but I told her not to worry we'll handle her" he's messing up the script. I pinch him under the table

Aunt Mary: "Handle me?"

Bheki: "Yes. We'll find you a husband" mom laughs. "I'm kidding. I bought you this" he takes out a small envelope.

Me: "You didn't tell me you brought aunty something"

Bheki: "I'm a mystery man my love" he kisses my cheek. I swear my parents wish we were getting married today. I've seen these types of smiles, the say I passed matric and on my graduation day.

Marcus: "We wanna know what's inside there"

Aunt Mary: "It's a cheap gift card. He can't even afford to get a gift card worth R500, where on earth do you think he'll get money to marry Lexi" she pushes back the envelope.

Bheki: "Waphuthelwa ke ntombi endala." (Your loss old lady)

Marcus: "Can I speak to you?" He says to aunt Mary.



They get up and walk away.

Melissa: "I'm really sorry about this Bheki. She's just...She's her"

Bheki: "No need to apologize ma'am"

Me: "You Aren't bothered?"

Bheki: "There's always such a person in every family baby"

Melissa: "She's just embarrassing my child. Dessert?"

Bheki: "Yes ma'am. Thank you. Your food makes me wish I had an extra stomach"

Melissa: "You're such a flatter."

She says and walks away. Bheki takes another piece of chicken.

Bheki: "What do they feed these chickens? Your mom can cook. I think I will love playing your boyfriend"

Me: "We're breaking up next week"

Bheki: "Why so early? Sabathile don't be jealous. Let's be together for at least 2 weeks more I wanna sit on this table and eat this meat."

Me: "No"

Bheki: "Fine, I'll have them going through our texts"

Me: "You wouldn't dare"

Bheki: "Try me"

Me: "Okay okay. Just stop with the sweet names and don't kiss me please"

Bheki: "You lack sense of romance"

Everyone comes back. Bheki takes my hand and kisses it. I fake a smile

Melissa: "You remind me of the olden days. Marcus couldn't keep his hands off me"

Bheki: "Who keeps their hands off their treasure?" I almost drop my desert. "Be careful baby. You're so clumsy"

He helps me wipe my hands.

The parents are smiling none stop and the evil aunt Mary is focusing on her food.

I just want this night to end already...

10

I regret the day I lied about having a boyfriend. Every phone call from my parents end with "send my love to Bheki" its so annoying.

Today we're going back to work. Its been quite a beautiful peaceful week, not for Philani though.

Sis Buhle is back full time. So I have very little to worry about. I take my phone from the bedside table. I still have 10 more minutes to stay in bed.

I text the love of my life good morning and browse through my social networks.

I see an email notification. I click on it.

They must be kidding me. I dial my mother. Why are the McVeighs so inconsiderate?

Melissa: "Baby"

Me: "but mom I did say I won't be able to attend the wedding"

Melissa: "You told me not the family."

Me: "I know you were there when they made these. A program director, really? Don't you guys hire someone to that anymore?"

Melissa: "It will be a very intimate thing Lexi. I'm pretty sure Mvelo wouldn't mind"

Me: "She will. This is unfair though. Send my love to dad"

Melissa: "Okay baby. Bye"

Me: "Bye"

I hang up and get up and head to the bathroom.

I take a brief bath and prepare myself for work. Sis Buhle greets from the other side. That means I'm about to be late. I have to visit Mvelo with a "sorry I can't come to your ceremony" gift. It sucks. I was looking forward to it but who goes against king Will. I know he did this deliberately.

Me: "I swear to God you will die from that coffee one day"

Sis Buhle: "I never say anything when you drink black rose" I zip my lips.

Me: "Let me go do what I get paid for"

Sis Buhle: "Have a great day my baby. I packed you lunch" she hands it over.

Me: "Thank you but I'm not 15 anymore. I know how to buy lunch"

Sis Buhle: "Sorry I didn't get the memo" she says sarcastically. I laugh and get on the lift.

I find Philani devouring on his famous kota.

Me: "So early in the morning?"

Philani: "Well good morning to you my pearl."

Me: "Morning. This place now looks like a work place, ohh my! We got a coffee area?"

Philani: "Yes. Isn't cool?"

Me: "I never thought of our boss to be the espresso machine kind of person"

Philani: "He's a lot of things trust me." He shoves the kota to me in a blink of an eye and got up like he's being struck by lightning. I turn around confused.

Oh. I chuckle.

Philani: "Mellow"

Mel: "Philani. Hey Lex"

Me: "Hey boo."

Mel: "I'm so glad you guys are back. You won't believe what did that laundry my friend suggested did to my clothes. I just had to throw it all away"

Me: "Oh my that's terrible. I'm deeply sorry. We're now back and here to take care of your clothes as always"

Mel: "Thank you. This place now looks heavenly. And this advanced technology is superb"

Me: "Right? Our customers interests come first. This will be R250, you can scan to pay if you want" she laughs.

Mel: "You guys are on your own level. Is he okay?"

Me: "Who? Him? He's perfectly fine. He just had too much coffee"

I step on his shoe. He jumps.

Philani: "Yini?!" He snaps.

Me: "Please take these to the laundry room"

Philani: "Uh...have a great day at work Mellow"

Mel: "Thanks. You too" he carries the bag away.

I fail to contain myself and crack up.

Me: "I'm sorry about that. I think he has a crush on you" I whisper. She snorts.

Mel: "Oh please. Here's your tip. Bye sweets"

Me: "Lucky day. Thank you. Bye"

She turns and walks away. She has a body to die for. It's like she created herself. I install the data needed into the computer.

Me: "Are you still alive in there?"

Philani: "Leave me alone!"

I laugh and steal his russian. I should get on diet. So many ceremonies awaits me but this thing here is irresistible....

...

My phone rings as I get into Mvelo's office. What does he want?

Me: "Goodday"

Bheki: "Yebo nkosazana. Are you well?"

Me: "Yes I'm good. How's yourself?"

Bheki: "I am very good. You're not here"

Me: "Uhm yeah. I went to visit my friend in hospital. I'll be back within the next 45 minutes though"

Bheki: "Good. Be ready around 4pm I'm taking you out"

Me: "Are you asking me or telling me?"

Bheki: "Don't wear amakwaikwai"

Me: "I can't go anywhere without-" I move the phone off my ear. My goodness! Who on earth does he think he is?

She attacks me with a hug from behind.

Mvelo: "I hate how much we're always apart now"

Me: "We're getting old" she lets go and laughs.

Mvelo: "Did that just come from you?"

Me: "Yes. Why? You look surprised"

Mvelo: "Aren't you gonna blame it on Nduna or something?" I chuckle.

Me: "No. We're 25. I have come into terms with the fact that we can't always stay like doves. Though I wish we could."

Mvelo: "Uhh my friend. I promise you, soon as this whole thing is over we're going on vacation"

Me: "You will be probably be pregnant after your honeymoon"

Mvelo: "Eww!"

Me: "Excuse you!"

Mvelo: "I'm nowhere ready to be someone's mother babes."

Me: "If you say so Mrs Mlangeni. Here is my I'm sorry. Will picked the same date as yours for his boring wedding and chose me to be the program director"

Mvelo: "Why is he so evil? Now I'm sad. I'll feel incomplete. That ceremony will not be any good without you by my side"

Me: "I know baby. I'm sorry." She opens her gift basket and pull

out chocolates.

Mvelo: "I hate Will right now."

Me: "Finally!"

We laugh.

Mvelo: "So...where's baba Ncube? Have you seen him since that day?"

Me: "You're gonna die young with this match making. Even if I was into dating I wouldn't date such a man. Can you believe he told me to get ready by 4. "I'm taking you out" not "can I take you out?" He's too arrogant for my liking"

Mvelo: "I find dominance very sexy. I like my man in control"

Me: "Well he's not my man. Did you find that toaster for mommy inlaw?"

Mvelo: "I ordered it and I'm running out of time. It will arrive the day after the event."

Me: "As long as it will get to her."

Mvelo: "Yeah but I'd have loved for it to arrive with the rest of the gifts"

Me: "You worry too much. She will still appreciate. Let's eat. My lunch is almost over"

Mvelo: "You took an uber?"

Me: "Yep. Driving costs. I am still saving"

Mvelo: "What for now?"

Me: "Moving to my own place."

Mvelo: "Hhaibo friend. But your dad gave you your things



back"

Me: "True. But how long will it take until he takes it all back again?"

Mvelo: "Oh yeah. You're right. I'm proud of you"

Me: "Thank you babe. In 6 months I will be moving in into my own apartment"

Mvelo: "Or getting married"

I hit her with a napkin.

Me: "You're such a bore. Let me take this drumstick for the road"

Mvelo: "Thanks for the lunch"

Me: "I was just doing my job. Nail that pitch." She whines

Mvelo: "Shit! I totally forgot about that"

Me: "See your life? You need 4 PAs"

Mvelo: "I really do. Mind you Siphe told me to set up a reminder before she left"

Me: "Tell them you're getting married. They'll get too excited and not pay attention to faults you may make"

Mvelo: "You're not helping. Use Nduna's promo code for discount"

Me: "He rides uber? Wow"

Mvelo: "You need to stop taking my man for granted"

Me: "That dmd yellow hat doesn't make it easier"

I say and rush out laughing...

...

Philani left right after I arrived. I hate to be the one to lock up. It means to be the one to open in the morning. Waking up before 8am is still torture to my soul.

I decide to clean up after keeping the records down.

We have new cleaning equipment.

"I'm sorry I'm late madam. My daughter fell sick and couldn't fetch my son from creche. I promise you it won't happen again"

Me: "Please calm down." I walk to the other side and offer her a seat. She's sweating. "Did you take the stairs?"

Her: "Yes madam the lift was taking too long"

Me: "Call me Lexi please. Are you an employee here?"

Her: "Yes. I'm the cleaner"

Me: "Okay please wait here. Should I get you something to drink?"

Her: "Yes my child. Water will be fine"

I nod and go back in. I get water out of the mini bar fridge and take it to her then come back to call Bheki.

Bheki: "Nkosazana" how does he know it's me? "Sabathile?"

Me: "Uhm hey. Sorry about that. There's a lady here"

Bheki: "Mamzila? Sorry I forgot to mention. She's our cleaner. I took your idea of creating more job opportunities. Please treat her with respect"

Me: "I will"

Bheki: "Thank you"

I bid him goodbye and go back to attend the old lady. I must get myself familiar with this office phone. I felt really sophisticated.

Me: "You may come in ma."

Mamzila: "Are you the boss?"

Me: "No. I'm an employee. Our boss comes in once in a while."

Mamzila: "He sounded like a very good young man on the phone"

Me: "He is good. You may put your bag on the locker"

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the yellow door"

She goes in. Its close to 4. I take the phone and call Bheki again.

Bheki: "You miss me?"

Me: "Is she going to lock up?"

Bheki: "No. There's a guy who's employed to do that"

Me: "That means I can knock off in the next 30 minutes?"

Bheki: "Even now if you want"

Me: "Okay thanks"

I hang up. Mel walks in.

Me: "Is the lift working?"

Mel: "Yes. I take the stairs Every day on my way in"

Me: "Oh. That's great. Let me get you your parcel"

I fetch her bag. I find her with some lady.

I just pick my purse and my phone.

Me: "Mama; I'm knocking off now. Shall you need anything just pick up this phone and press this little second button"

Mamzila: "Okay sisi thank you" isn't weird when an elder acts submissive towards you?

Me: "Here. Did I give you the receipt?"

Mel: "Yes you did. Friend please hold here"

Me: "You look familiar" I say to the friend. She gets off her phone and takes off her glasses.

Her: "Oh you. Township hooligan"

Me: "Excuse me?"

Mel: "Pam! I'm sorry Lexi she-"

Pam: "I'm what? This is the piece of shit that attacked me!"

Me: "You're acting like the hooligan you're accusing me to be right now missy. Mel I'll see you around babes"

Pam blocks my way.

Pam: "You wanna fight?"

Me: "No. Please move out of my way"

Pam: "With this fake hair now you think you're white? Bitch I will beat this hair off this dumb head" she tried taking my weave off, I grabbed her hand and roughly pushed her. She landed on Bheki coming in.

Pam: "You fighting? Huh? I'll show you today"

Mel: "Pam! Pam? Stop embarrassing yourself! I'm sorry Lexi"

Bheki: "What's going on?" I can't talk.

I just leave them all there. I wanna cry so bad. I hate people who mess with my patience.

I get to my place. I strip down everything and get into the shower. I let the water hit me from the head.

I step out it when I've cried enough. I wrap a towel around my body and another one on my head.

I look at my reflection on the mirror. Why is being me so hard?

I hear my phone ringing. Whoever that is must just wait.

I take my laptop and jot down this crazy incident. After so long of not being tortured about who I am, she just had to.

I hear the lift dings. I hear a knock on the door just as I get off the bed.

Me: "Come in"

I startle when I see him. "Hi" he clears his throat and turn away.

Bheki: "I'm sorry" he closes the door. I follow him.

Me: "Is everything okay?"

Bheki: "Yes. I thought you were dressed"

Me: "Bheki Ncube can you see my boobs?" He reluctantly shake his head. "Or any private parts?"

Bheki: "No. But my father taught me that only my wife I am

allowed to see in sleep wear or bathing towels" I chuckle. He isn't really looking at me.

Me: "Okay. Let me go put on some clothes then"

...

I find him still in the same position when I get back.

Me: "So. Is this a social visit or?" He turns. I frown.

Bheki: "We're going out, aren't we?"

Me: "I didn't agree on that. Thats not how you ask someone out"

Bheki: "How does one go about it?"

Me: "Hi Lexi. Can we go out?"

Bheki: "So you can say no? Are you ready to go? You need this. To forget about loya mconjwana with unmatching nails" I laugh.

Me: "That's a trend"

Bheki: "Don't do it. Its unattractive. You should've beat her up"

Me: "I can't get my hands dirty over that thing"

Bheki: "A little slap won't hurt"

Me: "Let me wear shoes then we'll go"

Bheki: "No you're fine. Let's go"

Me: "Like this? I'm not even wearing a bra"

Bheki: "Really? You qualify to go to emhlangeni(reed dance) then. Just put this on and we're good to go"

Me: " This dress is too long Bheki. I can't be looking like aunty in public"

Bheki: "The beautiful aunty. Nothing like Mary" we laugh.

Me: "You still won't tell me what was her gift?" He shakes his head.

Bheki: "Have we broken up yet?"

Me: "We'll break up today"

We get on the lift.

Bheki: "But that chicken"

Me: "I'll give you recipes and you'll ask your wife to make it for you"

Bheki: "You're the best"

Me: "So you have a wife?"

His phone rings. He takes it.

He speaks until we get into the car.

We drive off. He's still on the phone, laughing like nobody's business. I am now getting annoyed.

I regret agreeing to come with him.

Bheki: "That was my cousin. His suit got stolen. He's getting married on Saturday"

Me: "And that's funny?"

Bheki: "Yes. What was he thinking fetching it so many days before the wedding day? Ceremony curse caught up with him"

Me: "You're the worst"

Bheki: "We're here"

Me: "Here where?"

Bheki: "KwaMaimai sshalala sami."

Me: "And what are we doing here?"

Bheki: "Eat supper"

Me: "I don't see any sign of a restaurant"

Bheki: "You see all these tents? These are the restaurants.

Choose mazikhethela. Let me look for a place to park"

Me: "Oh my God. This place is so..." I decide to shut my mouth.

"I'm not gonna eat anything from such an environment"

Bheki: "Get out of your Lexi persona and get into Sabathile.

Sabathile will eat"

Me: "She won't. Please go inside and buy whatever you're

buying and get me out of here"

Bheki: "There are my brothers here. I might leave around 8pm"

Me: "Are you kidding me?"

Bheki: "No. I'll be on the navy tent if you change your mind"

He hops out. What was I thinking?

I call Mvelo. She picks up on the first ring.

Mvelo: "I was about to call you. Did you go on the date?"

Me: "Date you say? Mvelo I'm at malimali. I'm expected to eat food that's cooked here. Does that sound like a date to you?"

Mvelo: "They serve really nice food plus its the thought that counts"

Me: "Just please come fetch me before I die"

Mvelo: "Ahh friend I'm so sorry. Nduna and I are going



somewhere right now"

Me: "Wow"

I hang up and sigh.

I jump and almost lose my life when a very dirty guy knocks on the window. I look for coins on the ashtray. I find a few.

I gulp and roll down the window.

Me: "Hi" he laughs. Too much to my discomfort.

Him: "You're close. Just a little more steps. You're very close"

Me: "What?"

Him: "What took you so long? The weather is mesmerizing"

He walks away without even looking at the coins I had handed out.

I get out and lock the car before another crazy man comes.

I find Bheki sitting with a bunch of men eating, talking and laughing.

Someone points at my direction. He turns. Our eyes meet, he gives me a warm smile and calls me over.

Bheki: "Everyone this is Sabathile. Sabathile this is everyone" I sit next to him.

Me: "What kind of intro is that?" I whisper.

Bheki: "Their names are too long. We'd need a week"

I laugh. Its pretty clean inside this mini restaurant. And the food smells nice.

They are now all looking at me. I don't know what to do. I hope they don't ask me to remove the hat so they can feel my hair.

The lady serves me food in a tray. This is how Mvelo serves Nduna. Is this a way of showing respect?

Me: "Thank you sisi"

Her: "In a few months this will be you" I chuckle.

Bheki: "She's my aunt. My dad's sister. Her and aunt Mary should be kept separate on our wedding or else it'll be a mess"

Me: "What?"

Bheki: "What?"

He takes his phone and walks out. Our wedding? I need water...

10

I hear someone call my name from afar. I jump when I feel a cold object against my skin.

Me: "Wtf!"

Bheki: "Hheyi Don't say that to me"

Me: "Flip. What time is it? I should be at work. Greetings ma" I get up, balancing with a couch.

Mamzila: "Yebo sisi"

Bheki: "Its your day off. Its half past 12 in the noon"

Me: "Why do you look and smell fresh? God I feel horrible"

Bheki: "I'm older than alcohol. I brought you umama to clean for you since your lady called in sick"

Me: "No no. You don't have to do anything ma I'll clean up. I just need-"

Bheki: "A shower, food and rest"

He takes my hand and lead me to my room. He pushes me in and closes the door.

Bheki: "Should your food be spicy?"

Me: "Yes please"

My room looks very tidy. I am pretty sure I did not come in here last night. That was a wild ass night. We went to that lodge and things went down. His little brother is a fun bad influence. I had fun, although I feel like my head is about to fall off but its worth it. I haven't had so much fun in months.

I decide to take a shower. It is much quicker. I'd probably pass out on the tub if I use it.

I open the blinds. I haven't had this view in a while. I always jump in and out of the bathroom in the mornings. Jo'burg is still beautiful and attractive. Its partly clouded. The streets are pretty empty than usual.

I finish and walk back to my room to apply lotion and dress up. I put on a simple summer dress that goes just above the knee. Sis Buhle is responsible for so much dresses in sight. I tie a doek and walk out to the lounge. There was no Mamzila or Bheki in sight.

Did I take that long in there?

The lift dings.

Me: "Did I take too long or she's fast?"

Bheki: "It wasn't dirty. It was just bottles"

Me: "How much did I actually have last night?"

Bheki: "More than you can handle." I take out the plates and glasses. "I'm not staying. I have a meeting with my brothers. If you happen to feel better, please go check on Philani. I found him day dreaming while he had a customer in front of him" I chuckle.

Me: "Dark skinned and tall?"

Bheki: "Yeah"

Me: "That's his crush"

Bheki: "Isn't he...?" He does the hanging hand thing. I laugh.

Me: "No."

Bheki: "Okay. Eat, drink these and watch these senseless shows your species like"

Me: "Thank you"

Bheki: "Can I have this? Yes? Thank you. Have a good day nkosazana" he takes a drumstick and rush to the lift.

Me: "What are people going say?"

Bheki: "That I'm eating. Bye" the lift close. He's crazy. I dish up for myself. Who drinks apple juice? I wouldn't dare even if it was the last beverage on earth. I take my juice out of the fridge and take my plate to camp before the tv and watch these senseless shows that my species like...

I must've fallen asleep again. The pills are to blame. My phone stops ringing. Its already dark. Was I sleeping or dead? If its this dark, that means its close to 8pm.

I take my phone. Its almost 8pm. I call mom back. I sit up straight and brace myself for complaints. She picks up.

Melissa: "Don't ever do that again. Since when don't you text me for the whole day?"

Me: "I'm sorry. I had a very rough night last night"

Melissa: "You went drinking on a Thursday?" Now this is my chance to break the news.

Me: "I...I needed something to make me face my miserable love

life"

Melissa: "Oh baby, what happened?"

Me: "Bheki and I fought. It got real bad he decided we go our separate ways" I fake a sob.

Melissa: "Shhh my angel. He has no idea what he's lost. Daddy and I are on our way there to have supper with you. Should I get you ice cream? Ugh don't answer that. We're coming with warm meals and ice cream okay"

Me: "Okay. Bye for now"

I take a deep breath. Feels like I just took Rick Ross off my shoulders. I get up and rinse the dishes I used. I hide away the takeaway. Bheki seems to know every place that sells nice food. That chicken and pasta was to die for I swear. Some people were born for this cooking thing. I wish I was amongst that population.

I log on WhatsApp and check Bheki's last seen, a few minutes ago it says. That means he's safe and sound.

I go to Mvelo's, she calls in that instant. Our connection shall remain this strong.

Me: "I was just about to text you" she laughs.

Mvelo: "Baby, she says she was about to text me."

Nduna: "She's probably lying" he shouts from the background.

Me: "Tell him jealousy doesn't look good on him. Are you okay my hun?"

Mvelo: "I am good. I am happy you're still alive. Your insta stories were wild

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where were you and with who?"

Me: "I was in Soweto with Bheki and his fun people"

Mvelo: "Noway! You two are pretty close on particular days."

Me: "He was making up for taking me to that place"

Mvelo: "Come on. They sell the best tribe in town"

Me: "And their soft pap babes. I finished the whole plate. Its just the environment I'm not comfortable with"

Mvelo: "They are used to it. Those ladies are very clean"

Me: "The place they live in isn't"

Mvelo: "That's part of "the real world" get used to it"

Me: "Hell no. When am I seeing you?"

Mvelo: "On Saturday. I'll be leaving on the noon"

Me: "I hate short notices Mvelo. How many times should I remind you?"

Mvelo: "We discussed this when we went to buy blankets."

Me: "I have a very functional brain."

Mvelo: "Then I guess its not so functional after all. Don't try and cause drama about nothing. I did tell you, God is my witness"

Me: "I would know if you told me" the lift chimes and parts.

"Babe let me call you back later" I hang before she could answer.

Me: "What are you doing here?"

Bheki: "To fetch my house keys on your handbag"

Me: "Which one? You can't be here, my parents are gonna be here any minute!"

Bheki: "You should've answered your phone"

I face my tiny handbag down. Everything comes out. There's no keys.

Me: "I'll look for them. Please go I'll call you when I find them"

Bheki: "And when you say 'go' where are you expecting me to go?"

Me: "Your place! Jesus Bheki maybe they are downstairs"

Bheki: "And I should break in?" I sigh and walk to switch on the lift cctv.

Me: "See? They are here. Go hide in my room"

Bheki: "And watch pink walls?" I push him.

Me: "My walls are white"

Bheki: "I will say I was on my way out"

Me: "No!"

Bheki: "I'm hungry"

Me: "I'll bring you food"

I close the door and lock. Whew!

I fix myself. I should change my access code. I can't have this man walking in and out of here.



I act all excited, a bit over excited.

Marcus: "Look at this place. You keep making me proud"

Me: "I know right." We hug.

Melissa: "Love, she didn't clean this place. I know my baby like I know the back of my hand. She'll never scrub any floors with her nails freshly done"

Me: "Mom!" We laugh.

Marcus: "Who cleaned up?"

Me: "Me daddy" I hug mom. "You smell amazing"

Melissa: "Thank you my love. Daddy bought me a new fragrance"

Me: "You guys. When I get married you'll be my mentors"

Marcus: "Declined. Take out the plates. I'm starving"

Me: "We will eat outside"

Melissa: "Just what I had in mind"

Me: "Great. I'll get the plates"

I take out everything we'll need and rinsed it then took it outside to the balcony.

Marcus: "This view is priceless"

Me: "You see the beauty of Johannesburg. You can see almost everywhere"

Melissa: "If we weren't married I would hint that you should propose in such a place"

Marcus: "There are a lot of things we can do here my love" they giggle and kiss. I clear my throat.

Me: "I'm still here" they laugh.

Marcus: "How's the heartbreak?"

Me: "Better. What do we have here?" I open the containers.

Marcus: "The best chicken fillets"

Me: "Its embarrassing that my mother is such a great cook and I can only fry eggs"

Marcus: "If varsity couldn't teach you and living here alone didn't either then there's no hope my princess. You're almost 30. Let's just say its a good thing you broke up with Bheki"

Me: "And why is that?"

Marcus: "Black men love home prepared meals. Would you have been able to prepare him steamed bread and sugar beans?"

Me: "There are restaurants for a reason" he laughs and shakes his head.

Marcus: "Just stick to your kind"

Melissa: "I still think he was good for her"

Marcus: "I agree but shr wouldn't have survived being his wife"

Me: "Yeah, I guess its good we're through and never getting back together"

Melissa: "You just broke up. Whatever it is that you guys fought about, you might fix it"

Me: "We won't. Enough about Bheki, have you guys bought outfits for the wedding?"

Melissa: "We will look into the clothes we already own"

Me: "I knew I wasn't the only one not in the mood to look any glamorous"

Marcus: "You always look glamorous. I am up to get you a new something for the wedding if you want it"

Me: "Really? I could never say no to a new dress"

Marcus: "On one condition" here we go.

Me: "Yes?"

Marcus: "You take my offer of being my personal assistant"

Me: "Dad I-"

Marcus: "Come on. I don't want anyone working for me. I need someone that I trust"

Me: "Let's say I was working as an auditor. Who would work for you?"

Marcus: "No one. But now baby you aren't an auditor so I'm asking you to be my PA until you find your dream job"

Me: "I'll think about it"

He nods. We continue to eat, in silence now. My mom doesn't seem like she wants to intervene in this matter and I think its only for the best.

My phone beeps. I check it out.

'Seeing that you've forgotten about me. Is it safe to come out?'

I totally forgot about him. I clear my throat.

Me: "Let me take these into my fridge. I know I will need it for tomorrow evening"

Marcus: "Should I get you a chef?"

Me: "I'd appreciate that"

Melissa: "I charge R10 000 a month"

Me: "Since I'm the good daughter I'm sure I can get at least a 30% discount"

Melissa: "20%"

Marcus: "No. I am a good husband but I pay all the 100%"

Me: "Yoh charge dad for cooking?"

Marcus: "Ever since we got married"

Melissa: "Be a smart woman" she winks as I walk away with the containers. She's unbelievable but smart for real.

I find him sleeping on the bed watching movies on my laptop.

Me: "I see you made yourself comfortable"

Bheki: "Finally. Is it chicken?"

Me: "I swear to God chickens aren't safe around you"

I dish up for him and serve him. He smiles when I give him the plate. I shrug.

Bheki: "Do we have to pay in order to smile in this house?"

Me: "Why are you like this?"

Bheki: "Like what? Mmmh this tastes nice. You should spend more time with your mother and watch her around the kitchen"

Me: "No thank you. I'm uninterested in cooking"

Bheki: "What is your husband going to eat?"

Me: "He must have enough money to get us a personal chef"

I walk out before he could open his pie hole...

...

The parents stayed until very late. They left around 11pm.

Bheki escaped. He didn't even say goodbye.

Today I woke up very fresh. I volunteered to fetch Philani from his place. He was more than happy to experience this special treatment.

We grabbed a very fancy breakfast before we actually went to work.

We found Mamzila already there. She had cleaned already. She's mysterious.

Since we arrived I've been listening to Philani fantasize about Mel.

Me: "Why don't you build up a courage and ask her out?"

Preaching to me all these things won't help you with anything"

Philani: "Do you think its that easy to approach such a beautiful lady?"

Me: "The truth is I'm starting to get annoyed with your fantasies"

Philani: "Fine. I'll befriend Mamzila maybe she'll care enough to listen"

Me: "Please do try that. Did you install windows?"

Philani: "That's your job"

He takes his empty cup and goes into the kitchen.

"Greetings" bringing my eyes up my heart skipped a bit. He smiled.

Him: "Are you okay?" I gulp.

Me: "I...uhm...I am okay. Sorry, are you okay?"

Him: "Yes I'm good. I'm here to deliver these, I hope its the right order. My drivers just dropped me at last minute.

Sabathile McVeigh right?" I stand up and walk out to him. I feel hot flushes all over my body. What on earth is happening to me?

Me: "Yes"

Him: "Here is your parcels. Please sign here" I take the clip board and sign. We accidentally touch hands when I hand back the clipboard.

He says his goodbye and walk towards the door. I finally breathe. Was I holding in my breath? Jesus help me.

I rush over to the other side and take my phone out.

"I just found a men attractive. Let's fly to Durban. I need cleansing"

I wait impatiently for the response.

"That's pretty normal. Finally you gonna get laid. Congrats friend" -Mvelo

"Is it Bheki?" -Mvelo

"No. A stranger." I respond. "Stop match making Bheki and I. He doesn't see me like that nor do I"

I hear heels click on the floor. Its lady walking in rushing. She flashes me a smile.

Her: "Hi. McVeigh?"

Me: "Yes"

Her: "My husband happened go have forgotten his phone somewhere..." she looks around.

Me: "Who's your husband maam and what time did he come around?"

Her: "Sabelo Nkosi. He just left I think, he was here to deliver some things...oh here it is. Oh my God I almost lost my breath"

Me: "Oh great."

Her: "Thank you. Bye" she rushes out again.

"Never mind. The other gender ain't shit"

I text Mvelo and throw myself on my chair and turn it around.  
Disappointment is men...

It is days like these that make me wish I was invisible. This greeting, hugging and kissing business is not my favorite. McVeighs are a very dramatic family when it comes to events. We drove all the way to Neslpruit they booked the Kwanyoni lodge. And then they make me look the biggest spender in history. Its quite a beauti6 lodge. I spent my afternoon yesterday walking around taking pictures.

I am sharing my room with Britney's sister inlaw. She's sweet and hates humans as I do. We're almost the same age but she has a decent job and not living off her parent's money.

She walks in running. She locks the door and leans against it.

Pearl: "Oh my word! Your family is crazy."

Me: "Tell me about it"

Pearl: "We're the only people who are not ready"

Me: "Weddings never start in time. That's the culture"

Pearl: "Not this one. The soon be husband and wife are too excited. He's already dressed, everybody. For a programme director you should be ready"

Me: "What if I take illness and you take over my place?" She chuckles.

Pearl: "I'd rather swim into a river full of crocodiles" she disappear to the bathroom. I sigh.



I take out my make bag and start applying. I am only excited about my new beautiful dramatic dress. It is a long transparent sleeve black dress with crystals and sequins, my mom suggested all that. It hugs me perfectly, it goes just above the knees. I wanted a long one with a tail but the tailor told me not to worry I can have the best of both worlds. I can actually attach the tail when we go to reception.

Pearl comes out as I dress up.

Pearl: "I could eat you up right now" we laugh.

Me: "I did not like these sleeves yesterday but looking at my reflection right now, I think they make the dress even more beautiful"

Pearl: "But who chooses black as their theme?"

Me: "My cousin" we laugh. "At least they chose mauve to go with it."

Pearl: "Still. Weddings should be bright."

Me: "I agree." A loud knock startled us. "Who is it?"

Melissa: "It is me"

I strap on my mauve heels and head to open for her.

Melissa: "Thank God you're dressed. You look beautiful"

Me: "Thank you my love"

Melissa: "Pearl. Please hurry honey, these people are in no mood for waiting"

Pearl: "Almost done" I giggle. She still has a towel on. Her hair isn't dried, she's nowhere near to being done.

I walk with my mom out. We meet Britney in the hallway.

Britney: "Come, its really rude to keep people waiting"

Me: " Am I not going to start at the reception?" She doesn't answer but pulls me until we're outside. We stop in front of 3 guys in suits, each holding a glass of whatever.

Britney: "Gentlemen. This is my cousin I've been preaching about, Alexis" I'm gonna kill this woman. The first one extends his hand for a shake. I hesitantly take it in.

Him: "I'm Dave, nice to finally meet you"

Me: "Thank you" I move on to the next one. He takes my hand and kisses it, Eww!

I give him a botox smile just to tickle his fancy.

Him: "I'm Jack" I nod with a smile. The last one had lost interest in all this introduction, he was on his phone.

Me: "So I guess this is it. Nice to know you gentlemen"

Britney: "This is Mike, and he is your date"

Me: "Are you kidding me?"

Dave: "Mike, get off the phone" I doubt he heard him. Jack snatches the phone off his hand.

Mike: "Wtf! Bring back my phone"

Dave: "Stop being an asshole. This is Alexis, your date"

Mike: "I thought this was a wedding, not tinder"

I snort.

Britney: "You both might like to get a drink. Bye lovies" they all walk away leaving us staring at each for good 60 seconds and we burst out in laughter.

Me: "Are you the black sheep of the family too?"

Mike: "Kinda. Wanna grab that drink and discuss our black sheep tendencies?" I laugh.

Me: "Why not?" We walk to the drinks area. I did not think this black and mauve will look this good. This decor is crazily beautiful, I'm jealous...

...

14:50pm. I want nothing but my comfortable bed. I don't know why is everyone is interested in this boring wack love story, not even love story. It is just story. There's no love here, Will just picked the next desperate for marriage girl and just went ahead because to him, being a true McVeigh means being married. I haven't spoken to my dad and I doubt I will. He is too focused on being a proud uncle today and I shall not disturb him.

I don't even know where my crazy date went. He's a breath of fresh air. A total chatterbox but also a sweet gentleman, just not into settling down as I.

I am taken out of my crazy thoughts by a tap on the shoulder. Its him.

Me: "Where did you disappear to?"

Mike: "I saw this hun and went to chill with her by the pool.  
Worst mistake of my life

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wanna get out of here?" I laugh.

Me: "What happened? And will we be heading to?"

Mike: "Johannesburg. I hope you didn't come with your car"

Me: "Fortunately, no. Let's go"

Mike: "Really?"

I get up and lead the way out. Everyone is laughing and blushing at the fake love story. Humans are weird creatues I tell you.

It felt like hours before we could reach his car.

Me: "Why would you park so far away?"

Mike: "Because I wanted no problems driving out"

Me: "You aren't a serial killer, are you?"

Mike: "If I was. I'd start with my brothers"

Me: "Good. My father won't rest until he finds me if you ever think of stealing me"

Mike: "Okay. Are you gonna get in the car?"

Me: "Yes. My father is a very powerful businessman and he has connections"

Mike: "I really wouldn't want to mess with that"

Me: "Yup"

I take off my heels and adjust the seat to tilt back. "Wake me me after an hour"

Mike: "Okay madam"

I send Soulmate a text that I'm driving to Jo'burg with a stranger that might be a serial killer. I had to take this risk, listening to that boring story was gonna cause me all sorts of illnesses...

...

Arriving in Joburg it was already dark. Mike suggested we pass by a restaurant and grab takeaways and then brought me home. It was quite a fun ride.

My phone rings a second I open my eyes. I yawn and reach for it. Oh my sweetheart.

Me: "Hey babe"

Mvelo: "I swear to God yesterday was the worst day of my life"

Me: "What happened?"

Mvelo: "I had a ceremony and my best friend wasn't next to me. I did not enjoy that day at all. I missed you the whole time"

Me: "Aww baby. I was there spiritually. I was bored at that wedding too. But I found a friend who make us escape"

Mvelo: "Tell her I stab anything that gets too close to you" I laugh.

Me: "Its a he"

Mvelo: "What?"

Me: "Yes. His brothers and my cousin set us up to be each other's dates but it turned out we're the same person and we formed this little friendship"

Mvelo: "Is he cute?" This girl.

Me: "You need Jesus. Where's Nduna?"

Mvelo: "He's here. He arrived at 3am drunk"

Me: "What will your dad say?"

Mvelo: "Nothing. We're engaged remember"

Me: "Ohh yes. I forgot" we laugh.

Mvelo: "Still nothing from Bheki?"

Me: "Don't mention that stupid man's name. He was just bluffing when he said he will give that place his full attention now he's been gone for 3 weeks! The shit we went through with the soap suppliers, he doesn't even try and contact us"

Mvelo: "Ok calm down. He trusts you both with that business"

Me: "No he's stupid and careless"

Mvelo: "Do you keep trying his phone?"

Me: "It still goes straight to voicemail"

Mvelo: "I'm sure he has a better explanation"

Me: "I don't even wanna hear it. I am handing over my resignation letter as soon as his ass gets back" she laughs.

Mvelo: "You miss him?"

Me: "What? No!" She laughs.

Mvelo: "I see you. Let me get up and prepare this man hot water and food"

Me: "Okay baby. Send my love"

Mvelo: "I will hun. Bye"

Me: "Byo"

I hang up and roll over to get down. I walk to the bathroom to pee and come back to fix my bed. I am not doing any laundry, I am tired and I am going to spend my day in my couch feeding myself and watching TV.

I sweep and then go take a brief shower. I clean it afterwards. Sis Buhle is very sensitive when it comes to the bathroom. She hates dirty bathrooms. So I always make sure its spotless, she taught me well.

I find my phone ringing. I rush to it. Trouble!

Me: "Queen"

Melissa: "Don't Queen me Alexis McVeigh. Where are you?" I clear my throat.

Me: "I'm in Jo'burg"

Melissa: "Jo'burg where?"

Me: "My place mommy."

Melissa: "I told you there will be another little ceremony today, welcoming Jean" oh crap.

Me: "Oh dear God. I totally forgot about that. When my boss called and asked me to rush here I just lost my mind and left. I'm sorry. Tell Will I'll visit them and introduce myself proper to Jean"

Melissa: "You drive me crazy, you know that? Couldn't you text and tell us you're leaving?"

Me: "I wanted to but my phone died. I just switched it on I'm sorry"

Melissa: "Its okay baby. I was worried about you, I'm glad you're safe. We'll see you tomorrow"

Me: "Aren't you coming back today?"

Melissa: "No. Let me go get ready"

Me: "Okay. I love you"

Melissa: "I love you more my angel"

She hangs up. I want to cry. I was hoping I'll spend the night with them, watching movies or something.

I text Mike if he has any plans for the day. He responds with no. Great. We're going to walk around Jo'burg the whole day today. I walk to my closet to pick the best outfit for a 29° partly cloud Sunday.

...

There is no hope for this guy. In a period of 5 hours in this mall, we've crossed paths with 4 different girlfriends of his. I don't understand men and I'll never will. Each one of them sure feels like the one, if only they knew.

Mike: "Can we get something to eat now? I never go for this long without food"

Me: "What does that mean?"



Mike: "It means I am the reason why uber eats is rich"

Me: "You eat every 2 hours?"

Mike: "1 and a half."

Me: "Why aren't you fat then?"

Mike: "Its the Petro genes. No one is fat in that family"

Me: "You should thank them"

Mike: "Nope. Where are we eating? I don't eat sea food"

Me: "We can go to any restaurant that sells nice food"

Mike: "Are we done shopping?"

Me: "Yup I'm tired now"

Mike: "Then we'll grab McDonald's and then some hot wings from either KFC or Chicken licken" I chuckle.

Me: "You have black friends?"

Mike: "Yes. Why do you ask?"

Me: "Your food preparations. No offense but no white person eats dumplings" its what we bought yesterday at this restaurant that deals with only African cuisine.

Mike: "They are the best thing that has ever happened to me. My friends mom used to prepare them for us when we came to visit, bliss"

Me: "They are quite nice. It was my 3rd time consuming them"

Mike: "You should eat them more often. The Mageba restaurant sells all the nice food in the world."

Me: "We should go again"

Mike: "Tomorrow after work"

Me: "So soon, how about weekend?"

Mike: " Tomorrow there's buffet"

Me: "Tempting. I hope I don't have much work"

Mike: "I'll be waiting for your text"

We get into the car and drive off. He plays his country music that I learned to tolerate yesterday on our way here.

We stop at Chicken licken first then McDonald's. I like how we just got along. Its like we've known each other for years.

My phone rings as we park into this beautiful parking spot. Why would the security company call me?

Me: "Alexis speaking"

Caller: "Ma'am. We have blocked your code due to many wrong code attempts. We caught the suspect right at the spot please use your card on the reader and come down"

Me: "I'm not in my place"

Caller: "Please meet us at our offices"

Me: "Okay. I'm coming" I hang up. "I got to rush to somewhere. Someone was trying to break in into my place. I'll take an uber"

Mike: "Are you kidding me? I'll take you there. Where are we going?"

Me: "Sandton."

Who could it be? And why would they be stupid about this?

....

The lobby is empty. I ring the attention bell. A lady appears after a couple of minutes of impatience.

Me: "Hi. I'm Alexis McVeigh"

Her: "Oh Hey. Mr Swanepoel is waiting for you please go through. Sir you can wait there by the couch only one person can go in, can I get you something to drink?"

Mike: "Coffee will be fine. Can I eat on your couch?"

She chuckles.

Her: "Yes you may" women lose themselves in his gaze I swear.

I turn to the left hallway leading me to the big door.

I knock once and get in.

Mr Swanepoel: "That was quick"

Me: "I was around."

Mr Swanepoel: "The suspect won't speak. He says he wants you not us. We are waiting for your permission to call the police"

Me: "Can I see him?"

Mr Swanepoel: "Yeah sure. Please follow me"

He gets up and lead the way out. He unlocks what has turned out to be a door. I did not recognize it when I came in.

We get in. Oh my goodness. He smirks and shoves away the puzzle. They give them puzzles?

Bheki: "This place is too hot umuntu akasoze akuthole ukuphumula ilamabhunu" (one can never get peace with these

boers)

Me: "Bhekisizwe"

Bheki: "Sabathile"

Me: "Why would you keep punching the code when you saw that the first attempt did not go through?"

Bheki: "I thought you were upstairs. Why did you change it anyways"

Me: "Sir. This is my boss. I'm very sorry for the misunderstanding"

Mr Swanepoel: "Its okay. We're sorry Mr...."

Bheki: "Mr Bheki"

Mr Swanepoel: "Yes Mr Bheki. We were just doing our job"

He gestured for us to lead the way out. I bid him goodbye and we parted ways.

Bheki: "Nkosi engcwele are we walking or running?"

Me: "I am very busy Bheki. I shouldn't even be here"

Bheki: "Its Sunday"

Me: "Busy women are busy everyday." Mike gets up as we approach.

Bheki: "Uyakwazi lomfana womlungu?" (Does this white boy know you?) I ignore his stupid self.

Me: "It was my boss"

Mike: "Goodday Sir" he extends his hand. Bheki just looks at it.

Bheki: "Yah mfana" he proceeds out.

Me: "He's mental disturbed. Let me go talk to him"

Mike: "I'll wait for you in the car"

Me: "Okay"

I find Bheki leaning against a pole.

Me: "What was that?"

Bheki: "What was what?"

Me: "Not shaking his hand"

Bheki: "Angisuye umngani wezingane mina we Sabathile" (I am not friends with kids)

Me: "No you're rude"

Bheki: "Go get your bag. Our car will be here any minute from now"

Me: "No. I didn't come here with you"

Bheki: "Awungitshela. Uyini nalomfana womlungu?" (Tell me something, what are you to this white boy?)

Me: "His name is Mike!"

Bheki: "UMike owomfana womlungu, go get your bag please. I'm taking you somewhere"

Me: "Bye Bheki"

I walk away. Is he mentally okay?

I find Mike on the passenger seat. I walk around to the driver's. I start the engine and drive off.

....

Tears stream down as I stuff my mouth with popcorn. I regret picking this movie. I thought the title meant a wild out not this!

The intercom buzzes. So late? I take my phone and check the time: 21:50.

I pause the movie and motion slowly to the speaker.

Me: "Hello?"

"Please let me in"

I attempt to talk but decide against it. I punch the access code and go back to the couch and resume the movie. The lift dings. He has changed. He's in casual clothes and smells good. We stare at each for a good 5 minutes. He clears his throat and surrender.

Bheki: "Sawubona"

Me: "Yebo" I shift my attention back to the movie.

Bheki: "What are you watching?"

Me: "Walk to remember"

Bheki: "Mmmh"

Awkward silence.

He clears his throat again.

Bheki: "I'm sorry for disappearing"

Me: "Ok"

Bheki: "Great. Can I join you?"

Me: "No. Go back to where you were"

Bheki: "There's no you nor your laptop there"

Me: "Pity"

Bheki: "Look at me" I do. "I was home. I had a few things to

take care of"

Me: "And you couldn't say? How about a phone call? Text? A please call me?"

Bheki: "I left my place rushing. I left my phones behind" he's another case of a married man.

Me: "Whatever Bheki"

Bheki: "Ungakusho lokho kimi" (Do not say that to me)

Me: "What do you want me to say? You left your phones on purpose because you knew I will call and your wife will start questioning you"

Bheki: "Why? Its not like we're dating or anything" he's right. Why did I even say that? Shit!

I gulp and glue my eyes on the TV.

Bheki: "We will though because I am here to tell you ngiyakuthanda Sabathile. Its been long. I have tried to find any possible reason to not love you but there isn't ntombemhlophe. You are everything I have been looking for in a woman, beside the fact that you can't cook but I still want you to be mine sshalaphala." I laugh.

Me: "You're kidding right?" He frowns.

Bheki: "I just poured my heart out and you think I'm kidding?"

Me: "That wasn't pouring your heart out"

Bheki: "What was it?"

Me: "Just a statement."

I'm in very revealing pyjamas. He hasn't done his stupid look away. Infact his gaze is digging deep into my skin without a shame.

Me: "Your father told you its okay to look at half naked women now?"

Bheki: "Idlozi lami livumile ukuthi wena uzoba ngowami so there's no sin in looking at future Mrs Ncube"

Me: "I'm your employee Mr Ncube"

Bheki: "Manje?" (So)

Me: "You can't ask me out and try to have a romantic relationship with me, its against the law"

Bheki: "You're fired then"

Me: "No!"

Bheki: "Yes"

Me: "I don't date married men Bheki. Infact I hate seeing you there telling me you love me"

Bheki: "Who said I'm married?"

Me: "All Zulu men are" he chuckles and shake his head.

Bheki: "Not me nkosazana. If you give me a chance I promise you I will be yours and only yours"

I harden my face. I can't afford to blush.

Me: "I want to sleep now"

I get up and walk to the lift. "Goodnight Bheki. I will pray for you to lose those feelings" he walks up up me. His cologne!



Lord Jesus! He's too close, I can't breathe properly.

Bheki: "Let me be. I love how much I missed you. I thought about you and your silly complaints everyday. Good night princess. Once again I'm sorry for disappearing without a say. I promise you I'll never do that, ever again. You left me 80 voicemail messages by the way. I take it you missed me too"

He extends his hand to press the opening button. I am experiencing every type of feelings right now. Feelings that I shouldn't be feeling. The lift parts, he goes in and wave a little goodbye. The lift close I take a deep breath.

Out of all the men I've turned down my heart choose him? This arrogant-stupid man? Its him that it loves? No I can't fall inlove with a Zulu man. I refuse!

I lean against the wall. How do you stop your heart from loving someone it shouldn't?

I scream when my alarm rings. Why is the sun out? I don't want to go to work cause rest assured Bheki will show up and I will not know how to face him, not after our love confessing session, his love confession. I snoozed the alarm and continued my fake sleep. My eyes kept blinking. My phone buzzes. "Your boss is breathing fire. You Bette get your ass here in time" a text from Philani read. Fuck it!

I climb out of bed and head to take the quickest shower in history. Why would he be breathing fire? It is Monday morning for Christ's sake. Is he the type to sulk when turned down? If so then I will make his existence twice as hard. Before I know it I am done and ready to go. I write Sis Buhle a note apologizing for all the mess. I take bread and cheese and get on the lift. I'm a hot mess. I walk in, I catch the bad aura. It is gonna be a long day.

Bheki: "You're late" he shouts from the other side of the counter. I check the time. He's crazy.

Me: "Its 8:30"

Bheki: "30 minutes late. We open at 8"

Me: "I arrive at 8 when its my opening day Sir. Today wasn't"

Bheki: "Sit down Alexis and do your job" I smile. He keeps his straight ugly face. Is it weird that I find this mood sexy? I open

the chair and switch on the computer. I punch my log in details and get up to make coffee.

Philani hugs me from behind and whisper "I'm ready to quit"

Bheki: "Yey nina! Akusikho emjolweni la. Mangifuna ukuwotawotana, out" (hey you two. This isn't a place of romance. If you want to be all over each other. Get out) Philani let go of me and rushed back to where he came from. I took my cup and went to sit down. I recorded all the money that has came in. Mondays are the busiest, so much money in 45 minutes. Bheki was busy on the computer doing only Lord knows what but it seemed pretty serious, I could tell from his face expression.

Bheki: "We need 2 boys that will work on Mondays and Fridays"

Me: "Ok"

Bheki: "Issue a vacancy advert"

Me: "On it" silence. Just pressing of the keyboard making sound. "What is going on?" I ask after a good ten minutes.

Bheki: "Are you done with what I asked you to do?"

Me: "Yes Sir. Its on your email as we speak"

Bheki: "This place closes at 5:30pm. Whomever break the rules will face serious consequences"

He pile the papers together and walks toward the exit all the way out. I rest my case.

Me: "He's gone!" I shout laughing. Philani comes out.

Philani: "This human being has issues. He shouted at me in front of the love of my life. Can you believe that?"

Me: "What? What's wrong with him?"

Philani: "He's an ass. I am ready to leave this place if he will treat me like that" he's really hurt. My heart ached and started getting angry. "This place wouldn't be where it is today if it wasn't for me. And today he has the guts to come here, cursing around and shout at me like a I'm little kid in front of customers? No I will not stand that. Infact tell him I quit."

Me: "Philani wait" I say chasing after him. He did not act like he heard me.

I stop when he gets into the lift. I feel like crying now. I walk back slowly. I rest on the counter before I get behind it and sit. I take my phone and text him.

"This place needs you Philani. Please come back when you've calmed down"

I log on to facebook and text Mvelo. We chat for a while before she logs off to go to the meeting. We need a night to discuss her special weekend. She told me to pick a perfect one. Friday is the way to go since Bheki has decided to be a moron. I can't come in late.

The day drags. Laundry coming in and out much to my annoyance. By 5:30 I pack my things. Philani did not respond to any of my texts or answer my calls at that.

The drive to my parents house is faster than usual, I am hungry so I couldn't be happier.

Melissa: "You beat us into this!" She screams as I enter. I crouch to hug her.

Me: "Were you gonna come over?"

Melissa: "Yes. I was waiting for your father"

Me: "I missed home. The penthouse get lonely"

Melissa: "I know right. Cassandra please fix my baby a cheesy bacon sandwich!" She shouts. Someone yells "Okay" from the kitchen.

Me: "New help?"

Melissa: "Yes. I twisted my ankle yesterday, just a little and your father forbidden me to go anywhere near the kitchen so he hired her. She's a chef"

Me: "I'm sorry about the ankle, let me see" .

Melissa: "I went to the Dr this morning. No damage" I touch it to see if it's swollen, just a little.

Me: "One could never trust you mom. You like acting strong" she chuckles.

Melissa: "You guys worry too much. Did your brother call you?"

Me: "No. There's an 035 I found a missed call of though. It was so busy at work I forgot to call it back"

Melissa: "It was him. He wants us to plan a baby shower for Kim"

Me: "Really? Awesome. God I am so occupied I even forgot I'm

gonna be an aunt" they were not at the wedding.

Melissa: "No! Imagine me as a grandma. We haven't had a little baby in this house since you. I doubt I even know how to change diaper anymore"

Me: "We'll be changing diapers?" I say rather disgusted. She nods laughing. "Mark me absent ma'am"

A lady in chef uniform hover over me with a plate.

Melissa: "That smells nice Cassandra" I take the plate and thank her after she's said thank you to mom.

Cassandra: "Beverage preference?"

Me: "Is there cranberry juice?"

Cassandra: "Yes there is" her staring! Mostly on my hair. Probably wondering why it looks like this. I took off the wig coming in of which now I deeply regret. "I-I will pour you just now" she says when I stare back annoyed. I sigh as she walks away.

Me: "My savings are now enough for me to find a place"

Melissa: "A what? What's-" dad has this crazy thing of howling when he gets into the house. He first kiss me and then snuggle up next to mom.

Marcus: "I missed you"

Me: "Really? You didn't seem like you knew you had a daughter in Neslpruit"

Marcus: "FYI I came into your room every night to say goodnight but I'd find you dreaming and drooling" I laugh. "But

still kissed your 25 year old lovely forehead. Your mother is my witness"

Melissa: "Do you ever face your wrongs without pointing me a witness of something?"

Marcus: "You're my partner in crime. You signed up for that" they giggle and dad lays his head on her lap. This two and their forever blooming love.

Melissa: "Lexi was saying something before you came in" Dad outstretch his hand and I take away my plate. I have him a little medium piece of a sandwich.

Me: "Yeah. I have saved up enough to get an apartment" dad sits up straight.

Marcus: "What is wrong with the penthouse?"

Me: "Nothing. I just want to do something for myself"

Melissa: "Have you started looking?"

Me: "Yes I have. I think there's one I like"

Melissa: "I have a bad feeling about this. Where is it?"

Me: "Houghton"

Melissa: "Does it have hot running water? A big tub? Is it secure?"

Marcus: "Is there garages for your cars? Which security company is that building under? Does their lift works?" Jesus please do save me!

Me: "I have not been there. I was thinking of going there after work tomorrow"

Marcus: "Rent, how much are we talking?"

Me: "R5000" mom gasps and shake her head no.

Melissa: "That is a low class place"

Me: "Its not mommy"

Marcus: "There is no decent place with hot running water, a working lift and enough security that is so cheap."

Me: "What about the real world?" They both chuckle.

Marcus: "That world isn't for you love"

Melissa: "What you learned about it is enough. You don't need to rent a R5000 apartment to prove yourself"

Me: "I'm tired of being your little girl. I'm 25"

Marcus: "You're a 25 little of ours. Work some more and then you can move to your own place, decent place"

Melissa: "Yes. Your father is right" I sigh softly. They disappoint me.

Me: "Let me go take a shower"

Them: "Are you sleeping over?"

Me: "I wish I was but I'm opening tomorrow"

I hear the weak OKs as I go up.

I take a long hot bath. Just what I needed. I feel fresh as I step out after about an hour, I passed out for a couple of minutes.

Fatigue was killing me



now I'm a bit better. I receive a greeting text from Mike, I greet him back and put the phone away to apply lotion and wear pyjamas.

I find another text when I finish, him reminding about that restaurant. I feel bad, I apologize for not giving him feedback and take my gown and go out to meet my lovely family again.

Me: "Your air-conditioner is broken I think"

Marcus: "No I decreased it on purpose. You smell lovely"

Me: "Its that bedtime perfume mom bought me"

Melissa: "Its still there? It smells really nice"

Me: "Thank you"

I did not realize how much time had gone. It was 7:30.

Cassandra walked in with food. We ate and I packed my take away and left, after a huge argument about driving at night.

This place just gets so quiet after 8pm. Its like nobody lives here.

Arriving upstairs. I put my food in the fridge and went to sleep after I set up a 5:30 alarm.

...

I hear footsteps approaching close. I bring my eyes up. He's pushing a cart.

Sabelo: "Morning"

Me: "Hey." I get up and walk over to him. I take the clipboard

and sign. "Please wheel these inside for me. My co-worker is not in"

Sabelo: "Ofcourse"

Me: "Thank you" I say as he wheel his cart out. He stops and turn.

Sabelo: "What are you doing this evening?"

Me: "Keeping myself as far way as possible from married men. Need something?" His head drops. He meets with a smirk back up.

Sabelo: "Right. I wanted something but never mind"

Me: "Have a good day"

I go back to my computer and play Solitaire.

We got in a staring contest. His, tender and full of regret. Mine, boiling with anger I could feel tears burn my eyes.

Bheki: "Where's Philani?" He says after he loses the battle.

Me: "He quit"

Bheki: "What?"

Me: "Nobody wants to work for someone ungrateful and disrespectful as you are Bheki Ncube"

Bheki: "I'm sorry about yesterday"

Me: "Well you're sorry to a wrong person. How could you shout at him? Infront of customers at that!"

Bheki: "I was...I'm going through some things and I-" I cut him off.

Me: "We all are Bheki! But you'll never see us going around shouting at people, especially people who are helpful to us."

Bheki: "I'm sorry. I was out of line"

Me: "Damn right you were. I also quit! See how you run this place by yourself"

Bheki: "Lexi..."

I pull myself up. I put my things back to my bag. He grips my arm as I head out.

Me: "If you know what's good for you, you will let go of me. Go shave this hair, people do not think when they have hair" I looking at his head annoyed.

Bheki: "I'm sorry okay. I meant what I said that night"

Me: "To hell with that. You've showed me why I should keep myself away from you" I snatch my hand off his grip and run to the lift. I was mad but now I am furious.

I call my dad. I fail to stop the sobs when he answers.

Marcus: "What's wrong baby? Where are you?"

Me: "I'm...is the offer still available?"

Marcus: "Ofcourse it is my love. What did your boss do? Tell that motherfucker I will kill him!"

Me: "He's...he's not treating us well"

Marcus: "I'm coming there right now."

Came to think of it. I never told them I work for Bheki.

Me: "No need daddy I'll be fine. He just left anyway"

Marcus: "I am coming anyways. I love you okay"

Me: "I love you too"

I hang up and kick my heels off. I lay on the couch.

I must've fallen asleep. My phone woke me. It was Bheki. I answer and keep quiet.

Bheki: "I've spoken to Philani. I apologized. Please let me in"

I hang up and get up to let him in. I go back to the couch. I page through my phone. I text my dad that I was asleep when he called.

Bheki: "Hi" I look at him and then back to my phone and then back at him. I want to laugh. He's wearing navy nike track pants and an adidas hoodie. Nothing like him.

Bheki: "I shaved my hair. Can we talk now?"

Me: "So you got into the salon and told the barber you want Mohawk?"

Bheki: "Yes. And I bought these at Woolworths I didn't steal them from ugogo womlungu"

Me: "You're very racist" he chuckles.

Bheki: "Black people are never racist. We never colonised anyone"

I sigh. Why do I love such a fool though? "I also bought you Ferrero Rocher." He handed them over.

Me: "Thank you"

Bheki: "Vula ke" (open it)

Me: "What?"

Bheki: "Ushokoledi. Angikaze ngawudla ngaphambilini ngifuna nje ukuwuzwa"(The chocolates. I've never ate it before. I just want a taste) never have I ever heard that before. I open it and give him one, I take one too. We eat in silence.

Bheki: "Can I have another one?"

Me: "No."

Bheki: "Forgive me for not being nice yesterday. Philani has forgiven me cause I scored him a date with his crush."

Me: "Really? Thats so sweet of you. I can't imagine how much he's floating in happiness" my mood light up.

Bheki: "He is. He hugged me and kissed my forehead" I laugh.

"Let's go get something to eat"

Me: "I'm actually sleepy"

Bheki: "You can sleep while I ride"

I put on my wig.

Bheki: "Why do you always wear that?"

Me: "Because I love it. I'll go change" I changed into jeans and a jacket. The weather has changed.

I find 2 of my chocolates missing. His cheeks looking like of a chipmunk.

I head to the lift.

Me: "Where's your car?"

Bheki: "Here" he says tapping a bicycle. I laugh. He unhooks it

from the bikes racks. "It has a hoot"

Me: "Bheki"

Bheki: "Mama?"

Me: "I am going back"

Bheki: "Because I am riding a bicycle?"

Me: "No. Because we won't fit in this"

Bheki: "We will. Come" I sigh. Jesus I do not understand this person. "Almost forgot" he takes off to the shop opposite and comes back with 2 helmets. "Here" I take and fasten it up. He climbs on and I follow.

Bheki: "Don't be afraid to hold on to me."

Me: "Okay." I held on tight. He's a cuddle bear. No six packs, just a tiny normal belly of an attractive Zulu man.

I would rather die than admit to Mvelo that I fell hard for this Brentwood wearing shaka warrior. He honks at some guys we pass by. I laugh.

Bheki: "I told you. This is a special bicycle nkosazana" that nkosazana thing melts my heart. "McDonald's?"

Me: "Yes please"

I wasn't even looking forward. My head was on his back.

I hear "Sir bicycles aren't allowed this side" I get my head up to see. We're at the drive through.

Bheki: "Isn't this a vehicle? I'd like 2 large big tasty, with orange juice and coke"

Lady: "Please do this again. It'll be R160"

Bheki: "Oh I will do it again. You probably won't be in, so..." he takes out a card. I face away and laugh. He smells nice. She gives us the receipt.

Me: "You're so exceptional Bheki Ncube" I say as we take our order.

Bheki: "Am I?" He parks at the parking lot before McDonalds door.

Me: "What are we doing now?"

Bheki: "Getting inside to eat."

Me: "Bheki Ncube?" He laughs and pull me towards the door. He looks at his reflection in the glass.

Bheki: "I look like Jo'burg boys today neh?"

Me: "Yes you do"

Bheki: "Thank you"

I spot a table for two at the far dim corner. I pull him. We settle down and he starts telling me about his bicycle.

Bheki: "It is special to me. I've never let anyone ride it."

Me: "We all have that one thing"

Bheki: "True and then we have people we want to share those special things with, to me that happens to be you"

Me: "Don't be cheesy"

Bheki: "Can I kiss you? Just incase I die tonight"

Me: "Yeah sure" we lean over and kiss. His lips are soft.

Bheki: "Look at you blushing. Thank you"

Me: "My pleasure"

Bheki: "These fries are cold now...sorry sisi, ngisacela ungifudumezela" I take the fries away from him.

Me: "He's kidding." The lady turns back. "You're such trouble"

Bheki: "How many troubles do you have?"

Me: "Two"

Bheki: "Congratulations. You now have three" he points at himself.

He's stupid and I think that is why I am falling for him. Are we dating now or what? Whatever it is that is happening, I love it....



13

Yet again. I am here on my bed, feeling like crap. I can't move an inch, I trusted this man again and went out drinking, just the 2 of us this time. I had a really great time but now I wish I hadn't agreed to go. My phone vibrates somewhere in the bed, with all the strength in me I search for it under the covers and God have mercy on me, I find it.

I view the the text message from my mother.

Lexi. We are going out today. You need to distress my angel. Be ready by 11am. Xoxo.

I growl. Its 10:15! How fast am I to be done and ready to be fetched by 11?

No mommy. I have a terrible hangover. Let's make it 12pm. Pretty please?

I respond and feel the burning urge to urinate, God my body can't take this torture. I get up, almost trip over my pants that I assume I didn't not pull them over my feet. I move them off and run to the bathroom. I pee, I feel relief take over. I sit in that same position for quite a while just thinking about my life, like most of us do in this place. I hear footsteps, I sigh in relief when I hear Sis Buhle humming. I wipe myself and flush. I look for remedy pills on the cabinet. I drink up, I look like I just came out of the bush or I am a family member of Croods.

Me: "Hey sis Buhle" she startle, we laugh.

Sis Buhle: "I thought you had left for work already."

Me: "I quit, I will work for my dad now"

Sis Buhle: "Really? What happened down there? I thought you were happy"

Me: "I was, its just...I don't know, I made a decision while I was angry and now I can't call my dad and tell him that so I'll just go ahead with it."

Sis Buhle: "Ohh I get it now"

Me: "Yup. Let me go take a shower, my mother is taking me out"

Sis Buhle: "You better do because if she sees you like this she'll assume you're going through depression" We laugh. She knows her too well.

My mother arrives just as I stepped into the shower.

By the time I finish getting ready Melissa McVeigh has called me to hurry up more than 30 times.

She gets into my room as I take my bag to walk out. I smile, the please don't shout at me smile.

Me: "See? I'm done. Let's go" She rolls her eyes and we walk out. "Sis Buhle! See you tomorrow. I love you"

Sis Buhle: "I love you! Have a good time my loves"

Us: "Thank you"

We get on the lift and I take a few mirror selfies of us. She looks simple and beautiful. She never dress up like this, she likes dresses and heels but today she settled for skinny jeans, white tee with some modern printing and sandals, not forgetting shades. My dad would go crazy if he saw her like this, he'd ask her on a date. I decide to send him a picture of us as we drive off.

What on earth is this! Please keep the men away from my wife. What a way to make my day. You look beautiful my honeys.

I chuckle.

Me: "Dad says I should keep the men away from you" she laughs.

Melissa: "Tell him I only have eyes for him. He must not worry"

I text him exactly that.

Me: "So today you decided we should go out?"

Melissa: "Ofcourse. We haven't, in months."

Me: "You know why?"

Melissa: "Why?"

Me: "Because I was always the one to initiate the outings and now I am the responsible and the spending wisely Lexi"

She chuckles.

Melissa: "True and I regret ever trying to introduce you to the world because in that process you stopped being our little girl"

I could sense a glimpse of pain in her voice.

Me: "Mom! I haven't. I just have been busy"

Melissa: "You hardly even call baby"

Me: "My mistake, I'm sorry."

Melissa: "When last did you sleep over?"

I sigh.

Me: "I will stay the weekend this time."

Melissa: "Why not today?"

Me: "Because Mvelo is coming over" She moved the meeting into today because apparently by Friday she'd have forgotten some things. That's just my bestie with lousy excuses for everything.

Melissa: "Okay. I will cook your favorite"

I laugh and perk her cheek.

I take out my phone once again to check if I have any messages. None. I place it back to my thighs and turn up the music. I pull out my glasses too. Mom glances at me and smile.

The drive to the spa is filled with joy and laughter.

We are welcomed with love and offered champagne as the young lady leads us to changing rooms.

Still no new messages on my phone or missed calls. I switch it off and put it in my bag.

Melissa: "I saw Bheki when I went to fill up gas, and then saw him in the building speaking to Mrs Kavinsky" she says as we lay

down to get started with the works.

So he's alive but hasn't bothered to text or call. "Lexi!" I jump.

"Did you hear what I said?"

Me: "Y-yes. I'm just thinking"

Melissa: "You haven't worked things out?"

I shake my head no.

Me: "Bheki is complicated. I don't think someone like him and me have a chance to date"

Melissa: "But you two looked happy together" I clear my throat and moan a little as the lady deals with the tense back of mine. She has magic hands.

Me: "I wouldn't really say happy, we just got along fine"

Melissa: "If you say so. Has Mvelo told you how was the ceremony?"

Me: "Not full details. That's why we're meeting tonight"

Melissa: "Don't drink too much. I know how you both get around each other"

I laugh.

Me: "She has to go to work tomorrow so we won't. We'll talk over a movie and a box of pizza"

Melissa: "That's good. I'm getting sleepy"

Me: "Me too"

We stay quiet and indulge into the moment...

...

The lunch is breath taking. Those foods prepared before our eyes are my favorite. Whoever came up with the idea is a genius. The place is quite packed, you wouldn't say its Wednesday.

I feel fresh and a whole lot better than I did 2 hours ago. Most people here are couples. I wonder how long they've been together. All of them look pretty happy.

Mom looks at me and then back at the couple I am watching, they look pretty young to be in a relationship. She lifts her glass of wine, I gasp when the diamond in her finger catches the light.

Me: "Isn't she too young for that?"

Melissa: "What?"

Me: "Marriage"

Mom looks at them and chuckles.

Melissa: "You know baby, when you find the one everything just seems right. How old you are, your financial state or whatever does not matter."

Me: "I see"

I don't. Why would one choose to share their life with someone from 20s. If I saw any need for marriage I would choose to get married at 40 when I am done with myself. Marriage limits who

are and what you want. I bet she can't just up and leave without telling him. Marriage is jail

Advertisement

a jail dressed as have made it in life.

My phone vibrates. I reach for it. I feel a bit of disappointment when I see a message from an agent reminding me about our meeting in an hour of which I totally forgot about.

Me: "Are you gonna come with me to the apartment viewing. This was an agent reminding me"

Melissa: "Yes ofcourse"

Her phone rings. She smiles and I already know its her husband.

.

They talk like they don't share a bed. She tells him she's going with me to see the apartment. Her grin grows even wider and then hangs up.

Melissa: "Your father says send him the address. He's gonna meet us there" I do not like that idea at all but I send him anyway. We finish up eating and leave the paradise. Mvelo abuses me with wanting selfies. I keep on sending her a picture of everything around me.

When we arrive at the given address, my father is already there waiting. We hug and he asks me about what my boss did exactly. I tell them as we head inside this old yet beautiful

building. They comfort me, if only they knew that my boss is Bheki.

"You must be Lexi" says a lady out of nowhere. She flashes us a big bold smile.

Her: "I am Camilla. Steph, your agent got held up somewhere so she asked me to help you. Your room is on the first floor, unfortunately the lift is temporarily out so we'll have to take the stairs"

I look at my dad. He stares at me blank and I nod towards Camilla and then she leads the way up. Their lobby is beautiful. Grey walls, white couches and a little bit touch of red there and there. The portraits on the wall compliments the style. I just hope the apartment looks as good as it did on the pictures or else these 2 human beings will eat me alive.

She unlocks the second door on the left.

Camilla: "This is it! You can put the carpet over if you do not like the wooden floor" whomever lived here did not believe much in cleaning. The wooden floor needs tender care, this one doesn't look like it got it's equipment once in a while. She leads us to what's supposed to be a kitchen, 3 people can not be in this kitchen. My dad opens the taps and closes them. They have a built in stove, washing machine and a dishwasher. Nice.

She leads us to the bathroom. There's no tub. Only a shower. The parents have not said a word and I know that's not good.



The bedroom isn't as big but enough. It has a walk in closet, its also small but not too small. We go back to the lounge.

Camilla: "So, What do you think?"

Me: "I-" my dad cuts me off.

Marcus: "Its ugly" mom and I looks at him. "What? Look at this floor, do goats live here? What about the wardrobe of a bathroom? Where's the tub? That kitchen, so tiny. This is a doll house. Tell whomever owns this place that he/she should fix it. Your lift doesn't even function"

Camilla: "Sir this apartment is the biggest and on high demand in this whole entire building"

Marcus: "Then give it to those who demand it. My daughter will not stay in such a place. Thank you for your time"

He pulls us both out.

Me: "Dad! What was that?"

Marcus: "You will not stay here"

Me: "Its affordable"

Melissa: "And not secured. I did not see a security guard at the gate"

Marcus: "Don't rush to move out. Stay in the penthouse until you have enough money to rent a decent place"

Me: "When I find that place I'll go alone"

Marcus: "Fine by me"

Mom shrugs. These people!

I also do not like the place but they are too much. I send Steph a text apologizing about my dad's behavior towards Camilla.

Marcus: "Mom and I are now going to Rosebank. You want to tag along?"

Me: "No, I have to go get some snacks, Mvelo is coming over"

Marcus: "Oh. You girls have a good time"

Me: "Thank you."

Melissa: "Take my car. You'll bring it on Friday"

Me: "Thank you" we hug and part ways into the cars...

....

People are always shopping. I did not expect shops to be so packed at this time of the month.

I couldn't help myself. I bought only 1 bottle of wine.

When I arrived back home I took a bath and slid into my pyjamas. I decided to hide my phone away before I go crazy. This is why I hate liking people. Stressing over why have not texted is not my kind of style. I feel foreign being mad at Bheki for not making any means to contact me.

6pm on the dot the best friend makes her way in. We hug so tightly. I peep into the paperbag in her hand. There is wine. I laugh.

Me: "Mom was right"

Mvelo: "What is gossip without wine? Are we gonna order in?"

Me: "Yes. You smell heavenly"

Mvelo: "Thank you babe. I bought one for you too"

She takes it out of her bag and waste no time but spray it on my body as I thank her.

I take out the snacks and glasses while she picks a movie for us. She changes into pyjamas and we settle on the couch.

Me: "Start from the beginning"

She laughs and starts talking. Her face lights up at the mention of Nduna's name.

By the time she finishes, we're tipsy and laughing none stop. We order food, Nduna calls her, I leave them to talk while I go pee. I come back, they are still talking. I fetch more snacks and a second bottle of wine. She hangs up when I sit down next to her.

Me: "So calling each other is the thing in a relationship?"

Mvelo: "Yes. I mean how can you not call or text your person? Nduna checks up on me every now and then"

Me: "Since you agreed to be his girlfriend?"

Mvelo: "Yes. Are you okay?"

Me: "Yeah, why would you ask? I'm fine"

I fake a chuckle.

Mvelo: "You just... you've never been interested in such information"

Me: "Oh no, I was just curious. Seeing how much Nduna always

calls you"

Mvelo: "Mmmh"

Our food arrives. We eat and then time for her to leave comes.

Me: "I thought you drove here" I say when she tells me Nduna is coming to fetch her.

Mvelo: "No babe I requested an uber"

Me: "Oh"

We get on the lift heading down. We hug when we reach Nduna's car.

Nduna: "You should come visit is Lexi, she misses you"

Me: "I thought you'd never ask. I will come soon"

Nduna: "I am ready to eat out" I laugh.

Me: "I can cook you know"

Nduna: "Ok I can't wait to eat foreign foods"

I chuckle.

Mvelo: "Its nice to see you two not trying to kill each other"

Me: "He loves you. Now I'm sure so there's no reason to kill him, atleast for now"

I smile at Nduna and bid them goodbye.

I gasp when I feel someone grip my hand. My face changes when I see his. I snatch my hand off and head back inside. He is hot on my heels as I press for the lift to open.

Bheki: "What's wrong?" If I speak right now it'll be bad. The lift parts, I am hoping it closes before he gets in but why am I

stupid to even wish of that because he's standing beside me and goes in first before I do. I wasn't this angry before he got here but now that he's here, I want to slap the shit out of him.

Bheki: "Are you going to say what's wrong or should I follow you around the whole night?"

He says as I clean up our mess with Mvelo. I put the dishes into a sink and put my right hand on the hip.

Me: "You have some nerve you know that? You spend the whole day quiet and you come here and say that to me? It is totally unacceptable Bheki!"

Bheki: "You're mad I didn't text?" He smirks. He finds it funny.

Me: "Are you kidding me? You think this is funny?"

Bheki: "No but seeing a short person angry sort is. I'm sorry I didn't text, I did not want to pressure you."

Me: "Pressure me?"

Bheki: "Yes. If you're hitting on a beautiful woman, you should give her time to breathe and think about you, of which I did but didn't turn out good"

Me: "Oh I thought we were already an item" I laugh at my stupid self.

Bheki: "How? You didn't agree to be my woman"

Me: "Of course I did you dummy. We kissed!"

He frowns.

Bheki: "That's it?..." he pause. "I forgot you're white. I thought

you guys did that only in movies. I absolutely had no idea that a kiss is all takes to seal the deal. I am sorry for not texting"

Me: "You are stupid"

Bheki: "I read somewhere that that's how you guys tells a person you love them so I love you too"

I find myself laughing. Why is my heart trapped on this fool. His smile grows as he sees me laugh.

Bheki: "Come here you battery low teddy" he picks me up to sit on the counter. He looks down on my exposed thighs. He clears his throat and looks at my face. "Why were you wearing this outside?"

Me: "Because-"

He places his cold, strong hands on my thighs. I gulp. I haven't been touched in a very long time. His left hand travels to caress my cheek and the other on my back.

Bheki: "You're so beautiful. I wish you knew that and stopped wearing that hair" I chuckle nervously as his finger softly drummed on my back.

Me: "Thank you"

Bheki: "Can I kiss you now?" I nod shyly.

He brings his face closer and our lips meet.

It is nothing I expected. You know this kind and such things, he seems to know his business. I wonder if his sex is also nice....whoa hold it Lexi!

I quickly shut my mind off and focus on the kiss that is sending all kinds of feelings into my body. I hope I am not kissing him badly, I mean I haven't kissed anyone in years.

Holy shit its official!....

14

The ringing sound of my phone disturbed my beautiful dream of buying myself the BMW M4. This is why I always put it on silence before I sleep. People get bored and call you, without any valid reason why.

I narrow my eyes as the light penetrate my eyes sharply. Its unknown numbers, I answer.

Me: "Yes"

Voice: "Don't tell me you're the grumpy type in the morning" I chuckle.

Me: "Not really. I just don't like people waking me up, not you though. Did you change numbers?"

Mike: "Yes. I got mugged last night on the parking lot"

Me: "I'm sorry. Didn't they harm you?"

Mike: "Just a few slaps, punches and kicks"

Me: "That sounds terrible"

Mike: "Ahh I'm fine. I took them as a man. What are you doing today after work?"

Me: "I will only go back to work on Monday"

Mike: "Awesome. Thirsty-Thursday here we come! Get ready by 12 in the noon okay?"

Me: "As long as you won't force me to drink even when I've had enough"

Mike: "I will do no such thing. Here comes my boss, let me call



you later. Bye"

Me: "Bye" I hang up and look at the time. 10am on the dot. Well I'm not surprised, I slept at 3am after Bheki left. He decided we watch a movie and cuddled in the couch. I was pretty impressed by his suggestion. Men aren't so much in movies, especially not romcoms but he picked one.

I send him a good morning text and go to release my bladder from the torture. I hear my phone ringing as fill the tub with hot water. I walk to take it. I smile and answer.

Me: "Hey"

Bheki: "Hey. I'm sorry about not texting, I just came out of the meeting"

Me: "It's okay"

Bheki: "Are you okay?"

Me: "Yeah I'm great. How are you?"

Bheki: "A bit sleepy but I'm okay. Any plans for the day?"

Me: "Yeah. I am going out with Mike"

Bheki: "Ubanike loyo?" (Who's that?)

Me: "My friend, the one I was with the other day"

Bheki: "Well you can't go out with him"

Me: "And why is that?"

Bheki: "Because we have plans"

Me: "No we don't"

Bheki: "We do now. Get ready. I'll pick you up in a few"

Me: "Bheki I'm not- Hello?" He hung up on me!

I toss the phone on the bed and go back to take a bath.

I made the bed after coming out of the bathroom and dressed up.

I hear a knock on the door as I put on make-up.

Me: "It's open"

He peeps his head in. "Oh hey. How did you get in?"

Mike: "I saw your code, sorry."

Me: "You're early"

Mike: "Yeah. I knocked off at 11:30."

Me: "Okay. You can sit on the bed, I'm almost done"

Mike: "Thank you"

I beat my face up and in 10 minutes I'm done and ready to go.

Mike: "You might consider getting a jacket. The weather will change soon"

Me: "Its gonna ruin my outfit" I whine.

Mike: "I'll carry it for you"

I fetch it and we make our way out. I set the lights to go on at 7 and off at 9.

The lift dings open as I extend my arm to press the button. His eyes go straight to Mike. Guilt suddenly hit me. I clear my throat to break the silence. He finally looks my way.

Bheki: "I take it you're ready"

Me: "I-Mike and I were on our way out actually."

Bheki: "Where's your girlfriend?"

Me: "Huh?"

Bheki: "I'm taking to him"

Oh...

Mike: "I don't have one"

Bheki: "Well use this time to go look for one because right now I am taking MY girlfriend out. Asambe baby" he turns to press the button.

Mike looks at me. I mime "I'm sorry" he silently chuckle and shake his head.

We all get in the lift. Silence until we get off. Bheki reach his hand out to Mike, he points at the jacket when Mike shows confusion. He gives it to him, I say goodbye to Mike as we part ways heading into different cars.

Bheki surprisingly opens the door for me. Its the last thing I expected him to do, especially not now.

I thank him and he close the door, I apply a lipgloss as he walks to his door. The starts the car.

Bheki: "Please put on the seatbelt"

I fasten it and off we go. He turns the stereo on and a Zulu radio station comes on. I stare out the window. Actually I should stop battling in my head, I turn the volume down.

Me: "I do not appreciate the way you spoke to my friend"

He glances at me once and look ahead. "I am serious Bheki. And

I left with you because it would've seem as disrespect if I insisted that I'm going out with Mike"

He turns his radio up and dance to the song playing. I turn it down.

Me: "Bheki"

Bheki: "Yebo mama" he smirks.

Me: "Did you hear any word I said?"

Bheki: "Every single one"

Me: "Why are you responding then?"

Bheki: "And say what my love? You told me you do not like how I talked to your purple hair friend and that you're just here because you didn't want to seem disrespectful. What was my answer supposed to be?"

Me: "Okay would've done it"

Bheki: "Ok. Okay then"

I roll my eyes. He chuckles.

Bheki: "I'm sorry that I'll never let you go out with him."

Me: "I'm 25"

Bheki: "Oh congratulations." He says sarcastically.

Me: "You're my boyfriend. You hold no rights of controlling me"

Bheki: "We'll see about that"

Me: "For real. If on our second day together these are the issues we're already dealing with then we should sit down and discuss how are we going to work this out"

Bheki: "I agree. Starting off with cutting that purple hair off our lives"

Me: "No. We don't make such decisions, we discuss"

Bheki: "His case is off discussion. I am not going to have my girlfriend going out with men, you told me your only friend is Nomvelo. Where did he come from now? He's even single to make matters worse. He's warming his way into your heart"

Me: "Eww! Mike does not do relationships. He fucks around"

Bheki: "Even more dangerous. Venomous"

Me: "You're being unreasonable"

Bheki: "Ok let's settle this: You'll only hang out with him in my presence." I scoff. "Take it or leave it"

Me: "I will not be controlled"

Bheki: "Have it your way then"

He inserts the maskandi CD and turns the volume up again.

He sings along, totally ignoring my existence. I take out my phone and text Mvelo. She tells me about the wedding dress hunt that should begin this weekend. I smile excitedly, I shall also tell her about Bheki. Or is it too early? By the look of today

Advertisement

we'll hardly make it to 2 months.

He pulls up in front of KFC and switch off the radio and exhale.

He searches for his wallet and find it.

Me: "Is this where we're going?"

Bheki: "Yes. Let's go" he un-buckle and step out of the car. Date a Zulu man and you shall see yourself choosing him over booze and music while he takes you to KFC.

I take my purse and he's already holding the door open for me.

I step out. He closes the door and we walk inside.

Eyes on us as we walk forward to the counter.

Bheki: "Unjani sisi. Can I have 2 streetwise 2 with chips, box master and crushes" he turns to me. "Berry or Oreo?"

Me: "Oreo please"

Bheki: "Oreos"

He pays and we go to find a table.

Me: "Are we going to eat here?"

Bheki: "Wherever you want"

Me: "We can go to my place" the stares made me uncomfortable.

Bheki: "We can go to my brother's place. Its nearby"

Me: "That's ok"

They call out our order. He gets up to fetch it.

Does he even have his own place? I'm starting to wonder.

...

In 15 minutes we arrive at his brother's place in Balfour.

He must be the cleanest person on earth. I've never been to a place so spotless I am even scared to step freely on the white tiles.

Bheki: "I'll go place these on the plates. Here's the remote, you can put on your shows" I chuckle.

Me: "Thank you." I take off my heels and put them beside the couch. I placed my feet comfortably on the fur carpet. He must be gay, I doubt a Zulu man would have such a style. White everything. Only the tv and the decoder is different. I switch it on and browse through channels. I settle for BET.

He gets back. My phone beeps. I view the email, its from my dad's firm. They are inviting me to an interview. I put the phone back down and look at this full plate before me. Am I expected to eat all this?

Bheki: "Do you want tamati sosi?" (Tomato sauce) I laugh.

Me: "No thank you. I prefer my fries like this"

Bheki: "I was asking for the meat" I frown.

Me: "Who does that?"

Bheki: "Bhekisizwe SamaNcube" he says proudly. I'm shook. He marinates one piece with mayonnaise and the other with tomato sauce. Wow.

We eat in silence. Not the awkward one, the comfortable beautiful silence of glancing at each other now and then and exchanging smiles.

After eating we clean up. Leaving no evidence of us ever eating here.

Bheki: "We can watch a movie" he says after we finish packing the plates back to the white cabinets! Jesus what is it with white everything and this person. Only the stove, fridge and the top of the counter is gray. Its beautiful but he shouldn't have over-white the house.

Me: "We can use my Netflix account"

Bheki: "Yinike leyo?"

Me: "Its a movie app. That's where we always watch movies"

Bheki: "You should buy it for me"

Me: "Its easy. You download the app, fill in your details, they ask the gadget that you'll use, you pick either phone and TV, phone and tablet, laptop or all of it"

Bheki: "Really? Please download it for me" he takes out his tiny huawei. I laugh.

Me: "Jesus I should buy you a phone"

Bheki: "What is wrong with this one?"

Me: "Nothing. Its just too much out of your league"

Bheki: "Which one is better?"

Me: "New samsungs, New Huaweis and IPHones"

Bheki: "Hhai ngeke ngilunge lapho sthandwa sami. I will only have such phones when I get married"

Me: "Then we'll have to use your laptop to sign up on Netflix. Today we'll use my account"



Bheki: "Okay" he turned away. "Gibela" (hop on)

Me: "What?"

Bheki: "Hop on mlungu"

Me: "I heard you at first muzulu" he laughs and turn.

Bheki: "Okay. Let me carry you in your way" I run for my life as he bends to pick me up.

I sync my phone to the TV and sit down while Bheki does whatever wherever in this place.

Bheki: "Its raining"

Me: "I was wondering why am I getting cold"

He closes the blinds and turn on the heater. He disappears and come back with a throw.

He finally takes off his kicks.

Me: "Where did you borrow those feet?" He laughs and put the right one on top of the other.

Bheki: "My mother"

Me: "She has very beautiful feet. Its very unusual for sons to inherit the mother's feet"

Bheki: "I am the lucky one"

He sits down next to me and pull me over to lay my head on his chest. His cologne game is out of this world. I inhale it and lose myself a bit. I wonder how does he smell like when he's sweaty, but I guess I'll find out soon. And being honest I hope he initiates today, here on his brother's couch. My inner bitch

endured too much torture last night when he only kissed me. Not going down there or anything. This girl needs some loving, its been a while, he needs to take down the web. I wonder if he's circumcised? Does he even know his HIV status? He doesn't look like the type to bother about both of that.

Bheki: "Lexi?" I startle.

Me: "mmmh?"

Bheki: "I'm asking if this one is okay" Man in black.

Me: "Yeah its okay. I haven't seen it."

Bheki: "Are you okay?"

Me: "Yes. I am just too full and need to unbutton this jean"

Bheki: "Go ahead then." He kisses my forehead. He must've seen that in movies.

....

Movies always lead to a nap. We both fell asleep. My phone became the alarm.

I move off carefully from his chest. It was minutes after 6. I answer my mother's call.

Me: "Hey"

Melissa: "Lexi, please come home. Its urgent" she's crying.

Me: "What's wrong mommy? Is daddy okay?"

Melissa: "Please just come home" she hangs up. I call her back, she doesn't answer. I call my father, he doesn't answer too.

I shake Bheki softly as tears build up in my eyes. He opens his eyes.

Bheki: "What's wrong?"

Me: "I don't know. My mother just called. She's crying. I'm leaving"

I put on my shoes and my jacket.

Bheki: "I will take you home"

He puts on his shoes too.

....

The drive to my parent's house is silent. And I would be lying if I said I mind it.

Bheki: "I'll stay here until you tell me what is going on"

Me: "You can leave. I'll be fine"

Bheki: "I am not leaving." He kisses my cheek before I hop out.

I put my finger on the reader and I go through. There are 2 unfamiliar cars parked behind my dad's. I say a little prayer as I walk to the front door.

I find mom in the kitchen. She doesn't see me. I carefully touch her arm. She turns my way.

Me: "What's going on?"

Melissa: "I don't wanna lose you Lexi" she starts crying.

Me: "Who said anything about losing me mom?" I am now also crying. We hug for minutes until she finally calms down.

Melissa: "They are here to claim you back"

Me: "What? Where's dad?"

She points at the lounge. I head straight there. He's with people. He doesn't look so happy himself.

Me: "Good evening" my dad gets up and rushes to me.

He puts his hands on my shoulders. Marcus: "Baby"

Me: "What's going on? Why is mommy crying? What did you do to her?" I am failing to compose myself.

Marcus: "Your mother-your mother is here to claim you back" he turns and look at the people sitting on the couch.

I see the man and an older version of Alexis Sabathile McVeigh.

I shake my head slowly. Marcus: "Lexi"

Me: "No daddy. No!"

I snatch my hand away from him and I run upstairs. I remember that Bheki is outside waiting. I turn back, passing my dad like he isn't calling my name crying.

I hop on.

Me: "Please drive. Take me away, far away from this house"

Bheki: "What's going on?"

I lean my head on the dashboard and hit it a couple of times with my fist as I scream. He starts the car and drive off.

The nerve of that woman! The nerve!

15

Bheki: "At some point you'll have to stop crying and start telling me what's wrong" we drove back to his brother's place. I told him I don't want to be where my parents would find me. He made me coffee when we arrived. I curled up on the couch and cried until my coffee got cold while Bheki sat on a chair before me.

I wish there was something to actually say to him. I couldn't talk. My voice failed me.

Bheki: "Sthandwa sami I am about to lose my mind. I can't just sit here and watch you like this. You need to say something" he extends his hand to take the cup into his hands. "I am worried Alexis!"

I startle. "I'm sorry. Please say something please"

I take the tissue and blow my nose. I take a deep sigh and sit up straight, both my knees in between Bheki's.

Me: "They had an affair with my father, he was her lecturer. I was the results of my father's infidelity, I guess she couldn't stand a mixed baby or she hated me because of how I came I

don't know." He wipes my tears as he clenches his jaw. "She went to my parent's house and left me at the door. When my mom went to attend the door bell, she found a little baby in her doorstep and that was me. My father confessed his sins, 'It really didn't hurt much. I was so focused on my gift wrapped in pink' my mother said when they told me about who I really am. So, she's back, to claim me" I chuckle. "Claim me. Like some sort of property, after 25 years?" I start crying again. He places both his hands on my thighs.

Bheki: "Hey hey hey, listen. You can't let that pathetic woman ruin your night okay? She's a piece of shit and not worth your beautiful tears. I know you're crying probably because you're angry but please calm down, you're scaring me and worrying me when you cry. I don't want to see you cry"

Me: "I can't help it"

Bheki: "I'll make you another cup of coffee and make you pasta and any topping of your choice"

I find myself laughing. "I'm a great cook miss McVeigh. Unlike someone I can't point a finger at"

Me: "Is it? So is your brother going to be okay with you taking over his kitchen?"

Bheki: "Of course. Why wouldn't he be? It's just a kitchen"

Me: "And his food"

Bheki: "I can always replace it. He's not greedy"

Me: "Where does he live?"

Bheki: "Rusternburg. Let me go make that coffee. Take this thing off."

Me: "Ouch!" He let's go and laugh.

Bheki: "I'm sorry. Doesn't it come out in one pull?"

Me: "No." I take it off. "Jesus you gonna pull my scalp up one day"

Bheki: "I might, because I don't understand why you wear it"

He disappears to the kitchen before I can answer. I look for my phone under the fleece, nothing.

Me: "Did you see my phone?"

Bheki: "On the TV stand"

Me: "Thank you"

Bheki: "You're welcome" I chuckle. He's nice to me, I should always cry.

I get up and take it. He comes in with 2 cups of coffee. He put them on the small round table beside the couch. I sit down and switch on my phone. He hands me my cup.

Me: "Thank you"

Bheki: "Mushroom sauce, peri peri sauce or just normal pasta sauce?"

Me: "A drop of peri and normal pasta sauce"

Bheki: "Mince or Chicken strips?"

Me: "Strips will do"

Bheki: "Okay baby." He switch on the TV and leave the lounge again.

Messages come in, in numbers. They are from the parents. I text them that I'm fine, text Mvelo good night and switch off my phone.

I settle some random tv show that was watching but not paying attention as my mind wandered off to that woman. 25 years, only today she saw it fit to come up here and "claim me"

I am angry. No



not because she gave me away. I actually appreciate her for that, had it been someone else she'd have killed me or worse. I grew up experiencing real love from both my parents. They love unconditionally.

I am angry that she came to "claim me back"

She's not here to try and explain anything to me or try to have a relationship with me first. Who ups and leave with a stranger just because it is their biological mother? She had no remorse at all. She looked at me with no surprise or whatsoever.

Bheki throws himself on the couch beside me. I turn to him. The aroma hits my nostrils. He gives me the bowl. I thank him.

Bheki: "Been calling you for the past 5 minutes"

Me: "I'm thinking about that woman. She had no regret in her eyes."

Bheki: "She's evil, thats why."

Me: "At least you get this. I mean he could've given me to my dad but still kept in contact. She never loved me, why is she here now?"

Bheki: "Her tyre probably kept punching, her mother suggested she goes to a sangoma. She did and then the sangoma told her it's because she gave you away and then she decided to look for you"

Me: "She's always known where I am. My father is a very well known businessman and the cars I saw outside, she might be in business too"

Bheki: "So you'll never ever forgive her?"

Me: "No. I do not need a woman. She can go to hell for all I care"

Bheki: "Let's forget about her and eat" I smile.

Me: "You're really a good cook. This tastes nice"

He takes my hand and kisses it...

\*\*\*

I was hoping I will get some steamy hot sex to relieve my stress. I got none. None!

We shared a bed. I was wearing his trunk that I took off in the middle of the night, it was uncomfortable. Not even the warmth of my butt woke him up. Even this morning, he realized

I was naked. He just smiled and baby kissed me and went to run me a bath. I am worried.

He gets in with a foschini plastic as I step out of the bathroom. He smiles and hugs me.

Bheki: "I missed you"

Me: "Where are you from?"

Bheki: "The mall. I went to get you cosmetics and clothes since you don't wanna be found"

Me: "Thank you. Aren't you supposed to be at work?"

Bheki: "I am but I decided to take a day off and take you out"

Me: "You like going out, don't you?"

Bheki: "Have parents ever bought you something you've longed for, for so long?" I frown and nod. "You couldn't maintain the happiness of going out and show it off right?"

Me: "Yes"

Bheki: "Thats how I feel with you babe. I just want to take you everywhere. Let people see that you're mine now" I laugh.

Me: "You're so cheesy for a Zulu guy"

Bheki: "What did Zulu guys ever did to you Sabathile McVeigh" there's something about how he calls my name and surname. It just sends shivers down my spine.

Me: "Nothing. They are just something else for my liking"

He raise his brow and offer me a body lotion. I take it and start applying. His eyes don't move away from my bare naked body. He sits on the bed and keep on looking. I am getting uncomfortable.

Me: "If eyes could eat someone up. I'd be long gone" he laughs.

Bheki: "You're too beautiful to not watch."

Me: "What did you buy? I should dry my underwear"

I take the plastic and take out clothes. He bought me a dress, pants, tee, sandals, bras and panties. I laugh.

Me: "How do you know these will fit?"

Bheki: "I'm a very smart guy. Can you please wear that dress?"

Me: "What? Are you taking me to Malimali again?" He laughs.

Bheki: "Its Kwamayemaye baby"

Me: "Same thing"

Bheki: "Its not. Let me bath. Order us breakfast" he heads to the bathroom door.

Me: "What can I order?"

Bheki: "Anything, with KFC" I thought Philani was bluffing when he said this man is obsessed with KFC. I nod as he goes in. I put on the dress. I do not like summer dress but I am willing to compromise. I fit perfectly into it and swing around. I put on shoes and clear up the room then take my phone and switch it on.

Messages again. My parents called Mvelo, I text her that I'm good and do the same to mom and dad. They are begging me to come home, I will go there in the noon.

I order breakfast. My phone rings as I put it away. Its my dad. I hesitate to answer but answer anyways. I don't say anything.

Marcus: "We're in Morningside medi clinic. Your mother had an asthma attack." He says. His voice so down.

Me: "Ok I'm coming"

I hang up.

Me: "Bheki. I am requesting an uber. My mother is sick"

Bheki: "Get in" what? No

Me: "I'll call you when I get there. Bye"

Bheki: "Sabathile"

I take my bag and walk out of the room. I see his car keys,  
well....

....

Arriving at the hospital I park and call my dad asking where are  
they. He directs me.

I tell the nurse on the front desk that I'm here for Melissa she  
grants me access in.

I find my dad sitting on the chair next to the bed. Mom's lips  
curve for a smile. I can't help the tears.

Me: "What are you doing to us?" I crush her with a hug.

Melissa: "I can't bear the thought of losing you baby"

Me: "Mom you'll never lose me"

Melissa: "I love you Alexis"

Me: "I love you more. Never let that woman get inside our home." I bring my head up to dad. "Ever dad"

Marcus: "Done. Ever"

Mom brings me close and kiss my cheek as she cries.

Melissa: "You're the best thing that has ever happened to me. I don't know what I would do with myself if I ever lost you. I can't even stomach the thought. Promise me nothing will change when you finally let her into your life"

Me: "Mom. You're my mother. I do not know that woman and I am not willing to"

Melissa: "Your father thinks you should" I look at him.

Marcus: "Just hear her out baby"

Me: "No! Jesus dad. How can you even suggest that!"

Marcus: "Calm down. She has no kids, you're the-"

Me: "After 25 years? No. Hell no."

Marcus: "She was young"

Me: "Excuse me?"

Marcus: "Try to be in her shoes"

Me: "Well dad I've tried so many times but I wouldn't have gone for so many years. Mom I'll see you later"

I hug and kiss her.

She was young? Bull!



16

The contract was delivered to my place on Friday. I found it in my mailbox Saturday morning when I finally went back there.

This morning Kelly, whom I have no idea what's her role in this company made sign a few paperwork and then showed me to my office that had my initials in the door and a bouquet of flowers and a note wishing me a very good first day at work from my mother.

After she left I looked around and finally settled down. An hour later my dad arrives.

Marcus: Do you like it?

Me: I love it. Mom did a pretty good job.

Marcus: Unfortunately it was me.

Me: Oh? Well done. Its beautiful. I was worried all the way here that I have redo everything because your last pa and I had a very different taste of style.

Marcus: I'm glad you like it. I wasn't expecting you to show up dressed like that.

Me: Mom helped. I was legit going to wear sandals, tee and skinny jeans. I have to buy a whole new wardrobe for work.

Marcus: My cards are ready to be used.

I laugh.

Me: That's very generous Mr McVeigh but mine too haven't been used in a while so they'd love the opportunity.

He chuckles

Marcus: I am hurt. Any moment from now your email and phone will start working.

Me: How do I answer?

Marcus: anyhow you like. Lunch is on me today.

Me: Ofcourse.

He heads towards the exit.

Marcus: Have a great day. I love you.

Me: I love you more.

He walks out. I spin the chair around, my phone rings from my bag. I take it out and answer.

Me: Best friend

Mvelo: Soulmate. How is your first day going?

Me: Pretty good thank you. I just don't think I'm ready to be answering calls every now and then.

Mvelo: Well prepare yourself honey.

Me: I hate it here. When are you actually going to be free? We really need to talk.

Mvelo: Lunch. I can drive there.

Apperantly every weekend she will be driving to KZN with hubby to be. I just don't get it.

Me: That'll be great. I have a lot to tell you.

Mvelo: Okay my love. I'll see you later then, be polite to people.

I laugh

Me: If they deserve it I will be.

The telephone rang.

Mvelo: Bye

Me: Bye babe.

I put it aside and pick the telephone up. "Hello"

Caller: Morning. Is this Mr McVeigh's office?

Me: Yes it is. How may I help you?

Caller: You're speaking to Jean. May I speak to him if he's not busy?

Me: Please hold.

I call dad's office.

Marcus: Baby

Me: Jean is on the line

Marcus: Okay. Put her on.

I sent her call through. This is much easier than I thought.

Bheki calls, we talk for sometime. He's such a breath of fresh air. He's built with all characters.

I say my goodbye when Kelly walks in.

Kelly: Cellphones are not allowed during work hours. I've been watching you for the past hour. Did you even check your emails?

Me: Uhm...no.

Kelly: That clearly states that you didn't go through your contract thoroughly, because if you did you would know that you're supposed to check your email every 5 minutes.

She comes over my side and click on the email. There are 25 new emails.

Kelly: See? Miss McVeigh I understand that Mr Marcus is your dad but I will not tolerate such behaviour. Put your phone away and focus on your job.

Me: My apologies. I will.

I put my phone on silent and put it back to my bag and read the emails. So many appointments. Doesn't he get bored of meeting up with people?

...

My dad gave me his card when I told him I will not be doing lunch with him anymore. He was meeting a client away anyway so he did not sulk.

Me: Why do you look so plummy? Aren't you pregnant?

Mvelo: Me? Pregnant? God would fall down.

We laugh and hug.

Mvelo: You look good in formal. I almost couldn't recognize you.

Me: Yeah right.

We get on the lift going to the roof where we'll be having lunch.

We find a table. Everyone in this building is flashy and also drunkards. Most tables have cocktails.

We order them too.

Mvelo: I'm so tired of working.

Me: Me too

Mvelo: Come on. You just started.

Me: I know but that Kelly woman is too strict.

Mvelo: You already have a boss from hell?

Me: Not really but I can feel that we're not gonna be each other's favorites.

Mvelo: Just do your job and forget about her.

Me: I will babe.

Our drinks arrive. We thank the lady.

Me: The woman who gave birth to me showed up on Thursday.  
She chokes on the cocktail.

Mvelo: What?

Me: Yep. To claim me back.

There's something about that CLAIM word that worked me up.

Mvelo: What are you? A car? Is that all she said?

Me: I didn't even want to hear anything more she had to say.  
When my dad said she's back to claim me I just lost it and left.

Mvelo: Wow. She has such a nerve, her approach was out of the way. She can't be gone for so long and come to say she's back to claim you.

Me: Its not that she came back because she wanted to, she can't have children which means she wouldn't have come back to "claim me"

Mvelo: Most probably. Wow I'm boiling

Me: I am too and my dad had to make it worse by saying she did what she did because she was young.

Mvelo: She's been young all these years? He must not play like that. This woman should've come here and showed some remorse at least before they bombard you with that claim rubbish.

Me: Thank you friend. Thank you.

Mvelo: I think you should actually talk to her when she comes around again.

Me: I want to but I am afraid I will lose it.

Mvelo: Just try to remain calm and speak to her.

Me: I'm not promising anything. Enough about her, I have something else to tell you.

I fail to contain my smile.



Mvelo: What is it?

Me: So...I made a huge decision of ditching singleness.

She gasps.

Mvelo: What's his name? Is he loaded? Have you had sex yet? Is he cute? Tall? Short? Dar-

Me: Jesus! Would you please slow down? Its Bheki.

Mvelo: No way! Mmh-mmh I refuse! There's no way in hell my best friend could date a Zulu man. No way!

Me: Well I am.

I take a sip of my cocktail. Our food arrives

she still hasn't taken her eyes off me. I take a bite on my burger.

Mvelo: Aren't you going to say you're kidding?

Me: Why?

Mvelo: Lexi you gonna need more than just say it for me to believe you.

Me: Friend! I am serious. Very serious.

I take out my phone and call him. I put him on loudspeaker.

Bheki: Mama

Me: Hey. Are you at work?

Bheki: Yes but not really working just spinning around on my chair, missing you.

Mvelo chuckles a little.

Me: I miss you too.

Bheki: Can I be your chauffeur this week?

Me: Starting from tomorrow morning.

Bheki: I was hoping you'll say this evening.

Me: You can come to the penthouse later.

Bheki: Fine by me. Uh...baby let me call you later, enjoy the last 4 hours of your duty

Me: Thanks love. Bye

He hangs up.

Mvelo: How big is his thing?

Me: Nomvelo!

I hit her hand, she giggles.

Me: I haven't seen it

Mvelo: Oh my you should get some soon.

Me: He doesn't make the move.

Mvelo: Then make it! Its the 21st century dear.

Me: I don't wanna come across as a sex freak or anything.

Mvelo: Then you will never get rid of that web.

I laugh.

Me: I will tolerate and nurse my web until he makes the first move.

Mvelo: Well let's drink to the spider web

She raise her glass. I raise mine.

Me: To the spider web

We laugh and drink up...

...

People are usually never too happy to knock off on their first day but I was. 4:30 on the dot I packed my bags and went to bid my dad goodbye and left.

I drove straight to Morningside, she was still there. The Drs said she wasn't strong enough to get discharged.

Melissa: Look at you!

She says when I walk in. I model for her as she laughs.

Me: When are they discharging you? We need to go shopping.

Melissa: I'll probably be discharged by then. How was it?

Me: It was good, beside Kelly. She's cheeky.

Melissa: That's Kelly for you. Don't mind her, just do your job and you shall not get in trouble with her.

Me: I will try my best.

Melissa: That's my girl.

I put the goodies on her cabinet and sit down.

Me: Don't you think we should talk to that woman? You know, ask her what she wants because I'm pretty sure its not me.

Melissa: Is that what you really want?

Me: I don't know but I feel like she needs to be heard and then she disappears again.

Melissa: I doubt. She said she wants you back.

Me: When you get discharged we should get hold of her.

Melissa: As long as you're ready to face her.

I nod. We talk about many other things until the sun goes down and visiting hours are over.

I drive to my place. Bheki calls, I tell him that I'm on my way.

I pass by the restaurant and get us takeaways.

I startle when I see a man leaning against my car.

Me: Excuse me.

He rolls his eyes to my direction. I almost split my takeaways.

Him: Get in the car.

The door of a black car parked next to mine open.

Him: Get in!

I try to run away but he grabs me and shove me into the car. I scream for help, he shuts the door closed and I hear the doors lock.

I feel a sting on my arm and then lights out...

17

I gasp as I open my eyes, feels like I hadn't been breathing. I sit up right and look around. I'm in bed. I remember getting into that car, I panic and get off the bed and rush to the window, all I see is perfect green fields and a lake not so far from here. Where am I?

I walk to the door. It opens before I reach it, I pause. A petite tall woman in heels, navy suit pants, a white blouse and glasses. She flashes me a smile and close the door.

Her: My name is Onika. Please sit on the bed.

Me: Who are you?

Onika: Onika

Me: What do you do? Why am I here?

Onika: You'll get explanations later, for now please sit on the bed, I want to check if you're okay.

Me: No. I want to leave.

Onika: You wouldn't get home trust me. Just sit on the bed, the overdose of drug might cause complications.

I go and sit after a staring contest.

She checks me out and give me pills. I put them under my tongue and spit them out after she leaves.

I go over the window again to check if I wouldn't be injured if I jumped out. I would.

I go to the door again. I try to open but its locked. I search my pockets for my phone. I find it, thank God!

I sit down beside the bed and switch it on. I wait for it to catch signal.

It shows the no signal sign. I begin to panic, reality kicks in. I'm kidnapped

The door swings open...

\*\*\*

BHEKI



The lady at reception keeps glancing at me. I keep my eyes on my phone as I try Lexi for the 200th time. It still goes straight to voicemail, concern fills me up each time I try to reach her.

Mvelo walks in followed by the girl whom I assume is her pa. I stand up and walk to them.

Me: Nomvelo

She turns to my direction.

Me: Can I talk to you?

Mvelo: Sorry do you have an appointment?

Me: No I don't.

Mvelo: Please leave your details with my pa she'll call you and set up a meeting. I have a meeting in the next 20 minutes and I really need to go and prepare.

She walks away. I follow her.

Me: I just need to know if you've heard from Sabathile the past 2 days?

She turns and look at me rather surprised. Sje gulps and take a deep breath.

Mvelo: Please forgive me. Please come this way to my office.

I follow her until we get into her office. She offers me water.

Mvelo: I have only an hour left to go open a missing person case. We're sick worried.

Me: I though you'd know where she is.

Mvelo: I'm sorry Bheki I don't. I was hoping she's with you, now that you're here I am now more worried.

Me: Let me not hold you up. Thank you.

Mvelo: Its okay.

I leave the office with a heavy heart. Where could she be?

I get into the car.

Qophelani: Anything?

Me: No. Take me to her place again.

Qophelani: I don't understand why are you so worried, she's rich. She's probably out there in New York taking pictures under the Eiffel tower.

Me: She was supposed to meet me that night.

Qophelani: And then she decided to call her real boyfriend and they flew away.

Me: Give your mouth a break before you get a punch.

Qophelani: I'm just saying.

He turns up the volume.

I am just praying she's safe wherever she is...

\*\*\*

ALEXIS

A woman in maid uniform gets in. She also smiles at me and head to the little table next to the single couch and place the tray of food.

Her: I'm Doris. You're very beautiful.

There's something odd about these kidnappers.

Me: Do you have signal around here?

Doris: Yes we do but your phone has to be registered.

Me: Please regist this one for me I need to make a phone call.

Doris: Madam will do that for you.

Me: Is it her who took me?

Doris: Please eat before your food gets cold.

Me: I need to shower.

Doris: I'll bring you fresh towels.

She walks out. I am experiencing headache now, I've been trying not to cry but each minute that passes I'm drowning in worry. I could be killed or put into sex trafficking.

I need to escape. I would rather fall and die than to be sex slaved. This window can't be opened, this is where they keep their victims. I kick it a couple of time but it doesn't break

Advertisement

I put the food on the bed and throw the table against the window. The table leg breaks. I'm wet, of my tears and sweat. I

am throwing everything at the bloody window but not even a tiny crack is formed. I go down on my knees and cry. God I know I haven't been good but please make a miracle for me...

\*\*\*

MARCUS

Me: Okay pull up in that gate. I think this is it.

Max: Sir this neighborhood is unfamiliar with our usual visits.

Me: If you hear a gun go off call for backup.

Max: What are we even doing here?

Me: Max my daughter is missing!

Max: She wouldn't possibly be here.

Me: Just stay here and wait for a gun.

I step out of the car and head in. I sign at the gate and the security accompany me inside.

Bonisiwe: What Diego I'm working

Security: You have a visitor ma'am.

She brings her eyes up, they meet mine.

Bonisiwe: Ok you can leave us.

The security head out and close the door.

Me: How sick can you be?

Bonisiwe: What are you talking about Marcus?

Me: I know you took Lexi.

Bonisiwe: So? What are you gonna do about it?

Me: Are you crazy?

Bonisiwe: No. I'm just taking my child back to where she belongs.

Me: Bonisiwe I am warning you. You committed a crime, I can get you arrested for that.

Bonisiwe: Go ahead Marcus be my guest. I did it for her own good for Christ's sake!

Me: How is holding someone hostage any thing for their own good?

Bonisiwe: I'm into shipping of illegal goods, I deal with dangerous people, I owe them 50 million. I am failing to pay

them since my businesses are collapsing. My sister sold me out, she gave them my back ground information they dug deep until they discovered I have a daughter and you know how those men work, they'll take her in exchange of the dept and you and your angelic wife can't keep her safe so I am.

Me: Who told you I can't keep my own child safe? Bring back my daughter and go back to whatever you came from!

Bonisiwe: Well that'll cost you all your lives because they'll kill anything to get to Alexis. In my side I have men who are willing to die for her.

Me: I can get them too. Get up, we're going to take her.

Bonisiwe: She's in Malawi Marcus. Get out I want to work.

Me: Do you know how much my wife is suffering right now?

Bonisiwe: I'll pay this money and bring your child back Marcus! I am not gonna start now to want to be a mother to that girl.

Me: You're a dirty devil.

Bonisiwe: That's right. Get out.

I turn on my heel and walk out. I find Max smoking outside the car. I hop on at the back and call my financial lady Kimberley.

Me: Kim

Kim: Marcus.

Me: I need 50 million. Asap.

Kim: There's no asap with just a huge amount of money.

Me: Well there has to be Kim. I need it by next Monday.

Kim: Marcus.

Me: Make a way Kim!

I hang up. A text message comes through.

'Do you find her?'

I sigh and clench my jaw. Losing Lexi would break her and she'll never recover...

\*\*\*

ALEXIS



I spent the whole day sleeping and waking up to find out I'm still in this place. Learning that it was 2 days later killed me even more.

I get off the bed and go sit on the couch. I play music on my phone. I've heard very terrible stories about women getting abducted and never found. Looking at this place through the window is enough to know there's no hope of being found.

I smell a strong cologne. I've smelled it before. I turn, she points at the bed, the girls in maid clothes get in with shopping bags of famous brands. She's not only cruel, she's crazy too.

The girl walk out. Girls young enough to be still at school.

Me: You're sick.

Her: Do you love the room or you want a different one?

Me: Woman I want to go home to my parents!

Her: I am your mother. You're where you're supposed to be!

Me: No! Wherever you are isn't where I belong. I belong at home with my mother and my dad.

I start crying. The sight of her made me very angry.

Her: Little girl, I don't wanna be your mother. The only thing I need from you is your eggs, maybe 2 of them. You owe me atleast that much for ruining my life.

Me: What?

Her: I want your eggs! I want to have children then you can go back to your parents.

Me: Oh my God. I'm so glad you gave me to my mother, what kind of a dirty devil are you?

She chuckles.

Her: Funny cause your father said the same thing. You have until next morning to thunk about this. The Dr will come here in the morning to give you meds for fertilization.

She heads to the door.

Me: My father is gonna kill you!

Her: He doesn't have the guts. Stop crying you're disgusting me.

Me: Fuck you, fuck you woman. You'll have to kill me first before you do anything to me, do you hear me?

Her palm made contact with my cheek.

Her: You ungrateful little brat, I could've killed you and gave you to a stranger but risked my life and birthed you!

She pin me against the couch and strangle me.

Her: You were not needed! You came and ruined me. You owe me Sabathile! You fucking owe me!

Her tear drops on my cheek as I gasp for air...

18

He gets in holding a tray. He places it on the bedside headboard cabinet and sit next to my legs.

Nduna: You have to eat.

I blew my nose.

Me: I'm not hungry.

Nduna: Of course you're not. I never eat because I'm hungry I always eat because I have to. Right now you have to eat.

He picks me up and walk with me to the ensuite bathroom. He makes me wash my hands and then pulls me back to bed.

Me: You made this?

Nduna: Yes I did and it tastes good.

Oh Jesus. This man only knows how to make tea and apply butter on bread. Grilled chicken and gravy are not what he'd be able to do.

I take a leap of faith and take the food. It smells really nice. I should give him that.

I taste the gravy, not bad. I position myself comfortably and start eating. I regret biting this drumstick.

Me: Oh my God babe did you pour all the chillies in here?

I ran to the bathroom to drink water.

Me: Oh Jesus.

Nduna: I'll get you juice!

He shouts from the other side.

Me: Uhhhh...my tongue is burning!

My phone rings. I rush back to take it.

Me: Tell you you've found one.

Lele: Yes I did. I just forwarded you their email address. They are the best in town.

Me: Thank you Lele.

Lele: Don't stress too much, they will find her.

Me: I'm hoping so Lele, I'm hoping so.

I hang up. The babe walks in with a jug of juice.

Nduna: This should do the trick.

Me: I see you've found a new lover and you want to get rid of me.

He chuckles and pour me juice.

Nduna: Not in a million years.

We kiss.

Nduna: Don't you get bored?

Me: Of what?

Nduna: Silence in this house

Me: We have a whole sound system babe

Nduna: Its starting to bore me but if you don't mind the silence  
hhai cha akunankinga sthandwa sami.

I chuckle and take a sip of my juice.

Me: Let me go make us breakfast.

Nduna: I'll pack this meat with me. My cousins will love it.

Me: You guys need Jesus.

He laughs and we head out ...

\*\*\*

[MARCUS]

I find her dressing up. I wipe off the sweat and take off the runners.

Me: Where are you going?

She glances at me once and go to her vanity.

Me: Melissa you are in no state to be leaving the house.

She turns to face my direction.

Melissa: Well sitting here will not bring my child home Marcus.

Me: So where are you going?

Melissa: I'm going to find her.

She says calmly and go back to making her face.

I take my phone and walk out.

The phone rings for a while.

Kim: Marcus

Me: Tell me you're working on it

Kim: I am but things aren't looking so good, they need also your wife's signature.

Me: Then cut and paste it Kimberley!

Kim: That will bring us trouble.

Me: Kim just do what you have to do.

Kim: Fine but just know we might go to jail for this.

Me: Just do it.

I hang up and go back inside to take a shower...

\*\*\*

[BHEKI]

Qophelani: Iit's Boxer's birthday celebration!!!

I open my eyes furiously.



Me: What's the matter with you?

Qophelani: Wake up.

Me: Get out.

Qophelani: We have your girlfriend to look for, remember?

I regret inviting him over. He's my little brother, my only brother.

Me: You should go back to res.

Qaphelani: Ngeke ukubone lokho.

He walks out. I look for my phone and turn it on, hopeful to find Sabathile's texts or voicemails. None.

That woman wouldn't possibly abduct her, would she?

Why didn't I think of that? This has her written all over it.

Me: Qophelani bring my laptop!

Qophelani: Ngi busy!

This kid. I climb out of bed and head out to the lounge. I find him watching cartoons on the laptop. I take it and sit on a chair beside the couch.

I send Derrick an email and go for a shower...

\*\*\*

ALEXIS

I feel someone shake me lightly. I mumble and pull the duvet. It is snatched away from me violently. I jump up to my feet.

I realize my surroundings and I begin to panic.

Bonisiwe: Take her to the white room.

Onika: But she's not protesting.

Bonisiwe: I know she will.

Onika: Boni-

Bonisiwe: Shut up! Kairo get the guys to take her to the white room.

The guys come in and my feet fail to move. They drag me out. I try to fight but I am not winning.

We arrive in this room. The lights come on

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its indeed a white room.

They put me in the single bed and cuff me into it. Onika comes to me and turn on a bright light over my head.

Onika: I will make this as fast as possible.

Me: Please...

Onika: You just need to cooperate if you wanna go home honey. This injection needs you to relax. If you don't if it won't work and you'll stay here forever. Stay calm okay.

I hear footsteps approach, her cologne feels my nostrils.

Bonisiwe: Onika

Onika: Boni get out I am trying to work here.

Bonisiwe: Change of plans. I want her to be my surrogate.

Onika & I: What!

Man: Taking her eggs and planting them into someone else will take too much time.

Onika: We didn't agree on this.

Man: We paid you so you have no business protesting.

Onika: This is insane, I'm not doing this.

Bonisiwe: You don't have much of a choice. Here's the new medicine for fertilization.

She should've just killed me...

\*\*\*

[BHEKI]

Derrick agreed to meet up with me.

He chose the secluded bar and I understand. I drive into the bar, it seems packed for a place so far away from people.

I managed to leave Qophelani behind. He can be a chappies at times.

My phone rings, I put it on vibrate and head in. I scan the room until my eyes land on Derrick. I walk to him.

Me: Derrick.

He raises his eyes and give me a smile before extending his hand for a handshake.

Derrick: How are you Sir?

I laugh.

Me: Oh please. How are you holding up?

Derrick: Kind of good. My wife and I are expecting.

Me: Wow congratulations man.

The server brings us 2 beers and glasses.

Derrick: Thank you. I hope you still drink.

Me: No, not anymore. I stopped.

Derrick: Sorry man.

Me: I'll have juice, apple juice.

Lady: We only coke and water that is not alcohol.

Me: Coke will be fine.

She walks away.

Derrick: Please tell me you're coming back to work.

Me: I might but I'm not here for that. I need your help. I think my girlfriend is kidnapped, by her long lost mother.

Derrick: And where do I jump in?

Me: I need you to organize a private squad that'll take with me to take her.

Derrick: Do you know where she is?

Me: No not yet but I'll find out tonight.

Derrick: I will help you, under one condition.

Me: Yes?

Derrick: You come back to work. The station needs you man.

Me: I will.

My coke arrives. We get into how things have been since I quit.

My phone rings again. I excuse myself to take it.

Me: Mzilankatha

Baba: We have been trying to get hold of you since last night  
Bhekisizwe Me: My phone was dead.

Baba: MaNgema gave birth. You should come home.

Me: Okwamanje ngibambekile baba(I'm currently busy) so I  
won't be able to come.

Baba: It's a boy. We can't perform the ritual without you.

Me: Please make it next weekend. I should go

I hang up before he can respond.

I stare at my wallpaper which is Alexis for quite a while and take  
a deep breath. I go back to the table. I call for the waiter.

Me: Can I please have Heineken.

Derrick frowns at me. Derrick: Thought you quit

Me: 6 pack after 2 years won't hurt.

My phone rings again. Mangema's name pops up. I decline the  
call and switch it off

19

2 failed attempts to save Alexis. 14 sleepless nights trying to figure out a way forward. Going back to work was one of the ways forward. I had to be in or else this case was dull and just taken as one of the many cases of missing women.

I greet the ladies on the front desk and proceed in. I find Derrick on his feet looking like he's going out.

Derrick: Just the man I wanted to see.

Me: What's up?

Derrick: I just got a lead. She was transported to Zim on Thursday, fools used her real ID.

Me: Are you sure?

Derrick: I'm a very certain man Ncube. You just need to get us that permit for us to cross that motherfucking boarder.

Me: I will

Derrick: As in yesterday because I'm pretty sure Zim isn't their official stop.

Me: I'll get on it right now. In the mean time go attend to that Soweto cable thief.



Derrick: Really Bheki? That man shitted himself yesterday, do you want me to die of that smell?

I laugh.

Me: He cleaned himself up

I head out.

Cele: Captain.

Me: Cele

Cele: I think I have new evidence on the shooting that took place in bree.

Me: Ok let me make coffee first

I go to the kitchen...

\*\*\*

[ALEXIS]

It's so crazy how on your first day at work, you have lunch with your best friend, on call with your boyfriend, after work you go

visit your mother and then you plan on meeting your boyfriend, you decide to go get food first but then you never make it home because the woman who carried you abducts you.

Now I'm here, today is the day of the plantation. She can't have kids so she remembered she was once left a baby girl on someone's house door. She traced back and until she found this baby girl whom she claims owe her and should repay her by carrying her a child. Crazy isn't?

3 weeks ago I'm sure someone would've seen me and wished they had my life not knowing a storm was brewing for me. I have surrendered and gave in. Its not like fighting, crying and begging was to help me with anything.

I was drugged and I woke up in this new place. A beach house. I saw this chair and came to sit and look at the waves. They are so free, I wish I was them.

I startle when someone waves their hand before my eyes.

Onika: Day dreaming?

I chuckle.

Me: I wanna be those waves.

She blinks lazily and massage my shoulder.

Onika: Everything will be okay.

Onika and I have developed a good relationship over the 2 weeks. She's a good person and I can't crucify her for Bonisiwe's sins. She told me she raised her and paid her fees so it was hard and impossible to say no to her. I understood it felt good to have someone as her around.

Me: My life won't be the same after this trust me.

Onika: You stress too much.

The door push open. The devil herself walks in. Apperantly Onika has to inject me and give me pills in her presence.

Bonisiwe: The 3 Drs from France will land in a few hours and we shall get down to business.

She says excitedly.

Bonisiwe: Dora will be here with food you can inject her.

Onika: She has to eat first

Bonisiwe: We're 30 minutes late.

Yeah I should've been injected at 9am.

Onika: You were late.

Bonisiwe: Its not like she's gonna die!

Onika: True but it will effect the plantation.

Bonisiwe: Dora!

She storms out.

I get up and head to the bed.

Onika: You done watching the waves?

Me: I'll watch them after taking the injection.

Onika: Ok. Let me go get it.

I nod and lay on my back on the bed...

\*\*\*

[MARCUS]

I check the time. He's 25 minutes late. I am losing my patience. I ring him up, he doesn't answer. I call the waiter to bring me the bill. He walks in. I sigh.

Bheki: Things are pretty crazy at the station. I'm sorry.

Me: I was about to drive there.

Bheki: Not a good thought.

The waitress walks up to us.

Me: Never mind. I'd like a double shot of whiskey.

Bheki: Just water with lemon.

I frown. He chuckles.

Bheki: I'm on duty Mr McVeigh. With burger and chips, no ketchup.

The waitress nods and walks away.

Me: Any good news?

Bheki: Yes and a little compromising situation

Me: Talk.

Bheki: We gonna need your wife to seduce that husband of Bonisiwe.

Me: You're out of line.

Bheki: That's the quickest way to reach to Alexis.

Me: Bheki

Bheki: Mr McVeigh they have taken her across the boader. The further she gets, the harder it will be to find her.

Me: Fine! I'll speak to her.

Bheki: thank you.

Me: Are you still in love with my daughter?

Bheki: I care about her.

He calls the waitress to make him a takeaway.

Bheki: I'll be waiting for your call.

I nod. He pays, ups and leaves.

Melissa found out I was gonna give that 50 million to Bonisiwe then she suggested we go to the police and report Alexis missing. To our surprise 3 days later Bheki visited our house along with a detective for questioning, since then he's been in touch.

I take the last sip on my glass and call Melissa...

\*\*\*

[MELISSA]

My phone rings from the bed as I apply lotion. I groan and walk to it. I hope its some good news.

Me: Hubby.

Marcus: Hey my love. Are you at home?

Me: Yeah. Do you need something?

Marcus: I'm coming. Wanted to make sure you're there.

Me: Is everything okay?

Marcus: Yes and no. Bye I love you.

Me: I love you.

I hang up and go to the closet.

"Mrs McVeigh?" Oh Mvelo.

Me: In the closet baby.

She gets in.

Mvelo: I am building this size in my new home.

We laugh and hug.

Me: Well you deserve it honey. How are you?

Mvelo: Surviving. How are you?

Me: Also surviving. Are we attending the prayer today?

Mvelo: We should. Prayer gives faith.

Me: Yeah it does. Blue or pink?

I ask about the dresses.

Mvelo: Blue

Me: Thanks. How's Nduna?

Mvelo: He's fine just stressed that I'm stressed.

Me: Uhh poor thing.

"Honey"

Me: Closet!

Mvelo: Oh my god is that your cologne collection? I'm jealous.



Me: You can take the one you love.

Mvelo: Really?

Me: Yes baby. Let me go attend to this man.

I head out. I doubt she heard the last part. I find Marcus sitting on the bed eating.

Me: Hungry that much?

Marcus: I'm starving. You look beautiful.

I smile.

Me: Thank you.

Marcus: Alexis crossed the border.

Me: To where?

Marcus: Zimbabwe and we need your help to find where she is.

Me: Huh?

Marcus: Bonisiwe's husband. I'm asking you to seduce Bonisiwe's husband.

He says without even looking at me.

Me: Whaat?

Marcus: Its the only way we might get her location.

Me: How? I'm gonna fuck him and suddenly he'll sing? Are you out of your mind? He knows I'm your wife he'll get suspicious if I get close! Jesus Marc.

Marcus: Shit.

"I'll do it" we both look her direction.

Mvelo: He doesn't know me. So I'll do it.

Me: Honey no we'll find another way.

Mvelo: We'll try this one first.

Marcus: Nduna won't allow that.

Mvelo: Who's gonna tell him?

I look at Marcus and shake my head.

Mvelo: I insist! Its my friend that is out there feeling helpless. This is the least I could do!

Marcus: Ok. Just seducing then we drug him, take him in and then we punch the answers out of him.

I sigh in relief.

Me: Great then.

Marcus: Let me go call Bheki.

He ups and leave.

Me: Baby are you sure?

Mvelo: 100%.

I bring her close and we hug.

Me: Thank you so much.

She squeezes me...

\*\*\*

[ALEXIS]

I hear a whisper. My heart beats fast, whispers in the dark are never good.

I scream when I feel a touch but my mouth is closed quickly with a hand.

"Shhh its me"

Onika? I move her hand off.

Me: Why are you whispering?

Onika: Because we don't wanna wake this whole house. In a few minutes shit will go down get up.

Me: What's going on?

Onika: I'm getting you out of here.

Me: Why? I already have that man's sperm in my egg.

She roughly pulls me up.

Onika: Its either you go in your sleep wear or you put some clothes on. We don't have time!

She goes over the window while I dress up.

Me: How are we gonna get out of here? I thought you said there were guards.

Onika: There are but they don't check trunks.

Me: You don't have to put your life in danger for me.

Onika: I know but I'm doing it anyway.

Her phone rings. She picks it up.

Onika: We're coming...what? Shit! What are we gonna do? No no no.

She hangs up.

Onika: Lexi we have to jump.

Me: What?

Onika: Boni knows I'm trying to get you out of here. She'll kill us both. Oh my God what was I thinking!

I freeze. She comes and slaps me back to reality. She goes to lock the door and comes back to pull me towards the window. Bullets come raining in. She opens the window

Onika: Jump!

Me: Onika I'm scared of heights!

I hold on to the frame with my eyes closed.

Onika: You wanna die? Huh Lexi? Jump!

A gun with a different bang goes off and the shooting stops.

Me: I'm gonna pee myself.

"Onika its us! Open up"

She sighs in relief and pulls me down. I gasp and catch my breath, my heart beating out my chest.

She opens the door full of bullet holes and 2 men with guns walk in.

Man1: Let's go.

Onika: Alexis we don't have the whole day!

I finally come back to my senses and stumble towards them.

I keep gagging as we pass bodies laying on the ground all the way to the gate.

We finally get to the car. We hop on and the car drives off. Onika keeps rubbing my back as I cry.

Me: I need something to clean out this sperm off of me!

Onika: You're on 3 months prevention. All those injections were replaced with water. I wasn't about to ruin another woman's life. That sperm won't work.

Me: What happened to her?

Onika: Probably dead. Oh we're here.

Me: How long have you been planning on this?

Onika: Since a few hours ago. It happens we both know someone who cares about you.

We get off at the airport. Where are we?

\*\*\*

[NARRATED]

Mvelo pops her head in.

Mvelo: Are you coming to bed?

Nduna: Not yet.

His phone rings. He quickly takes it out and answers.

Nduna: Yes?

Ntokozo: Boss? We're about to board. The girl is safe and unharmed.

Nduna: Good work boys.

He hangs up.

Nduna: Shall I hear you talk about going to seduce men I'll kill you. Your friend is on the flight back home.

Mvelo: Wha- what?

He walks past her heading to their bedroom. Mvelo runs after him...

\*\*\*

[BHEKI]

My phone rings. I sigh and roll over to take it. My mother never calls. What is it about today and this late?

Me: Mashobane

Mother: Awukaze wabatshela laba bantu bakho ukuthi unomndeni? (Have you never told your people that you have a family?)

Me: Abantu baphi ma? (Which people?)



Mother: Egedeni lendlu yakho marn Bhekisizwe! Simile la ingane iyagodola. (At your house's gate. We're standing here, the baby is feeling cold)

I sit up right. She's got to be shitting me!

Me: Nenzani egedeni lakwami nezingane? (What are you doing at my gate with children?"

Mother: Silethe umkakho nengane yakho. Angithi awufuni ukubuya ekhaya. (We brought you your wife and child since you don't wanna come home)

Fuck. I hang up and call Dambayi to let them in.

I receive a text from Derrick.

"Alexis has been found. We dragged feet. She's safe and sound. We have been called by the Zim police. We will go wait by the airport."

Thank you God. I put both hands on my face and exhale. I need to take my mother and this woman and her baby back home as in now.

I dress up and take my car keys and leave the apartment....

20

I took my cup of coffee and exited the kitchen. Derrick pulled me to my office.

Derrick: Nkabinde is here.

Me: What does he want?

Derrick: To see if you're on the right path.

Me: I've only been here for 3 weeks. What massive change is expected?

Derrick: You know he's not happy about your return.

The door swings open. He'll never stop wearing like the captain of soldiers. A simple tux couldn't could be good but he likes being known he's a station commander.

Nkabinde: Derrick I'd like some coffee.

Derrick: We only have rooibos.

Nkabinde: Its fine.

Derrick nods and leave the office. Nkabinde walks around touching each and everything, too much to my irritation.

Me: To what do I owe this pleasure sir?

Nkabinde: Why are you back?

Me: What do you mean why am I back?

Nkabinde: I know when you left you wanted nothing to do with this place.

Me: Things change.

Nkabinde: You came back and only been focusing on the missing girl case, oblivious to the 5 murder cases.

I take a deep breath.

Me: The detectives are doing the best they can with those cases.

Nkabinde: You still have time to quit. I figured you abused your position to find your lover but I don't think you're still strong and capable.

Me: Well I am.

Nkabinde: Then leave the girl case. Mathaba and Derrick will take care of it.

Me: Its a big case. To have that woman transferred here will need me to be involved.

Nkabinde:

Me: As you wish. I've got some work to do so if you'll excuse me.

Nkabinde: Yeah.

He walks to the door and turns to look at me.

Nkabinde: I'll be watching you Ncube. I'll be here for the whole day

I just stare at him. He should be at a mental institution.

My phone rings. My mother never knows when to quit. I drop the call and switch on my computer...

\*\*\*

MVELO

Yesterday I got to see another side of Nduna. The scary side of him. I fail to lie to him I found myself telling him about seducing that man. He did not shout or anything but his body language said a lot of things and his silence was loud. I knew better than to go ahead with the plan of seducing that man.

On Saturdays he usually makes me breakfast but when I woke up he was nowhere in sight. I made breakfast and tried to call him but he didn't pick up.

I get up to rinse the plate and the cup that I ate on. I hear footsteps. I feel relief.

Me: Hey babe

Nduna: I thought you'd be at your friend's house.

Me: No. I'll bath and leave at 12. I made breakfast.

Nduna: I ate at Nqaba's place. I need to shower.

He walks off to the passage. I sigh and follow him.

Me: I said I'm sorry.

I say closing the bedroom door behind me.

Nduna: I heard you

Me: I don't want you to hear me. I want you to forgive me.

Nduna: Ok.

Me: Nduna

Nduna: Nomvelo

Me: How did you know where she is?

Nduna: Cellphone tracking.

Me: The police did that but they didn't find her location.

Nduna: Well private investigators aren't as stupid as police. They looked for the new arrivals and we found her.

He gets into the bathroom. He's making no sense.

Me: You're not making sense.

Nduna: I thought you'd be happy your friend is back.

Me: I am but also concerned how you found her.

Nduna: I just explained.

Me: Its not making sense.

Nduna: Not my fault my love. Can you please get me a fresh towel?

I nod and go out...

\*\*\*

ALEXIS

It felt like a dream waking up where I felt safe and protected. I told my parents everything when I arrived. The Dr arrived this morning to check me up and give me medication to flush out the sermen.

I check the time when I come out of the bathroom. It was already the noon, 2pm. I take out my pyjamas and put them on. Mommy walks in with food.

Me: Mmnh food! I am starving.

Melissa: I've always known I raised a strong girl but I didn't expect you to be this strong.

Me: Curling up in bed and throwing yourself a pity party can only sends you straight to depression and I am not ready to send myself into that dark place.

She puts the tray down and hugs me.

Melissa: I am so proud of you.

Me: Thank you.

Melissa: And I love you so much. That woman will pay for this.

Me: Let the law play its part.

She chuckles.

Melissa: I just wanna punish her so painfully.

Me: Don't let that wicked witch turn you into anything other than a good woman.

Melissa: I'm angry.

Me: Me too but we can't let anger control us, remember?

She chuckles as she wipes her tears.

Me: Let's go watch a movie.

Melissa: I'd love that. Your dad has a new collection.

Me: Where is he anyways?

Melissa: Out to play golf. You know how he deals with his anger.

I nod and hold both her hands.

Me: I just wanna forget about this mom. I wanna put it behind me and move on with my life. I am scared of having my mind locked up in a dark place that I might never recover from. I have cried enough about it, now I want it to count as one of the things that made me stronger. I also need you and dad to get over it, I'm here in one piece. Boni and her husband are in jail. That should be enough to make us all feel better.



She nods and we hug again. I really want to move on from this as quickly as possible...

\*\*\*

BHEKI

Today was the longest day I've ever had. Exactly at 5pm I turned off the lights and left the office. I drove to my house in Waterfall.

Bono: Let's thank your mother. What did this house ever do to you?

I chuckle and put my hand on the reader.

Me: Its lonely.

Bono: I hope we'll see you more often now since there's people in it.

I raise my brow.

Me: Not too sure about that. Go home before your wife divorces you again.

We laugh.

Bono: It was good to see you Skhulu.

Me: Likewise man.

I drive in all the way until I park before my gate. I get off and head inside. I am welcomed by the aroma of steamed bread, my poor electricity.

Me: Mashobane

She brings her eyes up and smile.

Mother: Mzilankatha. Look at you. Don't you eat?

Me: Always. My jeans are tight, which means I'm gaining.

Mother: You look skinny to me. I cooked your favorite.

I peep over the pot she's stirring. Beans.

Me: Mmmh nice

Mother: I'm sure you haven't had it in a while.

Me: I had it last week actually but I'm just glad I'm gonna have yours.

She smiles

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proud smile.

Me: I'm seeing someone.

Her smile fades away.

Mother: What?

Me: Yes. I am seeing someone and you being here will cause me troubles.

Mother: Isn't too early?

Me: I did what you wanted me to do now I am doing what I want to do.

Mother: But Bheki I was hoping the birth of the child will sort form a bond between you two!

Me: No it won't. To me she's my Khuselo's wife and that's what she'll be for as long as I am alive.

Mother: What about your child?

Tears were forming in her eyes.

Me: Its not mine. Stop trying to force her down my throat. You guys promised me! You promised that I can spread my wings

after I fulfill that wish. Is coming here with her your idea of letting me be?

Mother: We're trying Bheki.

Me: No ma. Stop, it'll never happen. Give up.

Mother: You know I won't do that and you will not take isithembu.

Her face changes from sad to hard.

Mother: You won't. You need to dump that girl.

Me: I will not ever like or tolerate that woman and you know me mother!

Mother: A Johannesburg girl? Does she even know how to fetch water from the river? Huh? Do you know how helpful MaNgema has been to us all these years?

Me: She will learn.

Mother: Bhekisizwe. Your father is not well, you are in charge of that home now as the heir, everything decision you make must benefit us all. You can't bring us a woman who wear pants and wear those dead people hair.

Me: Be ready by 8 tomorrow. Qophelani will drive you home.

I take my car keys. I see MaNgema leaning by the wall separating the kitchen and the sitting room.

Mother: You'll leave without seeing your child?

Me: I'll see him when he's 3 months.

Mother: Bheki!

I head out...

\*\*\*

ALEXIS

Just as I close my eyes my mother knocks.

Melissa: Are you asleep baby? Someone is here to see you.

Who sees people this late? I climb out of bed to open.

I freeze when my eyes meet his.

Melissa: Uhm captain Ncube is here to see you.

Bheki: Yes. I'm sorry to disturb your sleep.

Me: Its okay. You can come in.

Melissa: Can I dish up for you? We just ate.

Bheki: I'd love that Mrs McVeigh.

My mother smiles and goes away. I let Bheki in and close the door.

Me: You lied to my parents?

Bheki: About what?

Me: Being a detective.

Bheki: No. I went back to work to make it easier to find you.

Me: What?

Bheki: Yes. I was a captain and I am now again. I am glad you're back. I almost went crazy.

Me: Thanks to those guys.

Bheki: They are my heros. Can I get a hug?

I chuckle and throw myself at him. I try to kiss him but he looks away.

Bheki: We can't do that in your father's house.

Me: No one is watching.

Bheki: Your mother can walk in on us.

I laugh.

Me: So you didn't tell them we were dating?

Bheki: No I didn't tell them we were back together.

I laugh.

Me: Huh God I forgot. I kept thinking of you and everything seemed bearable.

Bheki: We're each other's peace of mind.

We untangle when we hear footsteps. She knocks once and come in. She puts the tray on the vanity and leaves after saying goodnight.

He seats on the single couch and sighs. I pull the vanity chair and sit before him.

Bheki: I have something to tell you.

I smile nervously.

Me: Okay.

Bheki: It's gonna break your heart.

Me: Ok

I say and gulp. He takes my hands into his and kisses them.

Bheki: I love you. I know I haven't done much to prove that but I do. Every decision you will take after I tell you this, I will respect it.

Me: You're scaring me.

Bheki: I have a 3 weeks old baby.

I try to snatch off my hands but he holds them tight.

Bheki: Listen to me

He says firmly. I want to cry.

Bheki: My father had 2 wives.

Me: Don't start with that crap.

Bheki: I warned you about those words. Listen to me. My other mother had a son but he passed on a week before his marriage. So my father made me choose between taking over the chieftancy and marrying her-

Me: What?

He holds me still. I'm crying now.

Bheki: I chose marrying her and impregnate her, fulfill my dad's request so I can have my normal life and get to marry someone that I love. But she's not my wife, I married her for him and I cut ties after that.

I shake my head a couple times.



Me: No. You need to leave.

Bheki: I wouldn't have survived being the next chief. I wouldn't have lived my life the way I wanted. I have dreams Alexis, big dreams marrying my brother's wife and giving her a child seemed okay at that time but I regretted it the first day I saw you behind that counter. I never thought I'd meet a woman I'd love to a point where I want to marry her. Sabathile I-

Me: Stop! Just stop! Let go of me. I try to fight him off but he holds me inside his arms.

Me: Bhekisizwe Ncube I'm gonna scream. Let go of me, leave my parent's house and never ever try to talk to me.

Bheki: I love you. I know this doesn't make sense to you but I'm hoping someday it will.

He kisses my forehead and let's go and heads to the door.

Me: Why couldn't you tell me all this while? He turns.

Bheki: I couldn't. I wanted to but I just couldn't. I'm sorry.

Me: Where did you find the courage now?

Bheki: I don't know. Good night. I'm sorry. He walks out.

I collapse on the couch and stare into space as tears pour down. He didn't even insist on staying and let me shout at him. I get up and run out to him...

21

Single. Single. Single. Single. I enjoyed it while it lasted. Lesson learnt, life has gone on. I am happy. I am back to my old life of Alexis McVeigh. Bonisiwe and her husband are still in jail serving 30 years. Marcus's lawyers made sure of it. I have 99 problems and a man ain't one. I'm just glad Bheki and I broke up before we even took this too far.

I am still my dad's PA. I got my first salary on Friday, Mvelo and I went to spend it at a resort in Magalies. We came back glowing, I am spending every minute with my friend because in the next 2 weeks she will be legally Nduna's, I am happy for her but a part of me is hurting I will not get to see her as I please.

'How is hang over treating you? I'm dying'

I laugh and call her, after I check where the mighty Kelly is.

Mvelo: Girl please help me.

She groans. I giggle.

Me: Get water with lemon. They say it helps.

Mvelo: Why did I let you convince me to drink that shit

Me: You wanted to obviously.

Mvelo: I hate you right now...oh no. Bheki is here.

Me: Bheki who?

Mvelo: The one and only. Bye babe.

Me: Wait don't hang up

Mvelo: Bye.

She hangs up. Wow. The work phone rings.

Me: Marcus McVeigh's office. Alexis speaking

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how may I help you?

Caller: Its Phenyo Zitha speaking. Is Mr McVeigh available.

Me: He is. Please hold.

I buzz Mr McVeigh.

Me: Phenyo Zitha on the line.

Marcus: Put him through.

Me: Yes Sir.

I put him through and go make myself some coffee. I find a magazine. I steal it and run back to my office. I need an idea of how my dress will be. I haven't found the one that I like so far and I have only 4 hours to send the design I want to tailor.

...

I love how quick my days are. After lunch I just blink and then boom it's knock off time, my favorite time of the day.

I pass by the tailor for measurements and drive to the shopping center to get some groceries, breakfast to be specific. I still can't cook and I am officially unbothered.

I find Mike on the lobby when I make my way in. We hug.

Me: What a nice surprise.

Mike: I know right. Let me carry this for you.

Me: Thanks.

We get on the lift and I punch my code.

Me: Magalies was everything a girl needed.

Mike: I'm here to hear all about it. I'm crossing fingers you found your prince charming.

Me: Unfortunately I did not because I wasn't looking for one but I did find fun of which I went there for. Thank you.

Mike: You really wanna be 30 and alone?

Me: I won't be the first one.

He laughs. We get off and he runs to the fridge.

Mike: Why isn't there alcohol in this fridge?

Me: Because my mother doesn't approve.

Mike: There's something called hiding Lexi. Buy booze and fucking hide it.

I laugh.

Me: You're such a drunkard. There's wine in the lower cabinets.

Mike: Wine? I'd rather drink my own pee. You're out of food.

Me: Eggs and noodles will be my supper tonight.

Mike: Oh Jesus send your angels to rescue this child. Let's go get food.

Me: Uber eats and Mr D food and Spaza eats.

Mike: And what is Spaza eats?

Me: Its delivery. It's Ntando Duma's. Woman power.

Mike: Who's that supposed to be?

Me: Get out of here. So just get into one of those apps and just order food. I will be taking a bath.

I take my bag and head to my bedroom.

Me: No African cuisine please!

I shout.

Mike: Too late.

I sigh and strip all the way to the bathroom. I bath long enough until I hear the lift chimes. I get into my pyjamas and go back to Mike.

Me: What do we have here?

I open the bag.

Me: Mmmh I haven't had this in months. I'm not even sure if I can use the chopsticks.

Mike: Lucky for you there's forks here.

I turn on the tv and we devour in.

...

The up and down is crazy in the morning. Mike slept over and he didn't set his alarm and I did not hear mine when it went off so here we are. Trying to eat breakfast and dress up at the same time. My dad keeps buzzing my phone.

I order him coffee.

Me: Wow I hate you Micheal. If you didn't suggest we play that freaking game we would be at work right now.

I say after the lift closes, taking us down.

Mike: How fast asleep were you to miss your alarm?

Me: If I sleep after 12 I do not hear anything.

Mike: My bad. I just hope we don't get fired today.

I chuckle. Finally we reach the ground floor.

Me: Good luck.

Mike: To you too.

We part to our cars.

Me: I'm so so so sorry. I had a running stomach I only slept around 3am.

Marcus: Why didn't you call me? How is it now?

Me: A bit better. Did they deliver your coffee?

Marcus: Yes they did. You should go see a Dr and take a day off.

Me: No need. I'll just take some pills I bought on my way here and I'll be fine.

Marcus: Are you sure?

Me: Certain.

He kisses my forehead and head to his office. I take a deep breath and head into mine.

'I'm safe' I text Mike.



'Morning my love. Wanna share what Bheki wanted?' I text the soulmate and check Mr McVeigh's appointments for the day and approve some then send him his schedule. I text the mommy and inform her I'll be having supper with them tonight.

'Morning soulmate. He came to investigate. One of the workers was caught in action apperantly. Imagine' I roll my eyes.

'Why couldn't he send a detective. He's dramatic. When are you leaving for home?' I respond.

'Tomorrow evening. I am too tired to drive. Nduna's brother will only be free tomorrow evening'

'Okay babe. Hoping to see you before you leave'

I am sad now. From tomorrow onwards is the beginning of my nightmare.

'Actually I am inviting you for dinner tonight' I smile.

'I will be there' I hear Kelly's laughter. 'Talk later. The devil is here' I press send and toss my phone on the drawer.

I start sending out emails and making appointments for the next day.

Before I know it, the day is over and I'm driving to Mvelo's. I bought wine during lunch, its really impolite to show up at people's houses empty handed. My phone rings, I put on the earpiece and answer.

Me: Mommy.

Melissa: Why am I only hearing from your dad?

Me: Because I was scared you'll shout at me.

Melissa: You better drive here after that dinner to collect your food. My fridge doesn't have space.

Me: Mom!

Melissa: We will be asleep around 10pm.

Me: I'm sorry. I will come.

Melissa: You better or else your food will spoil.

She hangs up. So dramatic. I sign in at the gate and drive in.  
This complex looks nice. I should get a quotation.

I park and reach for the bag of wine at the back and then get off. I ring the bell. This thing is annoying. Who still installs these ding-dong things?

She opens the door and attacks me with a hug.

Mvelo: I missed you.

Me: Where's Shaka Zulu?

She hits me playfully and we laugh.

Mvelo: He's bathing. He's from the gym.

Me: Is his suit too tight?

Mvelo: Yes.

Me: What was he thinking stuffing himself up with cow heads.

Mvelo: He must not hear you say that.

I chuckle and place the wine on the table.

Nduna: If its not Alexis!

Me: Hey Chief. I heard your name means chief.

Nduna: Who told you that?

Me: Philani. Should we get worried that you will show up without your suit on the wedding day?

Nduna: huh?

Me: That belly. It won't fit on that suit.

Nduna: I'll go fit another one.

Mvelo: I curse the day you ever saw intloko.

Nduna: Intloko did nothing. You cook lots of food.

Me: 2 weeks of eating clean might make a different.

Nduna: As long as that doesn't mean I should eat rabbit food.

Me: Salads aren't rabbit food.

Nduna: My niece's rabbit eat salads.

Me: Thats doesn't necessarily mean its rabbit food.

Mvelo: Good luck friend.

She disappears to the kitchen.

Nduna: Is your traditional attire ready?

Me: Mvelo will take care of that.

Nduna: Can you even dance?

Me: I will surprise you. Just keep your eyes open that day.

Nduna: I will be wearing specks.

I laugh.

Me: Yes you should.

He touches the wine.

Nduna: You both love alcohol.

Me: We don't. I just brought this as a gift.

Nduna: Really? Thank you. I'll keep it.

He takes it and walks to their bedroom. I was just saying!

My phone rings.

Me: Lexi speaking.

Mike: Hey Lex its me. I'm arrested. Your boyfriend arrested me.  
Can you please tell him to let me go?

Me: What did he say he's arresting you for?

Mike: I have no idea.

Me: Ok let me call him.

I hang up.

Me: Mvelo. Do you still have Bheki's numbers?

Mvelo: I think I do.

I take her phone...

\*\*\*

**BHEKI**

My phone rings. I cancel the call and proceed to the white boy's cell.

Me: Have you done your call?

Mike: I will sue you for wrongly arresting me.

Me: Did I? You had cocaine in your car.

Mike: What? I didn't!

Me: If you keep pasting yourself like apricot jam to Alexis you will have cocaine in your car.

Mike: What?

Me: Yes. Stay the hell away from her or else you will have cocaine and every dangerous drug and you will be convicted. I'm sure you wouldn't risk going to jail.

Mike: You're a sick bastard.

Me: Your choice.

I whistle and walk away. I need a nice long hot shower. Its been a long day....

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I arrive at the station and I'm told to wait. I sit down and read the news paper to pass time. People come in and out to certify. I keep glancing at my watch, I'm gonna be late for work again today. I text dad that the stomach bug is here again. He insists I go to the Dr and bring the letter tomorrow, so much work.

9am on the dot the devil's son walks in. The police on the front desk asks him to pass by and he points at me. Bheki nods and walks towards me.

Bheki: Morning miss.

Me: Morning. I'm here to get my friend.

Bheki: I let him go last night.

Mike must be kidding me! Why didn't he call me?

Me: Oh ok.

He smirk a little and walks away. I take my bag and leave.

I try to reach Mike on my way to the Dr but it keeps taking me straight to voicemail.



I get to the Dr, my lucky day it is empty. I consult and drive to Mike's place. I knock for a few times until he opens. He makes the bored face he always makes to people he doesn't wanna see.

Me: Is it safe to come in?

Mike: Why are you here?

Me: Because I am worried about you.

He shifts, making space for me to get in. He closes the door.

Mike: Do you want that psychopath to arrest me again?

Me: What did he says you did?

Mike: I became friends with you. I was arrested for being friends with you and threatened to stop.

Me: What?

Mike: Yes. He said he'll plant drugs in my car if I don't stay away from you.

I scoff. Wow this motherfucker does not know me. I take a plate of food and head to the door.

Mike: Where are you going?

Me: To fix this. Who the hell does he think he is? Get ready while I'm gone we're going to festival mall when I return. Peace offering.

He smiles. I smile back and walk out. Bheki Ncube is crazy. He is danger to the community. He is abusing his power for his personal affairs. Stupid man.

I call Mvelo and tell her about the sad news. She finds it funny. I hang up on her.

Police man: Did you forget something miss?

Me: Yes. Is the captain in?

Police man: Yes but not seeing anyone.

Me: Well I need to see him as in now.

Police man: I'm afraid you can't.

Me: Man of God are you listening to me? I want to see Bheki Ncube right now!

People stop and look at me. I don't care, I'm now even angrier. I just wanna chop off Bheki's head. We haven't spoken or seen each other since that night. He done step on my toe today.

The police man picks up the phone and inform him that someone is here to see him. He hangs up.

Police man: Left 3rd door.

Me: Thank you.

I fix myself and click my stilettos away.

I knock once and push the door. He's glued to the computer.

Me: What the hell Bheki?

He raise his eyes.

Bheki: Excuse you?

Me: What the hell? Why did you arrest Mike?

Bheki: Because he was breaking the law.

Me: Which law?

Bheki: Trespassing

Me: Where? Your house?

Bheki: My property yes.

Me: Do you know we can report you to your bosses for wasting the states resources?

He chuckles.

Bheki: What did I waste? The bench he sat on? Since when does he sleep over at your place?

Me: Why do you care!

Bheki: Because you said you needed time to be alone. If that boy can sleep over its clear that he's coming for you.

Me: Bhekisizwe. This is my life not ours. If I feel like dating and fucking Mike I will. I do not belong to you. Shouldn't you be somewhere stalking your wife? If you ever cross the line I will tell my father and you will lose this job and that laundry and you will starve to death cause I'd tell him to make sure you're never hired anywhere. Do you hear me?

He looks at me without blinking.

Bheki: We're done here.

He says deeply.

Me: Hopefully we are. Leave Mike the hell alone.

He goes back to his computer. I turn on my heels and head out.

I take a deep breath and fan the tears back. Why can't he just leave me alone! I compose myself and walk away with my head held high.

...

Spending the day with Mike made up for my little crying session in the morning. I enjoyed myself. When I got home I went straight to bed.

Even though I feel like I was hit by a truck this morning but at least I'm early. I take dad's coffee to this office.

Marcus: Look who's early today.

Me: I need promotion.

Marcus: Your mother and I were talking about that.

I laugh.

Me: That was a joke.

Marcus: Well its not. Many people are always interested in knowing about our company

our new arrangements and all. So I figured we have you here, how about we create our own little magazine that will be published every 2 months.

Me: What?

I take seat.

Marcus: Yes baby. You're good at what you do. And that will take us to the highest level. Take all the time you need to think about it. You will have your own team of 5 people.

Me: Dad! I don't even have to think about this.

He smiles.

Marcus: Then you better start brainstorming the name of the magazine cause I am going to inform my team about it.

Me: You're the best dad in the world. I see what you're doing though.

He laughed.

Marcus: This is innocent. When you find your dream job at Forbes, GQ or wherever I'd set you free.

Me: I love you.

Marcus: You know I love you more.

Me: Have a good day. I'll see you at lunch. Its on me.

Marcus: I love the sound of that.

I smile and get up to leave. A whole freakin magazine!

I screamed soon as I got to my office. I danced and called Mvelo. She left yesterday. I only have Mike to keep me sane. I tell her the good news.

Me: What's up with the red face?

Mvelo: Zulu face scrub.

Me: Isn't itchy?

Mvelo: No dummy. When you come aunty will force you to apply it.

Me: I'm so not ready to see her.

We laugh.

Mvelo: The good news is I'm not doing anything. I will be eating, bathing, call you and Nduna and sleep.

Me: I wanna be you.

Mvelo: Have you heard from Bheki?

Me: No. I shouldn't be hearing from him.

Mvelo: He loves you.

Me: And how would you know that?

Mvelo: I just know. I think what you said to him yesterday was a bit harsh.

Me: Harsh how? He arrested my friend over his stupid jealousy. I had to put him in his lane.

Mvelo: You threatened him!

Me: He needs to stay away from me and my life.

Mvelo: You're such a devil. So, are you and Mike really friends?

Me: Wow Nomvelo.

Mvelo: I'm asking. You hid Bheki and said you were just getting along fine.

Me: Mike and I are friends. Shall we upgrade, you'll be the first person to know my babe.

Mvelo: Is there a possibility?

Me: No. I officially want nothing to do with men at this point.

Mvelo: Okay babe. If you say so. I can't wait for you to come.



Me: Right after the baby shower I will drive there.

Mvelo: Ugh I forgot about it. I should send you money to buy a gift but I saw a stroller at Some insta shop. I'll check it out.

Me: Soon we'll be buying you strollers.

Mvelo: Eww oh my God no

I laugh.

Me: Uhm hello? You're about to get married.

Mvelo: That doesn't mean I should pop babies.

Me: Nduna will want a little him on the honey moon.

Mvelo: Contraceptives were made for such reasons.

She takes a sip on a glass.

Me: Is that wine?

Mvelo: No

Me: Mvelo. Nduna said we're drunkards.

Mvelo: In a world full of men. Women need to stay tisbury to be tolerate those men.

Me: Amen to that. I wish you can tell that to Kelly.

The door opens. Speaking of the devil. I focus on my computer.

Kelly: Here she is. Alexis this is Lebo. And she would love to have a word with you.

Me: Hi Lebo.

She waves a little. Kelly walks out.

Lebo: I'm sure you've seen me around.

I haven't but I smile and nod.

Lebo: Are you free around lunch? I am hoping we could talk over a glass of wine and stir fry.

What?

Me: Uh...I promised my dad that I will have it with him.

Lebo: Even better. Its about the magazine.

Me: Oh. No problem then.

Lebo: I'll see you then.

Me: Ok.

She walks out. I get up and head to dad's office.

I stop when I hear shouting. It's Kelly.

Kelly: Don't test me Marcus

Marcus: Would you please lower your voice?

Kelly: No! Since she came back. I am very invisible to you.

Marcus: I told you that day was a mistake. I was going through a lot.

Kelly: I wish you'd have sat that when your balls were deep within me.

What the hell?

Marcus: Get out.

Kelly: Its either we continue with this or your wife will find out about this.

I hear footsteps approaching. I run back to my office.

I can't believe this. What on earth is wrong with men? I can't believe dad went and slept with this woman.

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He grabs my arm and pulls me back to his office and shuts the door. I exhale and hold the file I had in my hand close to my chest.

Marcus: Princess, I don't know what is going on with you these days but we can't work like this? What is going on?

Me: Nothing. I am doing a lot this week dad. Bringing a magazine into life is not a joke. I'm sorry if you are catching a different vibe, I'm just busy that's all.

I try to smile to add on my convincing statement. He nods and hold the the door open.

Marcus: Will you be busy during lunch?

Me: I'll see.

Marcus: Okay. I love you.

Me: Love you too.

He perks my cheek and I'm out.

The magazine idea was successful. This week has been about me and my team trying to put everything together. We're trying to get an affordable camera man and cheap printing machines deals. Our budget is a bit too tight, Kelly was against the idea so I wouldn't be so surprised if she told the finance team to give us this.

I moved out of my old office to a new one that Mike helped me clean up cause it was a freaking storage but you wouldn't tell now. Advantages of having good friends, he bought me a portrait for the wall and paid for the carpenter. My desk is to die for.

I find Thabi and Kate waiting for me in the office. I place the file on the desk in front of them.

Me: These are Mr McVeigh's ideas of what our first issue should focus on.

Thabi: As long as it won't have us travelling.

Me: I will speak to Kelly about the car and petrol card idea.

Kate: I think we should just let Kelly be for now. She's so against this she'd call another meeting and convince the board the company doesn't have enough money for this magazine thing.

Me: You're right. I'll speak to Dan instead.

Thabi: Perfect.

Me: And this is it. We are meeting again later to choose an affordable photographer.

Kate: No problem.

They get up and leave. I plug in my earphones and glue myself to my computer.

I just see a woman standing on the other side of my desk. I remove the earphones.

Me: Hi.

Kelly: Give them to me.

Me: What?

Kelly: The earphones. They are prohibited in this building. Alexis you fail to follow any rules around here!

Me: Well that was not in my contract. I'm sorry I missed it when you told me about the dos and don'ts. How can I help you?

Kelly: Marcus tells me you're leaving on Friday for your friend's wedding in KZN. I would like you to submit a full report on how far are you with this magazine.

Me: Okay.

Kelly: With a sample of your cover page.

Me: We haven't decided yet.

Kelly: Then decide because next week Monday we're going on holidays and by then I need to have submitted the sample to the board.

She smirks. I wanna punch it off her ugly hoe face.

Me: Okay. The report will be on your desk Friday morning.

Kelly: I'd love that.

"Surpri-"

I look over to the door. I see my mother.

Melissa: I didn't know you had company.

Kelly: Melissa. Its work hours.

Melissa: Ofcourse. Not school hours that means I'm allowed to bring my baby and my husband food.

Kelly: Alexis is busy.

Melissa: I'm just here to drop this off and go to my husband. You know I've figured I'll bring him lunch and his dessert everyday. It doesn't seem hoe-ish to fuck your own husband in his office...close ears Lexi!

I startle and close them for real. I've never heard my mother talk like that before. Kelly runs out. I remove my fingers from my ears.

Me: What is going on?

Melissa: Adult staff. Are you hungry?

Me: Mom

Melissa: I will stab your father. Just know that.

Me: Oh Lord Jesus no.

Melissa: How could he do this to me? Her out of all people? When he told me I swear I wanted to pull off my hair.

Me: You wanna grab a drink?



She's crying now. I don't know what to do. I get up and hug her. Daddy comes in. I put the scissors in the open before I leave them alone...

...

Every girl needs a Mike in her life. He called me to drive straight to his place before I knocked off.

I found him cooking. I've been sitting here with a bottle of wine watching him cook. We've ditched the pimp my ride on the kitchen tab.

Mike: Guess who I bumped into this morning.

Me: Carlie? Lebo? Angel? Grace? Tasha?

Mike: Thank you for reminding me that I'm a whoreman. No, Bheki.

Me: Mxm.

Mike: He fined me for driving without a seatbelt.

Me: I will kill that man

Mike: No. He did it to get a reaction from you. Where does his wife stay anyway?

Me: I don't know and I don't care and I don't wanna talk about Bheki. He's an old chapter that I've burned.

Mike: Ready to date someone else?

Me: No. I am not cut out for this thing. I'll just continue my alone life plus now I have my dream job. Life is perfect, I seriously do not need a man.

Mike: Love is a beautiful thing Lexi.

Me: No its not. People just hurt each other, that's all its about: make someone feel special, loved and wanted and then drop a marriage bomb on them. Love is a fucking joke Mike.

Mike: Yeah with just ordinary people. When you find the one? Everything changes.

I look at him.

Me: What did you do to my Mike?

Mike: I know it sounds crazy but I'm inlove.

I laugh. I must be dreaming!

Me: What? Who? You? Inlove? With who Micheal?

Mike: Tasha.

I gasp and scream.

Me: Congratulations Tasha!

I scream. He laughs shyly.

Mike: It's crazy.

Me: Have you told her?

Mike: No. I don't know how to do it.

Me: Okay okay okay don't panic. Dish up and the lessons will start when we eat.

He smiles and nods. My phone rings.

Me: Hey my boo

Philani: Don't you dare. How are you?

Me: Fine and busy and I'm sorry but I haven't abandoned you. How are you?

Philani: Don't sweat nana I've been busy myself. I need a huge favor.

Me: Shoot.

Philani: I'm going to pay lobola for Mel this weekend. As you know, I have a little car, it broke down and I know I'm out of line but I was wondering if you could borrow me your car.

Me: You're getting married? Wow Philani I'm so happy for you. Ofcourse you can have my car. You can come get it tomorrow.

Philani: Thank you so much Lexi. Thank you thank you thank you. Mncwaa!

I laugh and we talk a little more before we say our goodbyes.

I look at Mike smiling to his phone. If Mike could fall inlove then there's hope for me too.

\*2 days later\*

I have been doing everything all at once. Fetching my dress, writing the report, coming up with an impressive cover page. I couldn't leave this morning because there was just so much to do!

I have received thousands of messages from Mvelo and Nduna threatening to never talk me again if I don't arrive. Mom left this morning and I cried because that should've been me going there to be with my friend. Now I won't even get to see her leave her parent's home.

8pm on the dot I drive out heading to KZN, relying on Mvelo as my GPS...

...

What is this place? I call Mvelo.

Me: I seriously can not believe you Nomvelo. You let me drive my baby here?

I am fuming. How could she do this to me. She knew her in-laws live at the bundus but let me lend Philani my jeep!

Mvelo: Friend its half past 5am

you should've been here yesterday. The ceremony is beginning at 9am.

She says calmly. She's only concerned about how late I am, well I wouldn't be late if she gave me right directions. I take a deep breath, like it or not I have to drive my baby here.

Me: How far is it from here?

I am beyond hurt that I am going to make such a major compromise.

Mvelo: 10 to 15 minutes. When you see a shop pull over, I will send someone to fetch you.

I toss the phone on the other seat and drive in to the gravel road. This place is ugly. How do people manage to live here? I left the town about 20 minutes ago. I wouldn't survive a day here.

Everything looks like a shop here. I call Mvelo again. I don't know what this man fed her. My friend wouldn't look twice on a Zulu man, her fantasy has always been marrying a white person. Living in an estate not here.

Me: Cows walk randomly around?

I say soon as she picks up.

Mvelo: Yes Sabathile. Cows are normal here Why did she agree to marry him though.

Me: Oh wait, I think they are chasing me.

I speed up. I hear her laugh.

Mvelo: Just stop already. You're here. Can you see us?

I look around. I see goats and dogs. Are they friends? I thought they were enemies because the goat never returned the dogs money or something like that.

Me: I only see goats and dogs

I say.

Mvelo: Turn left.

I turn.

Me: I see a group of people under the tree.

Who on their right state of mind sleeps under a tree?

Mvelo: That is us. You can park there.

Holy mother of God it's really them!

I park and reach for my flops at the back seat.

Me: Why on earth are you sleeping outside?

I ask looking over their lazy tired asses. They laugh. Nothing is funny.

Mvelo: You're here! Crouch and give me a hug. I am so proud of you, you drove alone all this way.

She says opening her arms.

Me: No thanks I'll pass. Just explain why you are street adults.

I say looking around. There's a homestead that has cars all over and smoke steaming out of grass houses. I assume that is Nduna's home. Well I expected it to be made of mud and ugly but its beautiful.

Mvelo: Its custom. Makoti firstly stay here until umgcagco and I will go in after we're from esigcawini.

She explains.

Me: Ohh. Have you eaten?

I don't see any signs of breakfast.

Mvelo: Yes we ate meat. We're waiting for proper breakfast now.

I tuck myself next to her.I missed her

Mvelo: Did you find any men on your way here? She must be kidding me. Me: You want me to date and marry a Zulu man too?

She raise her brows.

Mvelo: Sabathile you're very Zulu if you haven't noticed.

She says rolling her owl eyes.



Me: Yes true but I am very clueless about being one plus they have proven me right to be nothing but trouble so excuse me. They are not my cup of Ciroc.

The girls laugh. Mvelo is glowing. That red thing her aunt painted her with really works.

"Sanibonani bantu basemzini" I startle. Where did they come from? They place two big buckets before us. "This is tea and juice. The girls are coming with cups, sugar and milk" he says.

Mvelo is no longer visible next to me.

Me: Thank you.

I say since none of these ladies here have voices. They nod and walk off.

The girls indeed come with what they were expected to come with. I thank them again then they leave.

I nudge the under the blanket Mvelo.

Me: Don't tell me I came all this way to thank people.

She giggles.

Mvelo: That's what impelesi does.

I no longer want to be on 3 then. The guys come back again with 2 buckets, the ladies follow with 2 crates full of bread. Do they own a bakery? The other ladies follow with a huge sauce pan I've ever laid my eyes on.

"Umkhongi will come to see uMakoti right after you finish eating" he says humbly and they walk off.

A quantum park behind my car. The Zulu clan gets off. I peel Mvelo off. Me: Your aunt is here.

I giggle.

Mvelo: I thought she had a problem with her knee. she says bored.

Me: I told you it was all an act.

She's a very dramatic individual. She's limping.

Aunty: We're right on time. Why haven't you made fire?

No greetings no nothing. Aunty: Wena coconut. Get the woods over there, you see this fire is dying down.

That's supposed to be me. And I hope she doesn't really think I will hold a wood with my bear hands.

Mvelo: Zevile and your crew make the fire.

My ass is saved.

Aunty: You're not even supposed to be talking wena Nomvelo.

She says cheeky. Why is she even here.

I get up and try to help myself with juice.

"Uphuza umile muntu wasemzini? Uyazi ngizokuhlawulisa mina?" (You're standing and drinking. Do you know I can fine you?)

I quickly turn. He gives me a lazy smile. He's dressed in rank uniform, exactly the way Nduna and every Zulu man does. Brentwood, stripped uzzi tee, adidas cap and sandals. The: "Uyawudlala u Whataphu" shoes.

Me: I'm sorry I was too thirsty.

I say trying to save myself. He smiles and nods.

Him: Are you the maid of honor?

I nod.

Him: Good. You will be the one making breakfast for your side and when you're done please tell Makoti to call me.

He says and take what seems like a phone out of his pocket. Oh My God I fail to hold myself I laugh. He raise his eyes and look at me.

Him: It calls everyone from anywhere.

Even if so. I would never buy that. Taxi drivers like it. They are the most stingy people after Xhosa men.

Me: I see.

"Bafo they need you there" says the guy who brought us juice. Why am I still standing here? I leave them talking. The fire is ready, the pan is even on top.

Mvelo waves at me. I go to her.

Mvelo: I saw how you looked at him.

She says with smirk.

Me: And how did I look at him? Don't even dare say I find him attractive.

I thought this demon of match making me died.

Mvelo: You smiled at him.

Me: Yes I did because he said he's going to fine me. I had to be nice. You're wasting my time I am supposed to be making food.

I leave her there laughing. I look at him walking away. There's something about him that I can't quite put my finger on ...

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I was honestly hoping the first round of the wedding will be in a place more like a lodge but nope. We are here at the back of Nduna's home. The setting is beautiful. I was doubtful when they started decorating but now; it is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. It is December, the sun is boiling hot, we need air conditioning but that's just me being wishful.

Mvelo and I are inside a little tent. I am doing her make up. She keeps taking deep breaths, shit must be scary.

Me: Would you stop being nervous?

Mvelo: I can't. I need at least one glass of wine.

Me: Where are you gonna get it? Keep still.

I plug in the eyelashes.

Mvelo: I don't know Lexi! But I need it.

Me: Keep your voice down.

We're done with her make up.

Me: All you need right now is to put on this beautiful dress and then in the next hour you will be Mrs Nduna.

Mvelo: Its really happening.

Me: Yes friend. You're getting married. Oh no you gonna ruin your make up.

Mvelo: I wish mom was here.

Her mother didn't come. Apperantly mothers do not attend weddings this side. I would be a mess if my mother didn't have to be there on my wedding day.

"Girls?"

That's my mother. We hug, she goes on to hug Mvelo.

Melissa: The butterflies? Trust me they will vanish soon. Its half past 8 please dress up. Mvelo, don't cry baby.

Me: You can still walk away.

Melissa: Lexi!

Mvelo laughs.

Me: See? It cheered her up.

Mvelo: Please help me put on my dress.

Melissa: No problem. The stares I'm getting are insane.

We laugh.

Mvelo: I'm sorry they'll get used to you.

We dress up. 5 minutes to 9 we all leave to the venue. We are handed water and fans before we enter. Thoughtful. Me and other 3 ladies, Mvelo's cousins we move to sit in the front. Each wing belongs to the certain side. Its percent because aunty told me men will be hitting on us but I don't see the chances of that happening now since they'll be on the other side.

Soft hearted music plays on. Nduna walks down the aisle with his people, they leave him on the altar and sits down. After a short while a different song plays. I get up, only me. This should be feeling odd but its not. Mvelo and Sboniso, her brother from her babomkhulu walk down hand in hand.

Her father couldn't come too but the babomkhulus did. She picked Sbo to be the one who walks her down the aisle. The dress! I wanna scream!

Its a touch of white and African patterns put in so perfect. The hairdresser did the things there by the head, not to forget my doll up skills. She's an African barbie. I can't hold these damn tears.



I sit down when she is given to her Shaka Zulu warrior. He looks beautiful. He looks nothing like the leather wearing Nduna.

The pastor unites them, they exchange vows, rings and its over.  
We are now heading to Esigcawini

Advertisement

I was crossing fingers that this time of the day doesn't come but here we are!

"Uxolo nkosazana. Ukhohlwe iphone yakho esitulweni" (Excuse me lady. You forgot your phone on a chair) he says grabbing my hand. Its the uzzi wearing man again, he has changed to more uzzi clothes.

Me: Thank you.

Him: I didn't get your name.

Me: Neither did I. Alexis.

He extends his hand.

Him: Nqaba.

We shake hands.

Nqaba: I'm looking forward to see you esigcawini. I widen my eyes. He smiles, with his eyes. I startle when mom calls my name. My hand is still in his.

Me: I better go.

Nqaba: Ofcourse.

I take my phone and go to mom.

Melissa: Did you just smile at that man?

Me: Shouldn't I?

Melissa: You should but that was a flirty shy smile.

Me: Oh my God!

I walk away from her. I wait for Zevile finish dressing up so she can help me put on my beads. I wrap the isgege around and put on a white vest. Mom gets in.

Melissa: Mvelo's mom said you should wear boob tubes.

Me: And show off our stomachs?

Melissa: Yes.

Me: I'm not wearing that.

Melissa: You are. Here, hurry. We don't have all day.

Zevile: Come, we'll spend about an hour there so you can out on a jacket afterwards.

Me: An hour showing off my stomach? That's a lot.

Zevile laughs and help me finish my look. I put on the bloody boob tube and go to Mvelo's tent. She's all ready with isidwaba and everything that is hanging.

Me: You look beautiful.

Mvelo: Thank you. I hope you still remember the steps.

Me: We'll see.

Aunty: Hhaibo!

I rush out. I call Mike while I wait for everyone to come out. I call Philani afterwards and then I send dad some selfies.

The ladies come out singing. I'm just gonna stand at the back...

...

Right now I want nothing to do with being awake, let alone driving. I'm full and I'm tired and sleepy.

The sun just set. My side is ready to leave. I look for mom until I find her in her car.

Me: Can I please ride with you? I can't drive in this state.

Melissa: What about your car?

Me: I'll ask one of the boys to drive it for me.

Melissa: Okay.

Me: Thanks. Let me go say goodbye to Mvelo.

I walk to the house she's in. Its a new house, a 4 room. I knock and get in. I find her talking with Nqaba and Nduna. Nqaba gets up and leaves the room.

Nduna: Maid of honor.

Me: I didn't even get time to participate as one.

Nduna: But everyone knows you're.

Me: Yeah right. So its official. Congratulations my people.

Nduna: Don't cry. I told you you can move in with us.

We laugh.

Me: Ofcourse. Babe I'm leaving.

Mvelo: That sucks.

Me: You better bath and sleep. I heard your aunt saying you'll wake up at 4am tomorrow.

Nduna: Not my wife. She's tired.

Mvelo: He has no idea what he is saying. Thank you friend, you being here made everything bearable. I love you.

Me: I love you more and I'm gonna miss you.

We hug. A tall guy that looks like Nduna gets in.

Him: Bafo. We gonna need an extra car for the in-laws.

Mvelo: Weren't there enough cars?

Him: There was but each car left with 7 people. The elders can't travel with drunkards. Mrs McVeigh has left with the female elders, the males are still here.

Mvelo sighs. Mom left? Oh my God I'm gonna die.

Nduna: Where's Nqaba?

Him: He left. You know him.

Nduna: How does he leave without making sure everything is okay?

The door opens again. Its Nqaba. He looks sour.

Nqaba: Who's the owner of the meserati?

Me: Me

Nqaba: You're parked behind my car. I need to go out.

Nduna: Nqaba we need cars.

Nqaba: And I need to leave.

Nduna: Smakade left. There's no need for you to leave.

Nqaba: I'll call the boys to bring 3 quantums. I hope they will be enough. Makoti, I'll see you tomorrow. Lady, after you.

Me: Bye love. Nduna please treat my person good or I'll come and take her back.

They laugh.

Nduna: Yes ma'am.

I walk out followed by Nqaba. I get to my car, I look for an energy booster. I'm gonna need 5 of them. The car in front of me flick lights. Ugh I forgot.

I reverse out and off I go. Eyes full of tears, I'm gonna miss her so much. Nqaba's car keep still behind me until we part ways on the tar road. Its been a good day...

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When I pass by the pa's office I see a woman behind the desk.  
That was quick. I knock, she brings her head up and smile.

Me: Hi.

Her: Hello. You must be Lexi, come in.

Me: Indeed I am.

Her: I'm Jean.

Me: Nice to meet you Jean.

Jean: Girl you were born for this. Everything was in place and  
clear to understand.

Me: I didn't want another person to find the mess that I found.  
Is Mr McVeigh in?

Jean: Yes but he will be out in 15 minutes.

Me: I'll be brief. It was nice to meet you.

Jean: Likewise.

I smile and walk out. I knock and the door opens. I startle a  
little.

Marcus: I was just on my way out to your office. Get in.

Me: I passed by Jean's office.

Marcus: Oh you've met her? Such a lovely young lady.

Me: Indeed.

I laugh when I notice the new picture frame addition.

Marcus: I couldn't help myself. You looked beautiful.

It is my picture in the traditional attire.

Me: Thank you. Do you have good news for me?

Marcus: Yes. They loved it!

He punches the air and spin around.

Marcus: I don't know what gave you an idea to make yourself the cover page but it worked.

Me: Whew! I wanna cry.

Marcus: Come here.

We hug. Someone clears their throat, we let go and look at the door. The devil stood there in a peach women's suit.



Marcus: Kelly, just in time. Why don't you tell Alexis the best news?

Kelly: We'll increase your budget.

I scream and hug dad.

Me: I see what you're doing but ok. Thank you so much.

Marcus: You'd be surprised if I told you the board decided you get more of what you had been given. I'm proud of you.

Me: Me too. Thank you. Lunch is on me.

Marcus: As long as we'll go to a different restaurant.

Me: I'll make reservations.

Marcus: Okay my love.

He kisses my cheek and I walk out. Where did Kelly go?

The victory walk is noticed by everyone I come across with in the hallway. I keep bowing to the congratulations until I get to my office. I text mommy and then call the makoti.

Mvelo: Hey.

Me: Are you sleeping? Tell me you're not.

Mvelo: I am. Mother inlaw forced me back into bed, I slept around 2am. I am sick even.

Me: Aww my poor baby. You should leave for your honeymoon already.

Mvelo: That is 4 weeks ago. How did it go?

Me: I got it!

Mvelo: Yes! I knew it. Did you record the look on devil's face?

Me: I will go through the cctv footage of from Friday. I wish I was there to witness it.

She laughs.

Mvelo: Congratulations my love. I am proud of you and I love you.

Me: Thanks babe. You better go back to sleep. I'll call you later.

Mvelo: Bye sweets.

I hang up and get back to work. We need to have At least 4 articles by Thursday so that when we come back next year we won't have to start from scratch. Thabi and Kate are out hunting for young business women to feature on our first issue. Mvelo will be one of them, she just doesn't know it yet.

\*\*\*

Yesterday was a long-beautiful Monday. It is my favourite Monday of them all. Today I arrived early to go steal the footage. Lunch with dad yesterday was incredible. We went out again in the evening with mom to celebrate. Will and his mother are coming this weekend for Christmas holidays. Truth be told: I don't want them anywhere around me but it is what it is. Kim's baby shower will be something intimate. I'm glad we're finally done planning it.

I stick in my hard drive and download the boardroom Friday footage and walk out before Lobster comes back from collecting all the cupcakes at the cafeteria.

I get back to my office and pour another cup of coffee. I find articles from Thabi and pictures from Kate, she's quite a good photographer. I smile, my team is solid. I email them to not go out today, we'll spend the day putting these pieces together into a magazine.

I receive pictures from Mvelo wearing a doek and a blanket over her shoulders. I compliment her. We chat and I work until my nose catches up on a scent that used to intoxicate me. I

bring my eyes up to meet his. He's really standing in my office right now.

Me: Ever heard of knocking?

Bheki: I did knock but your father told me to get in.

Me: Right. How may I help you?

Bheki: I came to say hi.

Me: Well Hi.

Bheki: Hi.

We stare at each other. He clears his throat.

Bheki: When are you free? I want to take you out so we can talk.

Me: Is that a request or you're telling me?

Bheki: It is a request. Please.

Me: I'm free at 11:45.

He glances at his wrist watch.

Bheki: That's an hour away. Can I wait for you?

Me: If you want.

Bheki: I do. I will wait in my car. Thank you.

He turns and walks to the door.

Me: You can wait here. There is coffee and biscuits. You can sort yourself out.

Bheki: Thank you.

I nod. I don't like this little sad child him. He's making me feel guilty

I don't know of what. I get back to my computer as he helps himself out there by the snack area.

Time just got to snail mode. He's watching me work. Doesn't he have things to do in his office?

My phone rings as I attempt to ask Bheki if he shouldn't be at work. It is unknown numbers.

Me: Alexis McVeigh.

Voice: Ntombemhlophe. Please excuse my ill manners nkosazana. I was in desperate need of your digits so I asked Nduna to steal them for me. It is Nqaba speaking, we met at the wedding.

My insides turn. I look at Bheki, he's on his phone. Whew!

Me: Hi. No problem, how are you?

Nqaba: I'm good. How are you?

Me: I'm great thanks.

Nqaba: I wanted to ask if you went well that day.

Me: Yes I did. I believe you did too.

Nqaba: I'm glad nkosazana. I wasn't going very far but to answer your question, yes I went well.

His deep voice sent chills down my stomach.

Me: That's good.

Bheki looks my way. Oh God.

Nqaba: I'm calling from my cell by the way.

I laugh.

Me: Ofcourse you are.

Nqaba: Never laugh at it. Let me not keep you. Have a good day ahead.

Me: You do too. Thanks for the call.

Nqaba: A thousand more will follow.

I don't know what is happening with me but I love the sound of that.

Me: Looking forward to that. Bye.

I hang up. Oh holy mother of Jesus! I just flirted with a man in front of Bheki!

Me: I think we should go grab something to eat. I'm hungry and quarter to 12 is too far.

Bheki: Okay. How was KZN?

Me: It was great. Really fun.

Bheki: Mmmh. Who did you meet?

Me: I met a lot of people.

He nods. The way up to the restaurant is quiet. We order soon as we sit down. Our beverages come first.

Me: So, you wanted to talk.

Bheki: Yeah. I miss you.

Me: I miss you too.

Bheki: Then come back.

Me: To what? Someone's husband? No.

Bheki: I am not Lexi.

Me: So you keep saying! Your family will not accept me. I don't want to put myself through that. What happens when your father says she should have a second baby? What will become of me being with a man that is mine but not really mine because he has to take care of his brother's house on the side?

Bheki: That will not happen sthandwa sami I promise. Please.

Me: You're asking for too much Bheki. I always try to understand this but I can't.

Bheki: Its you that I love. I feel empty without you. God knows I don't want that woman, she was just a duty. My family will accept you and love you as I do. Just please give me another chance. I don't wanna lose you.

Me: I don't know Bheki, I really don't know what's right and what's not. I do love you but this arrangement doesn't sit well with me.

Bheki: Just pretend it doesn't exist.

I sigh. As if it was that easy. His phone rings, he lets go of my hand and answer. He speaks shortly and hang up.

Bheki: Its work. Can I call you later?



Me: Yeah sure.

He gets up and give me his card.

Bheki: I love you.

He kisses my cheek and off he goes.

How will I live to see his child with another woman and pretend it doesn't exist? My heart will never let me accept this, ever...

Bheki indeed called and came to pick me up to go have dinner at some restaurant that he labeled as his favorite in town. They serve all kinds of food, I can't begin to imagine work their workers go through.

Today all we're focusing on with my team is editing. My baby is maturing and I'm over the moon. I keep glancing at the wall clock, I didn't eat breakfast again today. I sleep late, wake up with enough time to bath, get ready and go to work. I am very impatient for lunch. I get up to get a 100th cup of coffee.

Kate: That is unhealthy

Me: I can't help it I'm hungry.

Thabi: Me too. I no longer get time to eat breakfast. Plus I'm not a fan of donuts in the lobby.

Me: Me too! Jesus.

Kate: Well I do.

She digs into her bag and comes back with a lunch box.

Kate: I'd die without breakfast. When my office is ready I will have a microwave and foods stashed up in my cupboard.

We laugh. I take the lunchbox and take 2 slices and pass it on to Thabi.

Me: You should teach me how to make these.

Kate: You can't? Girl I love my food nice and stylish. Just pick a day.

She's the ghetto-nerd coloured. I am very jealous of how she wears her hair. Every day she has a different style. I wish I had that confidence.

Me: What are you guys doing this weekend? Friday to be precise. I was hoping we do something anyways before we all go home.

Thabi: Yes boss bae!

I laugh.

Me: This hard work needs to be celebrated.

Kate: We gonna bath and put on our pyjamas at 6, start cooking while we sip on wine and pouring our hearts out. I know we all have boyfriend problems-

Thabi: Girlfriend

We laugh.

Kate: Yes. Or Girlfriend problems. We advise each other, eat, watch movies, braid each other. I'm not really a fan of crowded places.

She adjusts her glasses. Me: That is fine by me.

Thabi: Me too. 10 minutes to lunch. Yay!

My phone beeps. I view the WhatsApp text. I am gonna need a new phone, 64 gig.

'You look beautiful my love. I miss you even more when I see your pictures'

I send and read mom's text

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reminding me to pass by home later.

We use the remaining 10 minutes to just talk about everyone at the office. The new girl seems nice, we decide we must make her feel welcome.

...

The day went by fast. It ended with me receiving flowers from Bheki. He called me and we spoke all the way to the mall to get mom a few things and all the way here.

We are trying to fix things I guess. I don't know what kind of miracle I am hoping for that'll make the situation of his wife and child disappear but I am willing it does and our relationship somehow works.

Mom is nowhere in sight. I pack the groceries in their respectful places and make corn flakes. I kick off my heels and sit down and eat.

The queen walks in.

Melissa: Its 5:40pm.

Me: Yeah

Melissa: Why are you eating that?

Me: Just because...I'm snacking.

She sighs.

Melissa: How are you Miss snack?

She takes out plates and dish up.

Me: I am perfect. How is you my lady?

Melissa: I am good.

Me: Where is your helping ladies?

Melissa: On holidays.

Me: Mmmh.

Melissa: When are you gonna come?

Me: Christmas eve.

Melissa: What? Why? Mvelo isn't even here!

Me: I know mom. The girl might be dating and needs to spend a little time with it's boyfriend.

Melissa: Oh Jesus. When are we meeting him then?

Me: Soon.

Melissa: I liked it when you were single.

Me: You did? You should've fought Mary then.

Melissa: I did!

Me: Okay okay. Another thing; I will arrive Saturday morning. The girls I work with and I have plans on Friday.

Melissa: As long as everything will go accordingly.

Me: It will trust me.

Dad walks in and goes to his wife. They kiss and smile at each other like he didn't cheat on her with that devil.

Marcus: I didn't see you today at work.

Me: That's because I'm not your pa anymore Mr McVeigh. But I did see you going into your office in the morning.

Marcus: And didn't come to greet me?

Me: Daddy I called you and we spoke for 30 minutes.

Marcus: Still.

Me: I should get you guys a grandchild.

Them: We'd love that!

Jesus. Eww!

Me: I'm kidding. Lord Jesus! What's those faces? What would I do with a child? I'm a child myself.

Marcus: It'd be ours.

Me: Maybe next of next year.

Melissa: We'll be holding you into that.

I laugh. They have a grandchild on the way. They must convince Lucas to come live with them.

Mom serve us. We pray and eat. They start with their love stories. My father is a good lover but the cheating demon seems to always overpower him somehow...

...

The police siren disturbs me from my pile of thoughts. I look at the rearview mirror, they are flicking light at me. Great!

I pull up. I am now going to be an hour late. Dad must not talk to me for the next 2 months. Why wouldn't he wake me up? I slept at home and now I regret it because I'm never this late when I'm at my place.

I jump when I see a figure in my window. Bheki? Seriously? I slide my window down.



Bheki: Morning ma'am. Please step out of the vehicle.

Me: Why?

Bheki: I wanna hug you first before I charge you for speeding in a 60km/h zone.

Me: I'm late.

Bheki: Now you wanna put your life and lives of other citizens? Please step out.

Me: wow Bheki.

I step out.

Bheki: License please.

I reach for my purse and take it out. He writes me my ticket and hugs me.

Me: Are you for real?

Bheki: I'm just trying to make South Africa a better place baby. Have a great day at work. I love you.

I get in my car and drive off. What a way to begin my day.

...

Kelly: I didn't know 10am was the time to arrive at work.

She just had to be the first person I see when I get in.

Me: I'm from the Dr.

Kelly: Couldn't you call and let someone know?

Me: It slipped my mind I'm sorry. The headache is very bad.

Kelly: Dr's note?

Me: Here.

I give her and walk on to the lift. I don't know what we'd do without Drs. I just went to the Dr, it was the only thing to save me.

I get to my office and exhale.

Thabi: Yoh your granny is so annoying.

Me: I know right.

Kate: What's up with her and this stinking attitude? She honestly bores me.

Me: She has a thing against everyone apperantly.

Thabi: She needs a hiding.

Kate: A serious one.

Me: No no no. No hiding please.

I make coffee and sit down to work.

I tell Thabi and Kate to go have lunch I will finish up.

I encrypt the files afterwards. Tomorrow I am not coming here.

I hear a knock.

Me: Its open!

Precious our receptionist gets in.

Precious: I've been trying to get hold of your phone.

Me: I unconnected it sorry.

Precious: There's a lady here to see you.

Me: A lady? You can send her in.

Precious: Ok.

She walks out. Minutes later when I sweep. A knock comes through.

Me: Come in.

Precious walks in first followed by a woman I've never seen before. She is dressed like the women I saw at Mvelo's wedding: dress, tekkies, doek and a cape.

Me: Thanks

Precious: I'm just one call away.

Me: Ofcourse love.

She heads out.

Me: You may take a seat.

I say to the woman. She looks younger than she's dressed.

Me: I'm Lexi. Though I believe you know me.

I mean she wouldn't be here if she didn't.

Her: I am Mangema. Gugu Ncube.

Me: How can I help you Gugu?

Gugu: By stop ruining your life.

Me: I don't follow

Gugu: Bheki.

Yeah right.

Gugu: You are nothing close to what his parents may consider a wife. They will stop at nothing to make sure you are not with their son. I was taken from my father's home to go continue being a wife to a man that is no longer there. I agreed because its either you take the chief's orders or you are banished.

KwaNcube is no place for a little beautiful woman like you.

Bheki loves you yes but he would never be able to protect you from his people, I know you might love him too but save yourself while you still have time. Bheki thinks he has this figured out but he doesn't. His mother has sent me here to live with him, Bheki doesn't wanna be chief, for his father to allow that he has to be with me. Now tell me where does that put you? Are you going to stand that?

Me: Did she send you here to tell me all this?

She balls me.

Me: His mother! Did she?

Gugu: Ofcourse not. I came here because I care. I don't want to watch you get yourself into this and ruin your life. But if you

think maybe I'm just trying to get rid of you. Go ahead, we'll meet at the forest at 4am to get wood to cook for only Lord knows who.

She got up and left. I look around at nothing, trying to hold the tears from falling...

27

My phone rings. I take it and put it on silent. I have been doing nothing but crying and walking around this place like a mad woman. I hardly slept last night. I drank sleeping pills to finally get some sleep. Gugu's words kept echoing in my head. How did she know who am I? Where I work?

I really wish I had energy to speak to Bheki right now. I call Mvelo, we talk for a while and hang up. I don't mention anything about my crazy relationship that has a 3rd person. This is how its gonna be? Have an official 3rd person in our union!

I don't know what to believe. Did Gugu come to me with good intentions or bad? I would never know until I speak Bheki. He's been calling me since from last night. I stuck at his cellphone number, or maybe not. Let me just forget he ever existed and move on with my life. It doesn't matter if Gugu was there to push me away so she can have him in peace, either way he'll have him.

I delete his number and go to take a bath. As much as I have that little hope that this might work out, it really doesn't matter now. Bheki keeps choosing to be with her than to be chief.

I startle, scream, slip and fall on my butt when I get out of the bathroom and find a man sitting on my bed. My towel is still intact, good. He helps me get on my feet.

Me: How did you even get in?

I say snatching my hand off his.

Bheki: Security let me up. Why aren't you taking my calls?

Me: Why are you calling me?

Bheki: Alexis. I thought we were working things out.

Me: We were Bheki, until Gugu arrived here and you didn't even tell me.

He tries to speak but shuts his mouth and close his eyes.

Bheki: I was gonna tell you.

Me: When? Huh? When Bheki?

Bheki: As soon as I found the courage to. Its not easy to go to your girlfriend and tell her your brother's wife is here.

Me: What is she doing here?



Bheki: I don't know. How did you know she's here?

Me: She paid me a visit yesterday at work.

Bheki: What?

Me: Yes! You lied to me Bheki. Your father made you choose between being chief and being with her and you chose being with her on behalf of your brother, that means she is your wife! Until forever.

Bheki: That's nonsense and you know it.

Me: Then why is she here?

Bheki: I don't know and I don't care!

Me: It's because your mother sent her here. Its who they think is capable and good enough to be your wife.

Bheki: What my parents think doesn't matter Alexis. It is you that I love, she is in my house not with me where I live. My father told me after I get her pregnant

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my job would be done and I held him into that.

Me: Until you have fixed this mess, I am done. I don't wanna be part of all this uncertainty Bheki.

Bheki: Lexi please.

He takes my hand and look into my eyes crying.

Me: I'm a lot Bheki. Taking me to your parents would need you to learn how to man up before your parents. I can't even fetch wood! Some one like me needs a strong man to take her to people like your parents. Go and teach yourself to stand for yourself or else leave and never look back because Until you know how to say no to your father, you & I don't have a future. I really wanna be with you but not like this. Not like this.

I pull my hand away and walk to the closet. I lean on the door after I close and take a deep breath. I cried enough last night, I'm not going to torture myself right now....

\*\*\*

BHEKI

I push the doors apart. I find her in the lounge breast feeding the baby. She covers herself and look at me.

Me: Care to explain why you went to Alexis? You have ruined my life!

Gugu: As much as you're about to ruin hers? Don't let love make you selfish Bheki. That woman deserves a man with no baggage.

Me: She was starting to understand!

Gugu: Understanding what? That once in a while you'll have to sleep with me to fool your father that you're taking care of your brother's house? Come on.

Me: You don't understand. I love her.

Gugu: I also loved Khuselo but I had to share countless nights with you just because I had to do it for your parents! You know very well Alexis will not survive in that home.

Me: She won't even stay there.

She laughs.

Gugu: Now I believe love makes you men stupid. Like hell your mother would agree. She would want her there to torture her until she leaves you. Let the poor girl go Bheki, she doesn't deserve all that hell your family will put her through.

Me: Why do you care?

Gugu: Because if it wasn't for your vindictive parents I would be here in Jo'burg living my best life Bhekisizwe! I would have made something out of myself! I should've gone to university that very same year they decided no because Khuselo had paid

lobola for me. You and your siblings aren't nothing but a curse to every woman's life. You see this baby? Given a chance? I would throw it all the way down from the balcony because it is nothing but a reminder of how ruined my life is!

She is crying. She put it aside and walk out. The baby starts crying too. I sit down on the couch opposite and look at it cry while I rock my body back and forth crying too...

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ALEXIS

I went out to have lunch. Ignored every call and every text. I just need a polite way to tell Kelly to fuck off. This camel has a problem with me not being there. No youth wants to exchange hugs and have meaningless conversations with old age home share holders. The Christmas party was their idea, they must enjoy it and not bother us.

I drive to a park after my 2 hour lunch. I buy ice cream and sit on the bench and watch birds fly around with freedom, kids

rolling on the grass laughing with no single care in the world. I wish to be little again and clueless.

Cold hands cover my eyes. I sigh.

Me: Your hands are very cold. How did you find me?

He laughs and removes his hands.

Mike: Find my phone sweetie.

He slides close to me and takes the spoon and dig into my ice cream.

Me: I should delete that thing.

Mike: Too risky honey no.

Me: but you're abusing it.

Mike: The law says: If you can't reach a friend for more than 3 hours, get worried. I was worried.

Me: Amen!

Mike: What's going on with you?

Me: Nothing.

Mike: Your face just betrayed you. Out with it.

I sigh and sniffle.

Me: Don't judge me okay

Mike: I'm hurt. How can you even say that?

Me: Just in case. See Bheki and I were trying to fix things.

He doesn't look surprised.

Mike: And then what happened?

Me: The woman he married for his brother came to the office yesterday. She told me a lot of things about Bheki's home. Things I wouldn't want to be part of. She mentioned that her and Bheki were not a once off thing, its gonna keep happening.

Mike: And where does that leave you?

Me: That's what she asked. She also mentioned that Bheki doesn't have full control of the situation and I saw that this morning. Bheki is only focused on loving me and keeping me around but he won't stand up to his parents. They have so much power over him. So I told him we should stop until he fixes this.

Mike: I'm sorry love.

Me: Its okay. Its life, we live and we learn.

Mike: Let's go grab a drink.

Me: Bad idea. A movie would do.

Mike: Ok fine. A movie it is then.

I smile. We get up and go to our cars.

Amongst the missed calls I find, 2 of them are Nqaba's. He must stay away from me. He is probably married and have 5 kids.

I text Mvelo the drama my life has turned to face when we arrive at the cinema...

28

The ladies night was really great last night. I specialized in chopping, its what I do best. Kate and Thabi did their magic on the pots. Venting and crying my eyes out is exactly what I needed to numb my poor heart. We talked, cried, ate, drank wine, talked and cried even more.

I wish I didn't have to wake up early today but I promised mom I will manage so I had to manage. I left the ladies there because it would've been really rude to tell people to leave at 6 just because you are.

My mother is an early worm. I found her up and cleaning. I made myself breakfast while I waited for the deco people. They have arrived and I'm happy I have something to be busy with. Aunt Mary and her annoying kids are about to arrive any minute from now. I am so not in the mood for them.

Me: This is perfect. You guys are really good at what you do.

Guy: Then please rate us.

He hands me a tablet. I give them 10/10. They deserve it. They mixed baby pink and blue so perfect its like the colors were



made for each other. I text Buhle's bakery reminding them that we have only 2 hours to the shower so they better deliver the cake.

When I walk the decorators back to their car in the front, I see people through the sliding door. Punctual that much?

There is no car in sight. Great listeners. I bid the guys goodbye and head back inside. I greet everyone I come across with until I climb up the stairs. Catering confirms. Everything is going smoothly. I strip my clothes off and get into the shower. I am out after a while. I put on only the underwears and make my face.

My phone rings. Who wants to ruin my beautiful Saturday!

I reach for it. It is unknown numbers, I answer and not say anything.

Voice: Lexi?

Me: Yes?

Voice: Its me. Where's your vacuum?

Me: Ugh no. Don't worry about that, someone will come to clean up.

Thabi: We will clean. Where is it?

Me: The second door after the bathroom.

Thabi: Cool. How is it going there?

Me: Pretty fine thanks. Why are you even up so early?

Thabi: Hunger. Bye

I laugh.

Me: Bye.

I put the phone down and continue putting on make up. A text comes through.

GOOD MORNING NDLOVUKAZI. I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO REACH YOU ON YOUR CELL BUT I HAVE NOT HAD ANY LUCK. IS EVERYTHING OKAY?

Only a Zulu man from Nduna's village can text someone in capital letters. I shake my head smiling. I have been ignoring his calls. I see where he is going and I don't wanna go there.

Hi Nqaba. Everything is okay. I have been busy with work.  
Thank you for your concern.

I think of putting a smiley face at the end but decide I agaisnt it since he won't see it. I press send and set my face. I move up from the mirror and put on a robe and go downstairs. I meet mom on the lounge.

Melissa: Lucas and Lisa are on their way.

Me: Awesome. So is the cake!

Melissa: The deco is to die for.

Me: I know right. I told you.

Melissa: Well well well.

Me: Where's daddy?

Melissa: Somewhere outside with Peter.

Me: Uncle Peter is here?

Melissa: Ofcourse. Its December, all the McVeighs are here.

Me: Let me go greet them.

Melissa: I will be upstairs getting ready.

I send Mvelo my facebeat picture on my way to greet the elders.

I am dizzy of hugs and air kisses as I finish greeting. The cake arrives, I tell them where to put it and go back inside to change.

Me: The lady of the moment is here. May we all sit down and be quiet please? Thank you.

"Surpriiiiise!!!!" She runs back to Luc before her brain realize its us. We laugh.

Me: You can't run away from us.

Lisa: Oh my goodness are you trying to send me to early labor?

I laugh and hug her.

Me: No baby. Aunty is sorry okay my little pumpkin.

Mom brings the sling. She put it on.

Me: Don't cry please.

Lisa: Thank you so much.

Me: Thank your loving husband first. He made this

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we just helped.

She turns to Luc, they hug and kiss. We clap. Love is beautiful when portrayed right.

I lead them to their table and the fun begins. We ask her the baby shower questions, we play the games, eat the cake and then the main course is served. By the time it comes to an end I'm drunk. I disappear all the way to my room to sleep it off...

...

I'm woken up by noise of people shouting at each other. It is dark and raining. I get up, close the windows and turn on the lights. The shouting is still going on. I put on a jacket and walk out. Its not coming from downstairs but here in one of the rooms. It is coming from Will's room. The door opens, his wife storms out. She pushes Liam off her way on the staircase.

Liam: Trouble in paradise?

Me: Looks like it.

Liam: No woman can ever stand Will's stinking attitude. Until he fixes that about himself, he'll keep divorcing and marrying again.

Me: He shouldn't hear you say that.

Liam: He knows it too. There's someone outside here to see you.

Me: Who?

Liam: I forgot his name. Can I borrow your navy gown?

Me: Yes Liam but return it to my room when you're done with it.

Liam: Ofcourse.

He walks into my room while I go to meet the unknown person. I look around but no one is here. I head back inside.

Liam: Outside the gate.

Me: Why didn't you just say that at first?

Liam: I forgot.

I sigh and go to wear the rain coat and boots. The elders don't even know we exist. They are in the lounge before the fire

place asking Luc and Lisa questions. I don't wish to be them right now.

I find Bheki Ncube inside the car. I take off the coat and hop in. We stare at each other, he leans over to kiss me, I let him. I missed him, I missed the taste of stimorol in his lips, I missed how his kisses are always tender and heartfelt.

I take off the boots and climb on him. We continue to kiss until I take my hand down to his trousers. He breaks the kiss and grips my hand away.

Bheki: Lexi Me: Please. Bheki: Not like this.

Me: I'm not a virgin, you that right? He nods.

Bheki: Not like this. I miss you.

I sigh. He kisses my collarbone.

Bheki: And I love you. I am going to do everything in my power to make my home bearable for you.

I smile. Bheki: Please kiss me again.

He puts both his hands on my butt and we kiss again.

Finally we're going home. Although life here is easy but it is not as bearable as it is at home. Being around everything that I would have had it not been for the Ncube people was really torture. Seeing women my age drive beautiful cars and be who they want to be really broke my heart each time I saw them.

I put my suitcase aside and sit down to breastfeed Zwelethu. I text Bheki that we are ready. He has been staying over at Lexi's, I don't know if my fear of the Ncubes got better of me or what but I feel for her. I wish I had a way to help Bheki, myself and her to free away from the evil grip of his parents.

My phone rings. I clear my throat and answer.

Me: Mother.

Makhumalo: Mama ka Zwe. What is it that I hear about you coming back?

Me: Because its Christmas next week ma.

Makhumalo: Hhaisuka wena. Stay there with your husband and your child. Bheki won't be off during the holidays until the 2nd of January. If you leave him, are you leaving him to be with that skank?



Me: Ofcourse not ma. She's old news.

Makhumalo: Stay there and look after your man. Where is he?  
Put him on the phone.

Me: He's downstairs. Let me take the phone to him.

I put her on hold and call Bheki. He answers within a minute.

Bheki: Hello

Me: She wants to speak to you.

I emerge the calls and they talk.

Can this woman die already?...

\*\*\*

ALEXIS

Bheki gets off the call and comes back to bed. We have this  
crazy tendency of just looking at each other and smile.

Bheki: We should wake up and go get food.

Me: Yes we should but I just need a nap.

Bheki: You're so lazy.

My phone beeps. That better be not Nqaba. I have blocked him on 4 of his numbers. I am having a blissful week and I can't let him ruin that for me.

Honey we're coming to have breakfast there. Croissants stuffed with cheese and bacon?

I jump out of bed.

Me: My parents are coming!

Bheki: I told you.

He jumps up and reach for his clothes while I run around like a headless chicken. I collect the rubber wrappers, if my mom can know I'm having sex she'll never let me hear the end of it.

Bheki: If your father finds me here. He's gonna kill me.

Me: He won't.

He takes his phone and head out with me behind. He doesn't like the idea of sleeping here because of such situations but we can't always invade his brother's place. I don't feel comfortable.

I press the button for him and take my kiss.

Bheki: I will see you when I return from home.

Ouch there's that!

Me: When?

Bheki: Can you not make that face please? I will drive back tomorrow evening after I have rested.

Me: Ok. Travel safe.

Bheki: I love you.

He brings me closer to him.

Me: I love you too.

He kisses my forehead.

Bheki: I will call you later.

Me: Okay.

I hug him. The lift doors part, I let go and he goes in and waves a low goodbye. Every time he leaves it feels like I'll never see him again.

I clean up in the meantime. I even get to bath and change. They arrive when I am just about to make myself breakfast.

Me: I thought you were not coming anymore.

Melissa: Its holidays. The waiting is 10x more. How are you we missed you.

I hug each of them and take out plates.

Me: I missed you too.

Marcus: Baby at some point you'll have to tolerate being around your relatives.

Me: 24, 25, 26 until new year I will be around them. I needed this one week to myself.

Melissa: This time around we are going to Britney's for a change.

Me: Oh God save us.

Marcus: I thought you'd be happy we're not hosts.

Me: uh-uh. Britney is a worst cook. She will feed us sea food or even worse those Chinese foods.

They laugh.

Melissa: What is wrong with my kids! Lucas said the same thing. We asked her to prepare things that everyone eats.

Me: I'll bring a lunchbox, just in case.

Dad raise a brow at me. I hold both their hands and close my eyes. We say grace and start eating.

...

After my parents left I drove to Mikes. Now I'm here waiting for him to come rescue me. I keep trying his phone to no avail.

He calls back as I am about to drive off.

Me: Are you trying to kill me?

Mike: Sorry this thing was dead. Are you still here?

Me: Yes.

Mike: Ok I'll call them to let you in.

Me: Your complex sucks broe.

Mike: Its called safety!

Me: Safety my ass.

He hangs up. After a couple of minutes I'm let in. I park at visitor's parking lot and get my ticket.

I fly in and freeze when I see a woman standing behind the counter in only her bralette. I clear my throat and close the door.

Me: Hi.

She huffs and rolls her eyes

Her: Ever heard of knocking?

Me: Yeah. Sorry.

I go out and knock. Mike opens the door.

Mike: Hey!

We hug.

He pulls my hand to the kitchen area. I'm avoiding eye contact with this woman.

Mike: This is my best friend-

Her: Alexis McVeigh. I know her; we know each other.

Me: I swear to God I've never saw you anywhere.

Her: Its a norm. You assaulted me you hoodrat!

Mike: Whoa. What? Sweetie I've got to get you home.

Her: What? Because of her.

Mike: No. Because I don't wanna see you both fighting. Please go dress up.

She slams the knife against the counter and shake her little ass away.

Me: wtf! Is this Tasha?

I mime.

Mike: Hell no. I won her from the club.

He mimes back.

Me: Oh my God you're such an asshole.

She comes back. She stops Mike when he tries to walk her out.

Her: I know my way home asshole.

She slams the door behind her.

Me: What the hell Mike. You're cheating on Tasha?

Mike: Tasha doesn't wanna be with me cause I'm a hoe.

Me: And you didn't wanna prove it to her that you're not?

Mike: I am a proud hoe Alexis. I love her yes but that doesn't mean I will stop being a hoe. I breathe hoeness. I'm a proud hoeman.

Me: I am so disappointed in you.

Mike: You aren't the first one. Hungry?

Me: No Mike! Why won't you change for her?

Mike: Because my mind hasn't told me to.

Me: Wow Mike.

Mike: How are things going with your psychopath captain?

Me: Everything seems good for now.

Mike: how's the sex? I know you've done it.



Me: What if we have? Its great.

Mike: Is he circumcised?

Me: Micheal!

He laughs.

Mike: I'm asking. I'm concerned about your health.

Me: Well he is and we are using a condom.

Mike: We must throw him a party. Most of my black friends, Zulu aren't circumcised.

Me: He is and his sex is good. I was expecting the worst but he is good.

Mike: Minus one problem.

Me: Yes I guess.

I receive a text from him saying they are not leaving anymore. I smile. That means I get to spend the rest of this day with him.

Mike: I hate this sight.

Me: Don't be jealous. You were smiling at your phone not so long ago and I was happy for you.

Mike: I hate Bheki. I wish he could get eaten by a giant bear.

I gasp and laugh.

Me: What did he ever do to you?

Mike: He arrested me! Now I hate his dick for making you forget he put me in a cell for nothing.

Me: But he apologized.

Mike: 'Sorry mfana womlungu' is not an apology sister. He's full of it.

Me: Leave my man alone.

Mike: Heaven open the gates and take me. My man? What the hell!

Me: Mike stop it.

Mike: Let's go to Tasha's. You'll tell her how much I can't breathe without her. I miss her.

Me: Why can't you tell her yourself?

Mike: Alexis your psycho boyfriend arrested me for nothing. You owe me, let's go.

...

We arrive at Tasha's. I take him there and beg her to let him in until she gives in. I leave them there and go stay in the car.

I call Mvelo. She tells me about her Christmas recipe and how much she wish it was next year already.

Me: Uhm babe. Can I call you back? There's a call coming through.

Mvelo: If its Bheki emerge the calls.

I answer and emerge them.

Me: Hey

Bheki: Can we meet?

Me: Where are you?

Bheki: At my house.

Me: You want me to come there?

Bheki: No. We'll meet somewhere, a restaurant maybe.

Me: Tell me which one and I'll come.

Bheki: Ok.

He hangs up.

Mvelo: Is me or he sounds down?

Me: He does. I have a bad feeling about this meeting.

Mvelo: Tell me how it goes.

Me: I will babe. Bye.

Mvelo: Bye hun.

...

An hour later we meet at McDonald's near my place. The look on his face scares me. I hop in and greet him.

Bheki: I ordered us food.

Me: I'm not hungry. What's up?

His eyes drop.

Bheki: My parents are coming here for Christmas.

Me: That means you won't be able to see me.

Bheki: Yes but this is gonna be the last time they ever tell me what to do. I'm asking you to please bear with me this just one week and I promise when I return I will be all yours.

Me: Whatever it takes.

Bheki: Thank you for understanding. I love you Sabathile.

Me: I will believe that after one week.

Bheki: We will call and text every minute. Please spend the night at my place tonight.

Me: I will.

Bheki: I might be disowned for this but you're worth it.

I nod. He wipes my tears with his thumb.

Bheki: I'm gonna fix this. I promise.

Me: Ok.

He pulls me towards his chest. I wish today was the day he was free....

30

Jingle bells! Jingle bells! I hate Christmas. Christmas is eating food prepared by mom. Her food has magic to always make me hate Christmas a little less. Today I will hate it even more.

Its been 2 days since I saw Bheki. I am trying to not dwell much on our situation but it gets hard in some hours. I just feel like crying and giving up. I respond to texts, wish him a merry Christmas too and then I respond to everybody else before I climb out of bed.

I make my bed and clean up the entire room. I have gotten pretty good at this. The look on mom's face when she gets in confirms it.

Melissa: Wow. I actually came here to make your bed.

Me: Wow I'm hurt.

I dramatically hold my chest. She laughs.

Melissa: Let's go eat. We should leave around 9 or 10am.

Me: Is it pancakes topped with cream and berries?

Melissa: It's a new recipe. Not really new but its different frim what we usually eat on Christmas mornings.

We find dad about to come up.

Marcus: Lisa and the baby are impatient.

Me: I forgot they are here.

I laugh and rush to the dining area. I hug her from behind and kiss her cheek. Wow this table is full of everything.

Me: How are you babies?

Lisa: We are fine. Someone keeps me awake all night with movements.

Me: That's a good sign right?

Lucas: Yes it is.

Marcus: So, you want the gender to be a surprise?

Luc: Yes. Mom are you sure you want us to eat at Britney's?

Melissa: You will eat cause they will serve the meals at 1pm to 2pm.

Marcus: Get my lunchbox ready.

We laugh and hold hands to pray. The prayer takes longer than usual, the smell of fresh toast keeps tingling my nose. I forgot my phone upstairs. Mom would freak at me if I went to get it,

shall Bheki or Mvelo or Mike call they will have to call me again later.

We start piling our plates up suggesting baby names. I do not want to be Lisa right now. The look on my parents face says: We're about to invade your lives like never before!

They are so inlove with the idea of having a grandchild...

...

The traffic heading to Britney's house kills me. When we arrive, Aunt Mary sends me and Liam to go get more refreshments from the mall. These rich people's places are always far away from malls. Luckily for us there's a little shopping center not so far away. We get in his car and drive away.

Liam: I hope its not packed cause if it is I will not even bother going in.

Me: Do you want your mother to kill us?

Liam: This was just a way of getting rid of us. Britney knew from October that she will be hosting. Why wouldn't she have enough refreshments?



Me: You think? Well that's good cause I also don't wanna be around them.

Liam: They are all so self righteous. They treat marriage more important than it actually is. They should let us marry out of our own will. They keep divorcing and marrying again because they get married for the sake of being married. It sucks.

Me: It totally does. One day they will realize there's change in generations. Ours needs people to choose carefully who they marry, before 25 years of age you're still young and very-

I swear to God that man standing there with 2 women seated beside him is Bheki Ncube. As we get closer a man comes out and hands him a baby.

What is that? I turn to look when we pass them. There's smoke coming within them. They all bow down. Could that be his child? And his parents and his wife? He never told me he lives here.

Liam: Lexi!

Me: Yes!

I snap.

Liam: Are you okay?

Me: I'm fine. How far are we?

Liam: 5 minutes.

Me: Okay.

Liam: Are you sure you're okay?

Me: Yes Liam I'm fine.

Liam: Ok no need to shout.

I take out my phone and call him. It goes to voicemail. I feel hot.

When Liam pulls up at the parking lot I spot the restrooms. I hop out and run there. I get in and drink water and suppress the urge to cry but why not? I let out a groan one after another.

Liam: I'll be here.

He shouts from inside. I satisfy myself with crying. My make up is ruined. I take a tissue and clean the mascara black trails.

Me: Let's go.

Liam: Feel better?

Me: A bit.

Liam: Great.

We go to Checkers and buy the drinks. Its not packed so in a few minutes we are out.

Liam: I think we should grab zinger wings for the road.

Me: I need something strong.

Liam: Open one of the bottles we bought.

I reach for a bottle of wine. I close my eyes and drink up. We buy the wings via the drive through and head back.

Liam: Wings deal with boy problems better.

I laugh. I just want this wine to kick in before we pass by that house.

Me: Isn't there a different route we can use?

Liam: Was that him?

Me: Yes. Its complicated.

Liam: Sure as hell it is. What were they doing there?

Me: I am as clueless as you.

Liam: This route takes a little longer but let's take it.

Me: Thanks.

The bottle is finished when we get to the house. She invited her rich young and married friends. There's something about young married people that doesn't sit well with me.

Catherine: Alexis. Look at you. Your husband us definitely treating you good. You are beautiful.

That's it right there! They are always assuming everyone is married.

Me: Still not married.

They gasp.

Molly: What are you waiting for?

Me: A man. I can't marry myself.

Catherine: You must go out more often.

Me: I will. How much was your ring? Its so beautiful.

She smiles and look at it. If you want to shift attention from yourself just ask about their outfit or their ring.

Catherine: a hundred thousand maybe. I can't really remember.

Molly: My engagement ring was 80 000 and this one was 200 000.

So If I could steal both their rings I'd walk away with so much money? Interesting. Where's mom? I'm hungry.

I leave them there still discussing their rings. I look for mom but find another bottle of red wine instead. I take it to a secret spot and drink my sorrows down. My head is spinning now, just what I needed. I keep collecting the bottles of wine until I decide to stop.

Liam finds me in my car.

Liam: You're really wasted. Come

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lunch is ready.

Me: I don't want food.

Liam: You have to eat.

He opens the door and pull me out. We argue all the way to the back. She outdid herself with decorations. We sit down.

Will: You guys are always late for everything, aren't you?

Liam: Proudly so. May we say grace?

We all hold hands.

Liam: Heavenly father we thank you for this day. We thank you for this food, we hope its delicious as it looks, may you make McVeighs stop obsessing about marriage. Merry Christmas and Happy Birthday Jesus. We love you. Amen.

He's definitely going to hell for this prayer. We dish up. It smells nice and surprisingly taste good too. I take a picture and send it to Mvelo.

My mind travels back to Bheki. I decide to text him...

\*\*\*

BHEKI

Zwelethu finally falls asleep. I take him to the crib in the lounge where baba and mama are seated.

Makhumalo: See? Was that too hard?

Me: No.

Ncube: I hope this cleansing was the beginning of a beautiful bond between you two.

Makhumalo: Ofcourse it is baba. All that is left is for you and MaNgema to bond the same.

Me: That's what I don't get. What bond?

Ncube: To build a home ndodana.

Me: Whose home? Isn't this Khuselo's wife? Why am I expected to be building bonds and homes with my brother's wife? What about my home?

Makhumalo: Not this again.

Ncube: The sooner you accept that you can't live a normal life that you desire, the better.

He balanced with his walking stick to get up.

Me: Maybe I'm done being controlled by you both. I am sick and tired of it.

He turns and look at me.

Ncube: You are tired of being a Ncube?

Me: Yes. I am tired to be your son. I am tired of being blackmailed to do anything.

Makhumalo: Bhekisizwe!

Me: I am tired of you shoving Khuselo's life down my throat. I get it you loved him, you only acknowledged my existence after he died but I will never be Khuselo. I am not fit enough to be the next ruler of the village; I can't be with his wife. I have a life! I have a woman. My woman that I love, my skinny jeans wearing girlfriend that I would love to marry one day but who would love and marry a man that has two lives? You have ruined my life its enough and it ends here!

Ncube: Take those words back!

Bheki: No.

Makhumalo: Bheki this is your father you're talking to.

Me: I doubt it. My own parents would want what's best for me. Let the poor woman go and fetch her life. I will raise Zwe on my own.

Ncube: He has lost his mind. The village needs a ruler.



Me: I'm not gonna be it! I have respected you enough and you've done nothing but used that into advantage.

My phone rings. I take it out. Its Alexis. I answer.

Me: Sabathile.

She giggles.

Lexi: I'm outside.

Me: Outside what?

Lexi: Your beautiful house.

Me: Have you been drinking?

The line dies. I leave the wicked parents looking at each other.

She is indeed here sitting on her car's trunk. She smiles when she sees me. She's also crying.

Lexi: The most beautiful man on earth.

Me: Have you been drinking?

Lexi: Yes. I have problems. What were you doing here earlier?  
Was that your kid?

I frown.

Me: It was cleansing.

Lexi: Did you sleep with her?

Me: No.

Lexi: Liar! Why would you cleanse anything then?

Me: Because I never welcomed him. Can I take you home?

Lexi: Why? You don't want mommy and daddy to see you with your half black girlfriend? Buy me the cape then so that I can be their best idea of a wife. Buy me a freakin doek or long skirts and dresses. Let go of me!

I put her inside the car and walk around to the driver's door. She gets out as I get in.

Me: Alexis I'm not playing with you.

Lexi: Take me in there right now and let me tell your mother and father they can't choose you a wife. You're a grown ass man for Christ's sake, you love me and you need to tell them.

Me: I did. Now get in!

Lexi: No! I want to...oh my God I feel like I'm gonna be sick.

She rushes to the other side of the road and throw up. I call Gugu to bring me water.

Lexi: Fuck you Britney with your chilli chicken!

I laugh. I am looking forward to seeing her drunk in our home, cursing at our children...

31

My personal cellphone rings while I am on call with a Western cape businessman that I've been trying to reach for the past 2 months.

Him: Are you busy Miss McVeigh, perhaps we can schedule.

Me: No no no. I'm sorry about that.

Him: Great. I am very fascinated that a very young lady as you has chosen to take interest in business people's daily lives.

Me: Thank you. I just feel like the world needs to know that you have lives outside those expensive suits.

He laughs.

Him: Ofcourse we do. I will be waiting on the date of the shoot and the interview.

Whew! I need some air!

Me: Thank you Mr Harris. I will email all the details to your pa. Thank you so much.

Him: Have a lovely day Miss McVeigh.

Me: I sure will. Thank you. You have a great one too.

I hang up. Keep it down Lexi. Keep it down. I can't!

I scream. Kate and Thabi get in running.

Me: We're flying to Cape Town.

Kate: No fucking way!

Me: Yes!

They come over my desk to do a group hug.

Me: We are making it ladies.

Thabi: Look at God.

Kate: We better deliver these news to Will as hot as they are.

Me: How could we not. Let's go.

Marcus McVeigh decided to resign in January, with immediate effect. Talking about he's old, he wants to rest and stuff. I found out the following month that it was all an excuse. Him and his wife decided to explore Africa, wasting the money we work hard for. Only God knows when they will be back. So we are all left to deal with William and Kelly. They made sure Liam doesn't become the ceo here

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they took him to the branch in Durban that Will was in.

Dad found his PA another job somewhere else. Will came with his stupid; full of herself Lorraine. I knock once at her door.

Lorraine: He's busy.

Me: Schedule us for when he's free.

Lorraine: Monday.

Me: Sad. Tell him we got Harris.

She busts her gum bubble and nods.

Kate: She irritates me. I just can't deal with her. I can't.

She says as we walk away.

Me: At least we'll see them all again on Monday.

Thabi: Including you.

Me: Yes.

Kate: I'm also flying to KwaZulu today.

Thabi: I so want a lover right now. You guys make me jealous.

Me: You dumped a woman that loved you.

Thabi: She bored me. I want an exciting lover. Someone who makes it easy to be with them. Someone who doesn't just feed me love all the time but feeds me all the benefits of being loved. Okuhle only focused on loving me. We only went out once. Who wanna be in that sick relationship?

Kate: Not me.

Me: Eww me too. But you could've taught her how to not give love only.

Thabi: I tried! She's stubborn. So not my type.

She's so choosy. Since my relationship became stable we made arrangements of me going to his house every Friday. I can see my friends all I want mid-week but weekends are his. Mike has finally accepted. Mvelo showed no problem at all.

We part ways to our respective offices. They share an office and doesn't seem to mind. I pack my things and wait for 4 o'clock. I use the remaining 30 minutes to check my emails.

...

I find Tasha and Mike invading my place. Yes they are back together again, for the 200th time.

Mike: We thought we could come see you before you went to your home.

Me: Hi Tasha.

Tasha: Hey. I hope you don't mind I made juice.

Me: I do mind. Where did you get this crazy guy?.

Tasha: Hey came unannounced in my place.

Mike: Uhm Hi fam. Its my birthday next weekend. Can you ask your psycho boyfriend to borrow us you next weekend?

Me: He says no. I got Harris.

Mike: What! Come here.

We hug.

Mike: We'd go celebrate.

Me: We'll celebrate after the interview.

Mike: Awesome. Let us bounce.

Me: Tasha babes. Thanks for coming to see me for 5 minutes.

She smiles and we hug.



I walk them to the lift. I check if Bheki had replied to my messages. He hasn't. He must be having a hectic day today.

I go to take a bath and pack. As it gets darker, I drive to his house. My phone rings. I put the earpiece that Bheki bought me for safety! He's fined me for speeding and breaking all the road rules. I am as straight as a ruler now. I answer.

Me: Hey babe.

Mvelo: Have you left?

Me: Yeah I just did. Need something?

Mvelo: Yes you. We need to talk.

Me: You're scaring me.

Mvelo: Please drive here.

Me: Ok.

I take a u turn. What does she need to talk about now? I am praying that man did not hit her.

I inform Bheki that I'm gonna arrive late when I get to Mvelo's. I find her cooking, this husband life kinds of sucks.

Mvelo: That was quick.

Me: I was on the road.

Mvelo: Wine?

Me: No. Just tell me what we need to talk about.

Mvelo: It needs a glass of wine. Sit down.

I have a feeling I'm not gonna like this. I take a seat, she hands me a glass of wine and sits down too. She looks at me for a while.

Mvelo: There is no easy way to say this.

Me: Are you pregnant?

Mvelo: No! Jesus. I'm moving to KZN.

I chuckle and take a sip. She keeps her straight.

Me: Why?

Mvelo: Because Nduna's work transferred him there.

Me: What about your life here?

Mvelo: I asked for a transfer at work too.

Me: That means you've known for 2 months that you're leaving.

She nods. Wow. What has this friendship become?

Mvelo: I'm sorry.

Me: Its fine. Go well.

I get up.

Mvelo: Alexis wait.

Me: I mean it. Have a great time and life with your husband.

Mvelo: Lexi we're old. I don't even get to see you on weekends anymore. There arw people we put first now.

Me: I've never put Bheki first before you. I agreed to his arrangement because I don't get to you see you. If I see you it is a lucky charm.

Mvelo: Don't cry please.

Me: I don't want to but it really hurts to see you slipping through my fingers. Its even worse that I can't do anything about it.

I storm out with her following me calling my name. I get into my car and drive off...

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MVELO

I watch her car fade away. Nduna hugs me from behind.

Nduna: She will come around.

I free away from him and go back inside crying.

Nduna: Baby

Me: No!

Nduna: You're married. She's not. Those friendships tend to die at some point.

Me: That's the thing. This isn't just friendship. It is sisterhood. I love her and that look I just saw on her face means she's hurting and might get a car crash! I hurt my bestfriend!

I take my phone and call Bheki. He doesn't pick up. I take my car keys.

Nduna: where are you going?

Me: To Lexi Nduna.

He brushes his face and take the keys.

Nduna: I'll drive you.

\*\*\*

BHEKI

I find a car parked before my gate. I take out my gun and park behind it. I get out and go to knock at the window. Its Mvelo and her husband.

Me: Is everything okay?

Mvelo: Please let us in. We've been here for 2 hours. She won't talk to me.

I nod and open the gate. They drive in and I follow. The house is dark. I turn on the lights. She's curling up on the couch crying. Mvelo runs to her.

Mvelo: Babe I'm sorry.

Lexi: Leave Mvelo. Why aren't you on the plane to KZN?

Mvelo: I am sorry for not telling you on time.

Lexi: There's nothing that you gonna say and make something better about this. You're choosing a man over me! How long has he been here? A year? And now he's greater than all of us?

Nduna: You guys are old. You won't always be wrapped around each other's fingers. Just-

Them: Shut up!

I look at him. Why is he even meddling?

Me: Let's give them some space.

Lexi: What if he gets there and kills you?

Nduna: What? Please talk to your woman.

Me: Mvelo says horrible things about me but I've never told you to talk to her. Just let them shout at each other. Why do you even want Mvelo to go to Durban?

We head to the bar.

Nduna: Because she has to learn to live without Lexi.

Me: Why? She's her bestfriend.

Nduna: So what's gonna happen? We gonna be neighbours?

Me: If that's what will make them happy.

Nduna: Bakushaye ngepentu wena. Unakho ukudla la kwakho?  
Ngilambile. (You've been hit with an underwear. Do you have  
food here? I'm hungry)

He wanders off. I do not like this dude....

32

Returning from the mall I find her still in bed. Seems like she woke up, cleaned and went back to bed.

Me: Ngibuyile. (I'm back)

She sits up right and stare at me.

Me: Lets go make breakfast.

I smile to soften her up. Her argument with Mvelo did not reach a solution. Nduna did not help by meddling.

We get to the kitchen silently. I make toast and cheese. We eat in silence.

Me: I'm gonna be off on Monday. Are you gonna come back here after work?

Lexi: Yeah. Next weekend I will come on Sunday so Monday will make up for Saturday.

Me: Going somewhere?

Lexi: Yes. Its Mike's birthday.

Me: Ok.

Lexi: Just like that?

Me: Yes.



She smiles surprised.

Lexi: Ok. Wow. Are you sure?

Me: Yes I'm sure.

Lexi: God I love you. That was me trying you out. Unbelievable.

Me: What you wanna do today?

Lexi: Uhm, movies?

Me: Sounds like fun but no. How about festival mall? Play games?

Lexi: No problem. Let me rinse these and go bath.

My phone rings. I stare at it. I haven't spoken or seen her in 4 months. What could she possibly want?

Me: Ok. Let me take this.

I walk away to the pool side and wait for her to call again. She calls instantly and I answer.

Me: Mashobane.

Makhumalo: He needs to talk to you.

Her voice is so down and husky like she's been crying.

Me: Who?

I bring myself back to earth. The only he, she could be talking about is my father.

Me: Put him on the phone.

Makhumalo: Face to face. Your father ill Bhekisizwe. He has been ill for 3 months, things are not getting any better. He can't speak, doesn't eat, he ordered not to be taken to the hospital. He keeps mentioning you. You need to come home.

Me: I-

The line dies. I call her back, it goes to voicemail. Why wouldn't they let me know he's sick from the start?

I head back inside.

\*\*\*

ALEXIS

'You can't ignore my calls forever Alexis. We need to talk about this!'

The nerve of this woman for putting an exclamation mark. I toss the damn phone away and apply lotion. Bheki walks in, he doesn't look good.

Me: Is everything okay?

He shakes his head and opens the closet.

Bheki: I need to go home.

Me: Home?

Bheki: My father is not well and he needs me.

He takes out his travel bag and put in just 3 jackets.

Me: You're leaving now?

Bheki: Yes.

Me: I'm coming with you.

Bheki: No.

He zips his bag closed and comes to kiss me.

Bheki: I'll call you.

What? I freeze on my feet and watch him walk out.

After 5 minutes of my confusion. I go over the window and see his car drive away from the gate. What the hell is going on?

I take my phone call him.

Bheki: Babe.

Me: Don't babe me. You can't drive in that state!

Bheki: I'll pass by UJ and take Qophelani. He'll be the one driving.

Me: Why can't I come with?

Bheki: I don't want to upset him. Please understand.

I keep quiet for a while.

Me: I do.

Bheki: Thank you. I love you.

Me: I love you.

I hang up and take a deep breath as I hold back the tears.

'Do you still wanna talk? How about Parkview hotel?'

I send to Mvelo...

\*\*\*

MVELO

He gets in panting. I take my car keys and walk towards him.

Nduna: Going somewhere?

Me: Yep. Parkview hotel, Lexi wants us to talk finally.

Nduna: Don't we have anything important to do?

Me: Not that I know of. I will be back before the sun sets.

Nduna: You and Lexi are bad for each other's lives. Why is this such a big deal to her? You're friends!

Me: You wouldn't understand.

I kiss him and walk to the garage...

On my way she texts me the room number. When I get there I find her standing near the TV with a remote in her hand. She doesn't even notice me.

Me: Hey.

She turns my way.

Lexi: Hey. Can you believe this? Bonisiwe's lawyer is asking for medical parole.

Me: What? They must be crazy. Did your lawyer call you about this?

Lexi: No. Probably called my parents.

She switches off the tv.

Lexi: Justice system is such a joke. That woman could be faking sickness for Christ's sake!

Me: Calm down please.

Lexi: I need to call mom.

She wants to cry. If her mom answers that call she'll break down, I can't let that happen

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not before we talk.

Me: Let me call her.

Lexi: I need some air.

I nod. She walks to the window while I ring Mrs McVeigh up. She doesn't pick up.

Me: She's not picking up.

Lexi: I'd be damned if I ever crossed paths with that woman. I'd rip her apart with these hands. She ruined my life! My own mother, doing that shit to me? I will never recover from that fact. Ever!

Me: Come here.

We hug. I let her cry until I cry too. It must be really hard for her. I know she tends to act strong but I know this hits her randomly at night and it will happen until she dies.

After we cool off. We order some snacks and drinks and lay on the bed.

Me: I wish someone understood our friendship.

She looks at me and smile.

Lexi: I do.

We laugh.

Me: I'm caught in between.

Lexi: You shouldn't be. I am hurt that you did not tell me in time.

Me: I was scared you'll be sad and say all that you said yesterday.

Lexi: You know me better than anyone Mvelo, you could've texted it.

Me: I was scared okay. It honestly feels like I'm choosing him, the London scholarship that you turned down because of me. That wss a major sacrifice. You have sacrificed a lot for us Lexi and for me to tell you that I'm going away with a man felt wrong.

Lexi: You were sick. You think you owe me?

Me: Yeah.

Lexi: I did that out of love. And me causing a scene was not about that, I just can't bear the thought of not seeing you for months.

Me: We can visit each other on weekends...oh no, Bheki. We will make a way.

Lexi: Nduna was right. We're really old and we should learn to adjust to some changes.



Me: He annoys me to be honest. The way he said it, it wasn't a genuine advice.

She laughs.

Lexi: Ofcourse it wasn't but he was right. I guess I'll have to get over myself. I'm sorry for everything I said. I should also apologize to Nduna.

Me: I love you.

Lexi: I love you more.

We do a little toast and gulp down our lemon twist.

Lexi: Bheki went home.

Me: When?

Lexi: Today. His father is ill. I could feel trouble brewing.

Me: What kind of trouble?

Lexi: I feel like we're gonna break up again.

Me: Could you stop being negative? Eat your chips. Bheki will come back to you and kiss you and tell you he loves you.

She laughs.

Lexi: Ok Dr love.

Me: Yes ma'am.

She shakes her head laughing...

\*\*\*

BHEKI

As the sun sets. We make drive in to the Ncubes. There's a white flag at the gate. He must be really sick.

Me: Go park before his house.

Qophelani: Why am I so scared?

Me: Me too.

We get out of the car. He remains behind taking our bags. I wash my hands at the door and walk in.

Me: Ma?

Makhumalo: Ngiyeza! She shouts from the bedroom. I walk up and down until she comes out. We hug briefly. She is crying.

Makhumalo: We're losing him Bheki.

Me: He will not.

I walk in. He's disappearing on the bed. I stand by the door and watch him. Tears fall out. He coughs.

Ncube: Bhekisizwe

Me: Baba.

Ncube: Indoda ayikhali.( a man doesn't cry)

Me: I'm not.

Ncube: The time has come for me. Your grandfather is taking me away to be with them. You and Qophelani will be left to run this home. I had accepted that you will marry your Johannesburg woman but fate has it that when your aunt Badanile fled home, she was pregnant. She gave birth to a baby girl, Bonisiwe. Bonisiwe is in jail, sick. Sick because her daughter is sleeping with her relative, the ancestors are fighting her. Bhekisizwe please tell me she is not pregnant wherever she is

I go down on my butt. I feel sick...

I don't know what to do. I don't know what to feel. I have been lying here on this bed staring at the roof, I was able to doze off for an hour and then I just couldn't sleep anymore until now.

My phone has been ringing in my jacket's pocket. I know its her. She is probably wondering why am I not taking her calls. Someone will have to explain to her and that can not be me. How will I be able to look her and the eye and tell her we're blood related? What are we gonna do? How are we gonna get rid of the memories we've created since we met?

The door opens. The light stings my eyes. I shield the light with my hand. The door closes.

Me: I said no one should disturb me.

Gugu: Well you need to get up and adress the 100s of people on the tree to hear about your father's health.

Me: Do they not know he's sick? I have a lot to do Gugu.

Gugu: So do we Bheki! Get up and bath and go there.

Me: No.

Gugu: We are all worried about the chief but we still do our jobs. Suck it up and get up.

Me: Get out.

Gugu: God please help this man. People are waiting outside Bheki.

Me: Tell Qophelani to go address them.

She walks out. I get up and walk around in circles. I scratch my head as hard as I can. I pin my fists against the wall and I growl...

\*\*\*

ALEXIS

"Alexis"

Me: What!

I snap and turn to face the door way.

Kate: Whoa chill. I brought the report.

Me: Put it over there.

Kate: Are you okay?

Me: I need to be alone Kate.

Kate: Ok give me a call when you're done proof reading. Will needs this before the day ends.

Me: Close the door on your way out.

I go back into staring out the window. I take my phone and call him again. It goes to voicemail this time around.

Me: Bhekisizwe Ncube do not try me. Did your father tell you to not take my calls? Are you rejoicing with your wife that isn't your wife? Call me back!

Angry is an understatement. I am fuming, what is so hard about texting someone and let them know how you went? He has a lot of explanation to do.

"And why aren't you on your desk?"

I swear to God I'm gonna kill somebody today. I turn my chair around.

Me: Because I am sitting here.

Kelly: Alexis

Me: Yes Kelly how can I help you?

Kelly: I want to know how you got the approval letter to get R30 000 from the firms account to book flights and 5 star hotel in cape town are you shitting me?

Me: Did you just curse Miss Kelly?

Kelly: I asked you a question dammit!

Me: I went to the right people and asked for it.

Kelly: I am the one who issues those. Tell me how did you get yours?

Me: Because I asked it as your toyboy Holk. You just saw your lover's signature, you didn't bother to read you just approved. I wonder how much more money that he wants you've approved. But don't worry I'll get the right people to check how much of the McVeighs money you've chowed.

She gulps.

Me: Now if you don't mind. I'd like to get back into staring out the window.

Kelly: This isn't over.

Me: Ofcourse its not.

I get up and take the report Kate brought. She walks out. I sigh and lock the door. I take a seat on the couch and read.

I take to Will's office afterwards. I find him on the call. I serve him the best smile I have and put the file on his desk and run out before he even tries to stop me and make me engage in a conversation I'm uninterested in.

I pass by the canteen to get sandwiches. I didn't eat last night and this morning. Things that man put us through. After full 4 months of everyday communication, he goes home and then boom he's unreachable.

I find a message notification from him. Finally he remembered I exist. I view it. Its a bit long. I make coffee and settle down on my chair and read it: Good morning Alexis. I know you're mad and I don't blame you. From the first day I laid my eyes on you, I saw the woman I am willing to spend the rest of my life with. Remember when I disappeared after we became close? When I returned I told you I was at home to fix a few things, I was there to tell my mother I am not gonna be chief and for them to promise me that Gugu was my only duty and it was a once off. I wanted to be with you cleanly. I was ready to fight



for us, there is nothing I wouldn't have done for us, even if it meant cutting ties with my parents forever because you taught me to stand up for myself, you made me able to stop the controlling and bullying from them. I am crying

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I am torn, I don't know what to do or say. I have been here in this room staring into a wall hoping someone is going shake me and tell me to wake up I'm having a bad dream. Bonisiwe is a daughter of Danisiwe Ncube, my father's little sister. Bonisiwe and I are cousins and that makes you my niece. Alexis I'm so sorry...

From when I read: I was ready to fight for us. I started crying. I knew it was heading to break up but did not think this would be a reason. I wipe my face and I take my bag and head out...

\*\*\*

BHEKI

Gugu gets in with 2 blazers. She is ready. I don't know how she does this but I need her strength right now. After hours of her

begging me to go out there and address those people, she has made them food and served them drinks.

Gugu: Navy or black?

Me: Navy.

She hands it over. I put it on and take my phone out to check if Lexi has responded. I don't know what kind of response I'm expecting but I'm hoping she says something.

Gugu and I head out to the tree right outside the gate. They all rise when we approach. I greet them and ask Gugu to open with prayer. She makes it short and everybody sits down. I keep standing on my feet, my father's respective chair is the only option and it's against the law the put my butt in it.

Me: Ehh. Good afternoon everyone. I am very sorry to keep you all waiting for so long. As all of you know that my father is ill, things get a bit hectic inside these gates. At this moment we're trusting on the Lord. As the Ncubes we're asking you to please help us pray for his recovery. Things are...

I heard mother's cry. Everybody gets up on their feet. I see guards run into his house. They come out holding black flags,

everybody goes on their knees and bow their heads. He's gone....

\*\*\*

ALEXIS

I have been sitting here for the past 45 minutes and I am losing my patience. Two policemen appear from nowhere.

PM1: Alexis?

Me: Yes?

PM2: Follow us.

I take my bag and follow them until we get into the sick people area. They let me in and point at her. She's alone in this ward. Great.

Me: Can you give us some space?

PM1: We'll be watching you over the window.

I nod. They close the door on their way out.

She smiles.

Me: You make me sick you know that?

Bonisiwe: Then why are you here?

Me: What is your surname?

Bonisiwe: Ow? You wanna ditch your dad's? I'm flattered.

Me: Just say it!

Bonisiwe: My mother never did me justice of letting me know who my father is so I've been a Mathabela, where she married.

Me: What's hers?

Bonisiwe: She's a Ncube but she doesn't like that much. Her people aren't her favourite.

I walk away from her. Its true.

Bonisiwe: What did your daddy do that makes you wanna reunite with me?

Me: My dad did nothing you psychopath! You did! You ruined my life Bonisiwe Ncube.

Bonisiwe: As much as you ruined mine?

Me: I did not tell you to go and date a married man! If you had been a little woman with morals I wouldn't have been

conceived but you brought me here, you gave me away, why couldn't you even have the decency to tell my dad who you really were?

Bonisiwe: Do not judge me Alexis. You yourself had your own little affair with a married man.

Me: How would I have escaped those genes? I have been seeing a man Bonisiwe, A Ncube man.

She chokes on her spit.

Bonisiwe: Are you pregnant?

I might be. This tops the list of worst things that have ever happened to me.

Me: I will never forgive you for this.

Bonisiwe: Sabathile wait!

I run out...

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My alarm goes off at 8am. I turn it off and switch from flight mode and call Kate.

Kate: Please tell me you're on your way.

Me: I'm not coming.

Kate: What!? Will is breathing fire. He wants that R30 000 back Lexi.

Me: Tell him we used it.

Kate: Alexis are you hearing me? I'm saying he wants it back. He doesn't care that we used it. He-wants-it-back!

Me: I'll call him.

Kate: Please do. Thabi please lock the safe.

I hang up and get out of bed. I go to the bathroom first and go to the lounge to call my dad. I punch his numbers and send the call through. It rings.

Marcus: Are you okay?

Me: Yes I'm good. How are you?

He sighs in relief.

Marcus: Ok good. I'm okay. You never use the house phone.

Me: I'm out of airtime. Will is giving me tough time.

Marcus: What has he done now?

Me: Remember Mr Harris?

Marcus: Yes.

Me: He agreed that we interview him but in cape town. I requested R30 000 from the firm account and it was approved, I didn't use my signature. Now that they know that it was me who wanted it there's chaos, Will wants it back.

Marcus: Whose signature did you use?

Me: Some guy in the office. I knew Kelly wouldn't approve if I used mine. Please talk to them.

Marcus: Its illegal to do that Lexi. They have every right to want it back. I will talk to them, don't ever do that again.

Me: I was desperate I'm sorry. Thank you. Please give mom the phone.

Marcus: She's at the pool.

Me: So early? Isn't cold there?

Marcus: Heated pool.

Me: Ohh. When are you coming back?

Marcus: When my bank account runs dry.

We laugh.

Me: That means you are not coming back.

Marcus: We will just not soon.

Me: Okay. Enjoy. I love you.

Marcus: We love you more.

I hang up. I lean my head back on the couch. I take my phone to check time. I get to take a bath...

It is not as packed as I thought. In fact its empty, just 3 people in front of me. My turn to register comes, I register and go back to my seat. I plug in my earphones to pass time.

It rings. Its him. I stare at it until it stops ringing. What are we going to say to each other? I am sitting here in this chair hoping that my emotions do not get better of me I am not going to let him make my day harder than it already is.

I hear a voice like Mvelo's speaking. I turn, our eyes meet.

Mvelo: There she is. Thank you.



I get up to meet her halfway.

Me: What are you doing here? Are you okay?

Mvelo: Can we talk outside please?

She pulls me all the way out.

Mvelo: Like really now?

Me: What?

Mvelo: Not answering your calls, ignoring my texts, your phone off.

Me: Did you also use that crappy app to find me?

Mvelo: What did you want me to do! Why are you here? Are you sick?

Me: No.

I head to the bench and sit. She follows me.

Mvelo: What's wrong babe? She sits and hug me.

Me: Every thing is wrong Mvelo.

I go to messages and view Bheki's message and give her. I wipe my tears quickly when I see people approaching. She gasps.

Mvelo: Please tell he's kidding.

Me: He's not. I went to visit Bonisiwe to find out. Its true, Mvelo I don't know what to do. I'm going through hell, I couldn't sleep

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I-

Mvelo: You think you're pregnant

I bury my head in my hands.

Me: Yes.

Mvelo: Oh my God. This is bad.

"Alexis McVeigh" I raise my head up. It was the secretary.

Her: You're next.

Me: Please come with me.

We head inside. The Dr asks a few questions before he directs me to the bed. He applied the gel and moved the transducer around my abdomen. I can't look at the screen. I am scared and shaking.

Dr: The coast is clear.

Mvelo: Oh thank you Lord.

She squeezes my hand.

Dr: Would you like to do family planning? I can take your blood samples and find out which one is good for you.

Me: No need.

Mvelo: Lexi.

Me: I will come when it's necessary.

Dr: My door is always open. Take care Miss McVeigh.

Me: Thanks Dr.

We walk out.

Mvelo: He's calling.

Me: Please tell him to never call me again.

She does. I drink water and we walk out.

Mvelo: Are you okay?

Me: No. I'm not good. I need just a minute.

I get in my car and hug the steering and cry. Mvelo opens the door after some time.

Mvelo: Move. I'll drive.

Me: I wanna go get my stuff at his place.

Mvelo: Then we'll go.

Me: What about your car?

Mvelo: I texted Khuboni to fetch it. I left the keys with the secretary.

I move to the other side. She hops in and start the car.

Mvelo: Seatbelt on please.

I fasten it and we drive off.

Me: I can't stop crying.

Mvelo: Cry all you want baby. Let it all out You want ice cream?

Me: No.

She turns up the volume and let the air in as she increases the speed...

\*\*\*

Its been 4 days. I wish I could say I'm getting better. I'm worse. Will hasn't made it any better for me. I paid back the money from my own pocket. Arguing with him was not worth my time. We're flying to Cape Town later and I really wish we were on the plane right now. Everything around me in this place reminds me of him. I shouldn't but I miss him so much.

Mvelo and Mike have been the supportive friends that they are but there's only one thing that'll make me feel better: It is seeing him, for the last time. Not say anything but just see him. I have stopped myself from calling him so many times. He really stopped calling and that shattered my poor heart.

My house phone rings. I pick it up.

Me: Alexis.

Voice: Morning ma'am. There is a parcel for you here, are you home?

What? Could I possibly take my house phone away with me anywhere?

Voice: Uhh I'm sorry about that. Can I bring it up?

Me: Ofcourse.

I hang up and put away the bottles of wine. Its not even 10am but I'm already on my 3rd. It helps me deal with my life better. I look at myself on the microwave and go to stand by the lift. It dings open, I take my parcel and sign and bid him goodbye. I go over the counter and open it. It is 3 bottles of wine and a single lily and a note: I know nothing will make it better but this will try.

I feel tears burn my eyes. I take the flower and smell it. It smells of Axe, what could be worse than this. I put it aside and take out the bottle of wine. He bought it last month and hid it away. He said we'll open it the day he propose. Why is he doing this to me?

The lift chimes. I turn to find Mike with a bouquet.

Mike: Morning sunshine. Wine? I'm so thirsty.

He comes to me, kisses my forehead and give me the flowers. I laugh.

Me: Are you shagging someone at a floral shop?

Mike: No. I'm being a gentleman.

Me: Thank you.

Mike: Where are these from? God I've been dying to taste this Becky red wine. It was limited edition and cost an arm and a leg.

Me: Bheki sent them.

Mike: Excuse me?

Me: Yes.

Mike: Wow. Salt in a fresh wound.

Me: Tell me about it. Happy Birthday.

Mike: You remembered. Thank you.

I give him a lazy smile.

Me: We can have an early celebration since I won't be here later. And you can have that Becky red wine as one of your gifts.

Mike: Are you for real?

Me: Yes I am.

He attacks me with a hug.

Mike: come let's cuddle in the couch and drink all the wine in this house.

Me: I need to sleep. I've drank 2 bottles already and I'm just tisbury. Danger

Mike: You really need to sleep. That's not good at all.

He accompany me to my bedroom and help me get in bed.

Mike: I'll go get us the kotas downstairs.

Me: I could do with such.

He smiles and walk out. I close my eyes and all I see is us laughing by the pool challenging each other about eating lemons. We were finally starting to understand each other. We were in love. We were building a stable relationship.

This is all on Bonisiwe. She shouldn't have given me away. I would know my roots, I would've known that Ncube people are my people. I wouldn't have fallen for a man that is my whatever that he is. My life wouldn't be such a confusion if she took responsibility of her actions. I wouldn't be in this bed crying!

Mike: Lexi.



Me: Leave me alone!

I get up.

Me: I'm sorry

Mike: Bheki is here.

I frown.

Mike: I couldn't fight him off the lift I'm sorry.

Me: Let him in.

Mike: Are you sure?

I nod and walk towards the window. I wish my dad had never agreed to introduce me to the real world. I wouldn't have met him. I curse the day I saw that poster of a job vacancy.

He clears his throat and closes the door. I want to turn and look at him but I don't have the power.

Bheki: I just wanted to see you. See if you're okay. From the deep bottom of my heart I'm really sorry baby. I wish there was a way to undo all this. I know its hard, its gonna take time to forget about this but we will be fine. I went to prison yesterday to ask Bonisiwe some questions. Aunty is still alive, after my father's burial you will have to come home so we can perform the cleansing and apologize to the ancestors. I'm moving back

home full time. I am taking the chair, there's no reason for me to run away from it anymore. Once again, I am really sorry. Take care of yourself. I...I love you and you know I do. I don't even know what to do with this love so I'm just gonna keep it here until mercy comes and save me from myself.

I hear the door open and close again. I sob silently. I cover my mouth with my hands as I get louder...

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\*6 months later\*

I swing my chair around. What a good day this is. Pay day has turned to be my favorite day. The notification of the money in just makes me wanna wake up and head straight to the mall not here. The magazine keeps selling like hot pie, we issued our 4th one 2 weeks ago and it didn't last long in the shelves, apparently people are very much interested about what happens in the business world. We've made it even more interesting, we do not only interview them about their business life. We show interest about their lives off the office and tuxedos and they are always happy to share with us.

"Can I come in?" Oh and I have a PA now. Carlos, the sweetest guy ever. He's a professional. I did not know people are passionate for being personal assistants. I do not see myself looking forward to plan someone's day but he does, so beautifully.

Me: Yes please.

He gets in with a paperbag. I sigh. Does this man ever give up?

Carlos: This just arrived.

Me: I couldn't care less honestly. Just toss it away.

Carlos: Are you crazy? There's a note. I'd read it but it's written in Zulu.

Me: Just tear it apart and tell the security to never let that restaurant people in anymore.

Carlos: Ok. Let me eat this in the meantime.

Me: I'm out of here.

I take my bag and my phone and we walk out. He goes to his office and I head to the lift. It parts. Mr and Mrs McVeigh step out and hug me.

Me: Do you have a meeting here?

Marcus: No we're here to eat lunch. It's pay day remember.

Melissa: And we thought you might like to buy us that fried chicken platter.

Marcus: Not forgetting a bottle of wine.

Me: Ok. Here or you wanna pick a different restaurant?

Marcus: Here.

I press the button on the lift and we wait. This couple is living their best life. Newly grandparents. They invade their kids privacy as much as they want and we are letting them because we love them. I used that time they were away to get a place and buy it. I haven't moved in but I will soon when I've informed them. And right now is the good time to inform them.

We find a table at the far end. My colleagues are still scared of him so hiding here will save everyone's day. We order the famous platter and a jug of tropical island juice. Such a mixture of goodness. It literally give me orgasm.

Marcus: We missed you.

Me: Thank you. I missed you too.

I was with them the day before yesterday.

Melissa: And we love you.

Me: Are you giving me up for adoption?

They laugh.

Melissa: My only girl? I would never. We're so proud of you. Everything you've become, we never thought you were capable.

I gasp.

Marcus: Its true. You never wanted to do anything Lexi. So all this you are, so amazing to see.

I chuckle. I am flattered.

Me: I'm just glad you're proud of me.

Melissa: Cheers.

Us: Cheers.

Me: I bought an apartment.

Them: What?

Me: Yeep. When would you like to go see it?

Marcus: When you knock off?

Me: Perfect.

Our food comes. I keep my smile on as I dig in. I do not even want to entertain the look on their faces...

...

Finally the day ends. I have no plans except taking the parents to the apartment. The complex is newly built so I'm hopping

that will be enough to keep their mouths shut. Security is in check, not my kind of security but enough to satisfy them. I go to Thabi and Kate to tell them I'm leaving and then back to Carlos.

Me: What are we doing first thing tomorrow?

Carlos: We're driving to Sandton city to meet Nonhlanhla Khumalo. The owner of Lucky day hair salon.

Me: Lovely. Thank you. Don't be late.

Carlos: Excuse you?

I laugh. He's never late.

Me: I will not be late.

Carlos: Ofcourse you will not because I worked so hard to get her time.

Me: Lock up.

Carlos: I will.

I walk away.

My phone rings as I arrive at the complex. I park and answer.

Me: Hey stranger.

Jake: I miss you.

Me: I miss you too.

Jake: I have wine, movies and lasagne that my mother just brought here. I can't eat it alone.

I snort.

Me: I will come.

Jake: Awesome. Let me go and finish off my work. Call when I have to fetch you.

Me: I will do. See you later.

Jake: Bye.

In the midst of grieving my deceased relationship. I dedicated myself to work. I worked harder than before, I hunted down every business man in town

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Jake being one of them. A week after our interview, he brought me flowers. We started going out, of which was good for my heartbreak. I couldn't bear staying at home and think about Bheki. After the cleansing I changed my numbers. So this man took care of me for 3 months before we started dating. He's



been patient, sweet and loving. I wouldn't say I love him but we have a good thing going on.

I call the parents. They say they are in the reception. I go there and fetch them.

Marcus: So 2 people per block?

Me: No 4.

Melissa: It is beautiful. Good choice.

Marcus: Honey you can't say such things before we see the actual apartment.

Me: It is new dad.

He shrugs his shoulders.

Marcus: Just saying.

I punch the main code at the block burglar gate and we take the stairs up.

Marcus: Why did you choose an upper one?

Me: It was available.

Marcus: Mhhh

He's so disapproving of everything!

We reach my door and I unlock. Mom gasps.

Melissa: This is so beautiful baby.

Me: Thank you.

Marcus McVeigh is nowhere in sight. Mom and I explore the kitchen, not too big nor too small. There's already a counter with built in stove and a tiny round sink. The cabinets are also ready.

Melissa: When are you moving in?

Me: After we put in furniture.

Melissa: We?

Me: You and I.

She laughs.

Melissa: I thought there was a man.

Me: No ma there isn't. Lets go to the bedrooms. The ensuite is so beautiful.

Melissa: They always are.

Its quite spacious. We find dad in there.

Marcus: Its so big. We should build you a walk in closet.

Me: I was thinking of that.

Marcus: You will let us help you decorate?

Me: Yes.

The look on their faces is so priceless. My phone rings.

Me: I need to take this.

I leave them discussing the wall color.

Me: Hey baby.

Mvelo: Love. How are you?

Me: I'm good how are you?

Mvelo: I am good and just saw the news.

Me: She's getting released, isn't she?

Mvelo: She is

Me: So much for justice.

Mvelo: I know right. When are you moving to the new hive?

Me: I'm thinking next month. I am here with the parents.

Mvelo: What did they say?

Me: I did not give them a chance of saying anything. Mom loves it and I think dad does too but he's just him.

We laugh.

Mvelo: He's very hard. Let me go finish up cooking. Nguquko and his wife are here.

Me: Send my love.

Mvelo: I will babe. I'll call you later.

Me: Okay.

I hang up. Bonisiwe has been trying to contact me over the months. I can not find it in my heart to forgive her. Hearing that she's getting out is what I did not want to hear at all. She mysteriously became better after the cleansing. I also met her mother there, we got along just fine even before we were introduced to each other. We call each other sometimes.

A message comes in: Your mother is coming out of jail and She's getting divorced.

Its from her. I sigh and respond: I just heard. That's a pity.

Their relationship isn't quite rosy. Bonisiwe is bad on everyone's book.

I go back to the parents and tell them its time to leave.

We part ways on the freeway. I drive to my place first. I bath and pack my sleepwear and an outfit for tomorrow. I call Jake that I'm ready and wait.

After 30 minutes the car arrives. We leave...

It takes another 30 minutes to arrive at his place. I change into my pyjamas as he warms up the lasagne. I come back and find him dishing up. He has this weird thing of loving dim lights and light up two candles. It is romantic if it is done once in a while not this. Jake: How was work?

Me: Work was fine. How was yours?

Jake: Busy and annoying. My partner's wife is pregnant so I'm taking care of everything.

Me: He'll return the favor some day.

Jake: When you're pregnant I'll hire someone to help him out.

When I'm pregnant? I clear my throat.

Me: That's thoughtful. Tell him you need someone to help you out.

Jake: He won't budge. Do you mind meeting my mother?

I chuckle nervously. My phone rings, saving me.

Me: Excuse me.

I take it, I do not recognize these numbers. I answer.

Me: Hello

Voice: Please don't hang up. I sigh.

Me: How can I help you?

Bonisiwe: I need a place to stay. Just for a few days Alexis. I know this is too much to ask but I have no one.

She sounds so desperate and like she's crying. I feel nothing for her.

Bonisiwe: Lexi? I know I wronged you but I will not be let out unless they know where I'm going. My accounts are frozen and my husband sold his house.

Me: I'll book you a hotel.

Bonisiwe: No no no. I need a home, they'll need you to sign an agreement that I will be under your supervision. I know I don't deserve that but I am begging you.

I move the phone off the ear and let out a trembling breath. I am not like her, I consider other people. I put the phone back on.

Me: Do I need to come to the prison or they'll come with you?

I hear her sigh in relief. Bonisiwe: You need to come here.

Thank-

I hang up. And get off the chair.

Jake: Are you okay?

He runs after me.

Me: I'm okay! I need some time alone.

I shut the bedroom door on his face...

36

After my meeting with Nonhlanhla Khumalo Jake's driver drives to my parent's house. Arriving there I find them swimming. 10o'clock in the morning my parents are in a pool.

Me: Really you guys?

Melissa: Its part of exercising.

Me: I see.

They come out. Atleast they still care about my existence.

Marcus: Shouldn't you be at work?

Me: I should be but I was on an interview so I passed by here cause there's something I'd like us to discuss.

Melissa: Sounds serious. Come, have you eaten?

Me: Yes but if you gonna offer me food yes please.

She laughs. She's genuinely happy. My dad sure knows how to make it up to his woman. I bet she still remembers he cheated on her with that ostrich Kelly. We get to the kitchen, she take out scones and orange juice, perfect. We sit around the counter.



Melissa: Stop flipping your hair.

Marcus: Its too wet.

Melissa: A towel is on the chair behind you.

Marcus: Sorry we didn't see it.

She rolls her eyes.

Melissa: What did you want to talk about?

Me: Bonisiwe. She's getting released.

Melissa: What?

Dad clears his throat.

Us: You knew?

Marcus: Yes. I didn't wanna ruin your moods.

Me: Well she called me last night. She asked me for a place to stay.

Marcus: She's a nuthead.

Mom eyes him and then turn to me.

Melissa: What did you say?

Me: I agreed but I am here to make sure if you guys are cool with that since we'll be at the penthouse.

Marcus: The one that I bought? I am hoping you're not talking about it. Why would you even agree? This woman almost ruined your life beyond repair Alexis! Where's her fellow crook husband?

Me: She's getting divorced. Her accounts are frozen.

Marcus: Good riddance to bad rubbish.

Melissa: Marcus! Are you sure about agreeing?

Me: I don't know. I am doing what feels right at this moment.

Marcus: Feels right? Are you on drugs?

Me: Dad please. If you disagree just say so stop shouting.

Marcus: I am disagreeing.

Me: Mom?

Melissa: I am saying let's get her a flat to stay at. She's in need and we can afford to help her.

Marcus: It's not only the daughter under the influence of a dangerous substance but her mother too. Why are we bringing her into our lives?

Melissa: You brought her first. At least Alexis had the decency to let us know.

Ouch. He tries to speak but stops and folds his arms.

Melissa: We'll look for a flat for her while she stays in the penthouse and you can come here if you'll be uncomfortable to be around her.

Me: Thank you.

Marcus: I hope nobody comes to me when she brings you both trouble.

He gets off the chair and leaves.

Melissa: Don't mind him. Did she say when she's coming out?

Me: Apparently there's some paperwork involved. I have to sign as her new guardian.

Melissa: Ok. Let's pray she doesn't make us regret this.

Me: Are you sure you wanna get involved? No pressure. I can handle it all by myself.

Melissa: Yes I am sure. Your father has money enough to rent her a flat in Sandton city.

I nod and we continue eating in silence....

The first thing I see when get to the office is Kelly's face. Why is Precious not at her desk?

Me: Good day.

Kelly: Hi. I'm looking for a stapler, mine broke and I can't find Precious's.

Me: Maybe she-

Precious: Miss Alexis, Miss Kelly.

Kelly: Hiii! I'm looking for a stapler.

Kelly: Its next to the pc

Kelly: Ohh. I must get my eyes checked.

She smiles and goes away. I look at Precious.

Precious: She was here to look for the file that Will told me to mail. I think there's trouble in paradise.

Me: Tough luck.

Precious: I was at your office to deliver your parcel.

Me: From?

Precious: Secret admirer. I wish a had someone so constant. 4 months, everyday there's a parcel.

Me: You can have those parcels cause I really do not want them.

Precious: Are you for real?

Me: Yes.

I clock in and head to the lift.

I greet Carlos and go on. I find a bunch of lollies. These are definitely not from Nqaba. I pull the card, its from Jake. I smile and pick them up to smell. I take them to my tiny table next to the window. These aren't going home.

I feel hot. I unbutton the blouse and turn on the air-con. I sit down. I call Carlos in. He rush in.

Carlos: What's wrong?

Me: Water please.

He gets it from the fridge. I drink up.

Me: I need to see a Dr. My car keys are on the bag.

Carlos: Shouldn't we call an ambulance?

Me: No. Please drive me to my Dr.

I put his address on the gps. He holds my bag and take my hand. I try to remain as strong as possible until we get to the car. My phone rings. I decline the call. I feel my breath running short.

Me: Carlos...speed up.

Carlos: Hold in there. Drink water please.

We get there. The last thing I remember is him getting me out of the car...

...

"Alexis!" I startle and cough.

"Don't move you going to hurt yourself" I look around. I'm the hospital. I can't really see the face of the man in a white coat. I have an oxygen mask on. He turns and put the file on the table. He adjusts the bed. I remove the mask. He stares at me with his brows raised. I look away to the window.

The sun that is penetrating the window is the morning sun. This means I've been out for more than 10 hours.

Nqaba: Sawbona.

Me: Hi

Nqaba: Do you know where you are?

Me: Hospital.

Nqaba: You're at the surgery. The place is extended . We admit some patients.

Me: What? Where's my friend?

Nqaba: Who? Anzuri? He sold the place.

Me: And you work for the new owner?

He smirks and clip his pen on his coat.

Nqaba: Too zulu to be a Dr and an owner?

Me: I need to get to work.

Nqaba: I'm afraid you can't. I still need to keep you here at least until tomorrow. You had an anxiety attack. I will need you to take atleast 2 weeks off work.

Me: No.

Nqaba: I'll be back after 30 minutes. A nurse will come take you to the bathroom.

He walks out. I search for my bag. It is nowhere to be found. A door opens. A nurse walks in. She serves me a beautiful smile.

Nurse: Morning. How are you feeling?

Me: Very much better.

Nurse: Ok let me take these off. Its gonna hurt a little.

She takes my hand and removed the needle passing the drip in. I flinch.

Nurse: Done. Now we gonna walk to the bathroom. No dizziness right?

Me: No.

Nurse: Great. Let's go. Your mom brought you your sleepwear.

Me: My parents know I'm here?

Nurse: Yes. They spent the night here. Dr Zungu came this morning and asked them to go home.

I nod and we walk to the bathroom. All my bathing material is here. This feels like the time Bonisiwe kidnapped me. I felt my chest getting tight

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I hold on to the wall and run out. I bump into Nqaba on the passage. He tries to hold me but I escape from his grip, he runs after me shouting my name. The passage seems endless. I panic even further. I am crying now. He grabs my arm.

Nqaba: Wait! Jesus you gonna hurt yourself.

Me: Let go of me!

I fight him off. His grip tightens.

Me: I wanna go home! I wanna see if I am really at Anzuri's.

Nqaba: Alexis.

Me: Let me go please, I promise I will not say a word to anyone. I'll- I'll just pretend this, this never happened.

He frowns and let go of my arm.

Nqaba: I wouldn't hurt you. I'm sorry. We can go out.

He leads the way and turn to the right. The corridor leads us to the front. There are other patients falling the line. I stop.

Me: Can I please have my phone?

He turns.

Nqaba: Its on the cabinet in your ward. Can I take you back?

Me: Please.

Nqaba: Naledi I'll be back.

A girl pops her head out from under the reception desk.

Naledi: Ok.

This place is nothing like it was 6 months ago when I came here. How sick is Anzuri? Why couldn't he let me know he's moving and now this surgery has my secret admirer working on it.

Nurse: I was scared you didn't get the bathroom right.

Nqaba: Please give her, her phone and then go be with her in the bathroom.

I force a smile and walk into the ward. I take my phone and switch it on. Missed calls notifications come in flooding, most from Jake. I call him. He must be sick worried about me.

It rings unanswered. I hang up and go to WhatsApp to text him. I find tons of messages from him telling me to throw away flowers that just came into my office. I call him back again, it rings unanswered. I hear noise from the passage.

That's his voice. I run to open the door. He beats me into it. He throws the blazer down and hugs me for dear life.

Jake: I thought I had lost you. I'm sorry I got that tip off late.

I break the hug.

Me: What is going on? Are they the reason I'm sick?

Jake: I can explain baby just not now.

Me: Are you kidding me? Explain!

Nqaba and security guards are standing on the door looking at us.

Jake: Not in front of people.

Me: Can you give us some space?

Nqaba: they'll be outside.

I nod. They walk out. I get back to Jake.

Me: So?

Jake: My ex girlfriend sent those.

Me: excuse me?

Jake: Yes.

Me: How did you know?

Jake: Because she came to my office to tell me to take her back because you're dead.

Me: How did she even know who am I and where I work? Let alone my favorite flowers!

Jake: She hacked into my phone in the morning I think because I found her waiting for me at my work place in the morning.

I move away from him.

Jake: I'm sorry

Me: I need to be alone. Jake: Babe...

Me: I mean it! Jake. Please. Jake: I love you.

He picks his blazer up and walk out. I sit on the bed and run my hands on my hair.

My phone rings. I check who it is. Its Bonisiwe, not now please.

I switch it off and go to take a shower...

37

My parents came to see me. Mom and her drama, she was crying like I am dead. I asked them to bring me my laptop so that I can work from here. I am not looking forward to the next slot of visiting hours. Everyone knows I'm here, I've been receiving flowers. I wish everyone can just send flowers and not show up here.

Finally its 2pm. Only few hours left until the night, I will sleep and wake up tomorrow and leave. I put my laptop aside and lay down. Jake and I aren't speaking, he refused to tell me the name of his ex. I want to lay charges against her. She must know I'm not a toy to poison.

I head the door open. I open my eyes my dad and Nomvelo walk in. I get up and hugs her.

Me: What are doing here?

Mvelo: To see you. Did you think you can hide that you're sick?

Me: Nqaba told you.

Mvelo: Ofcourse he did.

Dad waves at me. I laugh.

Me: Dad I see you everyday.

Marcus: You weren't this happy when I came back from Tanzania. Worst of all right now I have food.

Me: I was happy and thank you for the food. Where is mom?

Marcus: At home making you more healthy food.

Me: This is healthy food?

Marcus: Yes but I bought you chicken fillet to make it worth your while.

We laugh.

Me: I won't be here to rescue you when mom finds out.

I turn to Mvelo. I hug her again.

Mvelo: I missed you so much.

Me: Me too. Nduna allowed you to come?

Mvelo: So easy. He's here but with Nqaba.

Me: Wow am I gonna die?

She laughs.

Mvelo: Maybe.

The door opens again. Nqaba walks in with papers on his hand. He's not wearing his coat now. Who wears a formal shirt, a tie, Brentwood and carvela?

Nqaba: Your blood results are back miss McVeigh. Can you give us some space?

Me: Its okay you can say it in front of them.

He looks at Mvelo then at my dad.

Nqaba: You were exposed to poison, Matel very fatal and you were lucky your body reacted fast to it.

Marcus: What? Where? Where did you go yesterday?

Me: Sandton

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home, restaurant and then work.

Mvelo: Is there someone at work you're not in good terms with?

Me: No. I must've been exposed to it at that restaurant.

Nqaba: Did you sniff anything?

Me: Yes a flower.

Marcus: What's the name? I'll sue them of every cent they have.

He's turning red and that's not good.

Me: Dad I found a flower on top of a table while I waited for my order. The restaurant had nothing to do with it.

He puts down the paperbag and leaves the room. I look at Nqaba. He's staring at me. Mvelo clears her throat.

Mvelo: Does she need to get more medical attention or?

Nqaba: Yes. I'll transfer to a hospital to make sure she's really okay.

Mvelo: When.

Nqaba: Now.

He takes my file and writes.

Nqaba: You can take her file to the reception to get a stamp then she'll be ready when you get back.

She takes it and leaves. I reach for my bag and take out my clothes. He's still standing here.

Me: Can I dress up?



Nqaba: No need to be rude. How are you feeling?

Me: Okay. I feel very fine.

Nqaba: Ok. Our private car will take you there.

Me: Thanks.

He tries to speak.

Me: No.

He walks out. I slide into my jeans and a tee. I keep the slippers. Mvelo comes back and we leave. She leaves with me, Nduna follows us behind.

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Its been a week. I want nothing to do with this staying at home nonsense. Mvelo left 3 days ago when she was satisfied that I'm okay now. My dad went as far as hiring bodyguards for me cause apperantly I can't be trusted.

I am happy that today I get to go out. I hate where I'm going but it means going out so I'm going. Jake offered to take me there, I should've been gone an hour ago but I'm still here waiting for him. He promised to take me to the police station to

lay charges when I've "completely healed". I am holding him into that.

My phone beeps. Its Kate. I grant her access. I call Jake in the meantime.

Jake: My love I'm so sorry things got a bit extreme at work. I had to take care of it.

Me: So you aren't coming?

Jake: I am but later.

Me: Ok I'll just go on my own I'll see you later.

Jake: I'm sorry okay?

Me: Its okay.

I hang up. Its not okay!

This is the 2nd times he's stood me up.

Kate comes out of the lift.

Me: Is that a MacDonald interview?

Kate: Yes. I came to collect your signature.

Me: What happened to electronics?

.Kate: I just needed an excuse to get out of the office! Will is not in the mood today and you know how he gets.

Me: God he deserves a PhD for being an asshole. I'm sorry.

Kate: No problem baby.

Me: Have you eaten? I have a lot of junk food in here that I don't eat anymore. Mommy's orders.

Kate: Let me help myself.

Me: I am leaving. Going to the Dr.

Kate: I'll see you when you come back to work.

Me: Cheers.

I take my phone and my bag and off I go. I inform the guards that I wanna go to the Dr, they drive me there. The perks of being the only girl.

I should've brought Kate with me. I do not want to be in the same space as Nqaba.

I register and go in when my turn comes. I greet him and sit down. He smiles.

Nqaba: Hi. You look fresh.

Me: I feel fresh. I hope I will go home with a letter granting me to go back to work.

Nqaba: Ofcourse. Let's start by checking your vitals. Please get on the bed and take off the jacket.

I do as per instruction. He comes and checks me up. I am back in a chair after 10 minutes. He's jotting down what I'm assuming is my letter to go back to work.

He gives me back my file.

Nqaba: No more medication. Please finish off the remaining one at home and all shall be good. And this is your letter.

Me: Thank you.

I take it and get up and head to the door. I startle as he shuts the door close after I open it.

Me: What are you doing?

Nqaba: We need to talk.

Me: Talk.

Nqaba: How long are you gonna do this?

Me: Do what?

Nqaba: That is not who I am. I was raised to respect women. I have tried everything to show you how much I care and really love you but all you do is shut me out.

Me: Can you move off the door please?

Nqaba: No. I will move off after you tell me you didn't feel what felt when we had sex.

Me: It was mistake!

Nqaba: mistakes happen once or twice, more than that it is no longer a mistake. You know exactly what you're doing.

Me: I'm done talking. Move!

Nqaba: I know you feel something for me but you're scared to let yourself feel it. What are you afraid of?

He steps closer. There's no gap between us, his cologne is rushing through my veins down to my heart making it beat faster. I'm staring at his chest. He's tall. Basket ball player tall or I'm just a midget.

Nqaba: Why won't you let yourself feel?

Me: I don't want to feel Nqaba. And I want you to stop trying so hard to make me feel. Nqaba: I can't. I've tried. I can't.

Silence. Nqaba: Jake. Do you feel for him?

I find myself shaking my head.

Nqaba: Do you feel this when he touches you?

He runs his finger on my collar bone, I take a deep trembling breath and shake my head. I'm literally under hypnosis. I hate this much power he has over my emotions. This is why I do not want to be close to him!

Nqaba: Then why are you with him!

Did he just shout at me? He moves off the door and walk to his desk. Nqaba: Answer me Sabathile.

He says calmly.

Me: Do not call me that and I'm done with this conversation. Don't ever send anything to my office ever again.

He turns. Nqaba: Is that what you really want?

Me: Yes. That's what I really want. Nqaba: Ok.

I open the door and walk out and do not even look back...

38

A knock comes through. Can people stay the hell away from my office!

Me: Come in!

I stop typing on my laptop. Its Will, he peeps his head in.

Will: Are you still okay?

Me: Yes I'm good.

Will: If you feel any bit of being unwell, just call my office.

Me: I will.

He smiles and closes the door. I get back into typing an email to businessmen. Another knock, I have endured enough knocks for the day. I feel unwell right now.

Me: Get in.

Carlos: Someone is here for you.

Me: Who?

Carlos: A male

My heart skips a bit. I get up and head out.

Its Jake. My pace slows down when our eyes meet. A part of me is disappointed its him. He's the last person I expected to come here.

Me: Let's go in. Carlos don't allow anyone in.

Carlos: Yes ma'am.

I turn on my heels to face him.

Me: What are you doing here?

Jake: You aren't talking my calls.

Me: Didn't that send a message that I don't wanna talk?

Jake: Why do you not want to talk?

Me: You chose last night. And now I have nothing to talk to you about. I will hunt that bitch down myself now that I have her face.

Jake: Last night? I chose what?

Me: Your fate. You denied to give me a name when we had lunch, on Friday you couldn't take me to the Dr because what? You were busy at work? Well I didn't know she's work and then last night you went to her house and fucked her again!



Jake: Babe I-

Me: Shut up!!! Just shut the hell up Jake.

I take my phone and show him his pornography. He blinks rapidly and wipes his mouth. I fold my arms and walk to the window.

Jake: I can explain.

Me: Explain.

Jake: She must've drugged me. I broke up with Messi 8 months ago because I didn't love her anymore. Suddenly when I'm with her I lose control and then want nothing to do with her the next day. She drugs me.

I turn again.

Me: I couldn't care less Jake. We're done.

Jake: Alexis.

Me: Either you leave on your freewill or I'll have security drag you out.

He press his lips together and walk out. Sobs escape my mouth, I cover myself with my hand...

...

I drove to my parent's house after work yesterday. I spent the night there. I couldn't be on my own and I couldn't have asked Mike to come keep me company because Tasha is pregnant and requires massive attention.

This morning I drove to Suncity after checking in if Bonisiwe has been released or not. She stopped calling, I guess she gave up.

I am sent to the prosecutors office to state my business. He sends me to another lady where I signed the papers as Bonisiwe's official guardian for the next 6 months. I am trusting my gut with this decision I hope I do not regret it.

Lady: And we're done. I'll get you a warden to take her out. You may wait for her outside.

Me: Thank you.

I pick my bag up and walk out.

I sit by the benches outside, a guard comes to me

Him: Good day nkosazana. Are you waiting for someone?

Me: Yes.

Him: Being released?

Me: Yes.

Him: They use a separate gate. You can go wait in your car.

Me: Oh thank you.

Him: You're welcome.

I smile and get and head towards the gate. Its quite a distance. By the time I get to my car, I am sweating and very tired. I open the door and get in. I adjust my seat down and chat to Mvelo. I should be visiting them soon but now I am a mother-sitter so I can't. Their house is beautiful and big, they hosted a house warming, invited all their friends, we all fit. Nqaba and I were the only singles, that's where this madness began, with just lamb curry that I kept asking him to cook. It started as the final tool to get over my heartbreak but I found myself wanting more and more and developing powerful feelings in a week, he's as shady as Bheki, no mention of family or past. Just focusing on the present. I detached myself before I went in too deep, it was easy because I didn't get to see him at all. I never even told Mvelo about it because I was prepared to put it all

behind me. Seeing him that day and again on Friday, he's been stuck on my mind like a tattoo. I wish what I feel for him is what I feel for Jake. Although he comes with an crazy ex but its something fixable, how do you fix a shady Zulu man that probably has a wife that wears a cape stashed somewhere in the bundus?

I call Carlos. He's been quiet.

Carlos: Miss McVeigh's office

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Carlos speaking how may I help you?

Me: Its me. How's everything going there?

Carlos: Smoothly. I've attended all your meetings, Will is nice today, Jake has called numerous times.

Me: Great. No parcel again?

Carlos: No.

Me: Can you send the cards to my address?

Carlos: Excuse me?

Me: You heard me Carlos. You kept them safe right?

Carlos: Ofcourse. Although I can't read most of them but they looked romantic to throw away.

A bell rings loudly. I look out the window. I see the gate opening. My heart beats faster.

Carlos: What was that? Where are you?

I swallow, my mouth is suddenly dry. My palms are sweaty.

Me: I'll call you back after a minute.

I adjust my seat back up. I reach for a bottle of water and drink. I take a deep breath and get out. She's heading to my car. Its the only car here anyway so she figured its me.

I am shaking my leg to ease up the anxiety I'm currently facing. Why is she taking too long to reach me?

Finally! I open the backseat door for her. She gets in. I close and get in too and drive off. I should've asked those big men to drive me. This is gonna be a long drive.

...

Me: This is where we live.

I say when we approach the lift. We get in. I changed the access to use fingerprints for safety purposes.

We get to the penthouse. We step out. I'm now calmer.

Me: Hey guys.

Them: Hey.

Me: This is Lungani and Steven, your bodyguards, this is Martha, your help. Guys this is Bonisiwe.

They exchange greetings. We head on to the bedroom.

Me: Your bedroom. Tomorrow morning I'll go shopping, write down your sizes and your style. That on top of the bed is your cellphone that you should never switch off. You can take a bath, there are fresh pyjamas in the closet, the bathroom in the door opposite. You'll find everything in there. I'm leaving, I am going to my parent's house. I'll be back later.

I head to the door.

Bonisiwe: Alexis.

I stop but don't turn.

Bonisiwe: I know this isn't easy. Thank you.

Me: Don't make me regret it.

Bonisiwe: I won't.

Me: I'll see you later.

I leave.

...

I am crying on my way home. I am going through emotions right now. I don't know whether I'm stupid or a good person. She almost ruined my life for Christ's sake! Why am I helping her? The voice at the back of my head keeps saying she's my mother, yes she is but does she see me as her daughter? All those mean things she said to me are still echoing in my head. .

I make a u-turn and drive to McDonald's and then to Mike's work place. I need to be with someone I'm gonna laugh with. My dad would make the matter worse if he sees me crying.

He welcomes me with a warm hug.

Me: You smell differently nice.

Mike: Uhh thank you. It was a gift from my colleague.

Me: Female?

Mike: Gay. Is this Mcfeast?

Me: Yes. Gay?

Mike: Yes. How's Jake?

Me: He's good. We broke up though.

Mike: What? Why? I thought y'all had something good going on.

Me: We did but I just didn't feel us.

Mike: You need to get over Bheki. Really you need to.

Me: How many times should I tell you I'm over that man. It disgusts me to even think our skins touched.

Mike: Then why don't you feel Jake? He's a good or so you've said.

Me: He is but not my good guy.

Mike: Give yourself time this time around. Date someone you love.

Me: I'll try. How's Tasha?



Mike: Pregnant and annoying and dramatic as hell I just want her to give birth already.

I laugh.

Me: Just 3 months left.

He shakes his head and devour his burger.

...

I get to my place around 10pm. Steven and Lungani go home. I pour myself a glass of wine and head to my bedroom. I take a bath first. I take my laptop and get in bed.

"Ahhh! Stop! Please stop! Somebody help me!"

I jump out of bed and run to her room. She's still screaming. I turn on the lights, her hands are on her neck, she's sweating. I am scared to get close but she's struggling.

Me: Bonisiwe! Wake up!

She doesn't hear me. I get closer and shake her hard enough to jump up on her feet, scaring me even more. She's panting, tears

are rolling down her cheeks, she's rubbing her neck with her left hand.

Bonisiwe: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to wake you, I usually sleep with the lights on.

Me: I wasn't asleep. Drink some water, leave the lights on.

Bonisiwe: Thank you.

I walk out. I throw myself on the bed, I've got a bigger problem than I thought...

I get ready for work. By his mercy I was able to hear my alarm. I could barely sleep, Bonisiwe kept having her nightmares. Today I plan on finding her a good therapist after I inform my parents that I fetched her. I can not deal with that I dealt with, I am sleepy as it is. I need bioplus, play, mofaya, reboost and everything else that will keep me awake and energetic. I hear a knock.

Me: I'm coming.

I pick up my hand bag and laptop's and head out.

Me: Lungani, morning.

Lungani: Mrs McVeigh is here.

Me: Oh thanks.

I emerge from the passage. Bonisiwe is busy on the kitchen area. Martha is sitting down, what is going on here?

Me: Morning.

Them: Morning.

Melissa: Can we talk?

Me: I'm on my way to work, we can talk over a cup of coffee in the coffee shop downstairs.

Melissa: Let's go then.

Me: Martha...

Martha: She insisted.

Bonisiwe: I can cook for myself.

Me: I know but I hired her.

Bonisiwe: I just needed something to do. Don't you have a garden?

Me: No. Guys, call me shall there be any problems.

We take the lift. We get to the coffee shop, we order and take a seat. I glance at my watch, still have little time.

Me: I was gonna come home after work to let you know.

Melissa: I'm not here about that. Are you okay?

Me: I'm good. How's yourself?

Melissa: I'm good. Someone named Jake called the house yesterday.

I swallow spit.

Me: What did he say he wants?

Melissa: Your hand in marriage. Are you seeing him?

I sure know how to pick them. I take a sip of my coffee.

Me: I was. We broke up.

Melissa: Whew thank God. He's Philip's son.

Me: Oh my God.

Melissa: Your dad couldn't even sleep.

Philip was once hired to assassinate my father years ago. He almost lost his life, Philip has been jailed ever since.

Me: I'll call him later. What did you say to Jake then?

Melissa: We told him to return with you if he wanna discuss such things.

Me: He's really out of his mind. I'll call him.

Melissa: How is she?

Me: Who? Bonisiwe?

She nods.

Me: I really don't know. She has a problem with sleeping.

Melissa: She should see someone.

Me: Yeah. I'll look for available therapists today.

Melissa: Ok baby. I'm proud of you.

She squeezes my hand. I smile.

Melissa: Go to work, I'll go back upstairs to talk to her.

Me: Ok. I love you.

Melissa: I love you more. Have a good day at work. Don't let Will ruin your day.

I laugh.

Me: He's nice these days.

I get up and leave.

...

I'm 5 minutes late. I clock in and greet Precious. I pray all the way to my office that I do not bump into Will.

I take a deep breath when I get to my office.

Carlos: He was here 3 minutes ago.

Me: Is he sour?

Carlos: Nope he came to congratulate you and your team for sealing the Liberty deal.

Me: what!

Carlos: Learn to read your emails.

Me: I had a really productive day yesterday I didn't get time to go through my emails. Whose flowers are these?

Carlos: Oh yours. They came with this.

He takes out a paperbag from his side.

Me: Who are they from?

Carlos: Mr and Mrs Ncube.

I frown. I take the paperbag.

Me: You can keep the flowers. Don't sniff them, just in case.

Carlos: Thank you. Did you get the cards?

Me: No.

Carlos: Great. Here they are, I forgot to send them.

Me: You're so fired.

Carlos: Espresso?

Me: Yes please.

Carlos: You're the best boss ever!

Me: You're still fired!

I close the door. I toss my bags over the couch and go for what's inside the paperbag. I come back with a card.

Mr and Mrs Ncube would like for you to join them on their special day, celebrating love....

I put it down and reach for...camera? Oh instax, nice. There's a lot of cards here that I'm not gonna read. My phone rings, it gogo.

Me: Old lady.

Granny: Hey ntombi yam. I just received an invitation.

Me: Me too.

Granny: Are we attending?

Me: I am thinking of it.

Granny: You don't have to if you don't want.

Me: I want to.

Granny: Okay ke my love I'll see you then. Call me.

I chuckle.



Me: I will, I promise. Let me get to work.

Granny: have a nice day baby.

Me: Oh I fetched Bonisiwe.

Granny: What! Are you out of your mind?

Me: No. It just felt right to do.

Granny: Oh dear child Bonisiwe has problems remaining good.

Me: I'll take my risks.

Granny: Shall she do something, do not hesitate to call the police.

Me: I will. Bye bye.

Granny: Bye...taking that rotten girl in. Dear Lord protect my grandchild from that wicked woman.

I chuckle and hangs up. So they are getting married for real now. She's jumped from being his brother's wife to officially his. I receive a text

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from Mvelo. She's telling me about an invitation. This is gonna be fun then.

Carlos comes in with my espresso and cards from Nqaba's gifts.

Carlos: We don't have a busy day today.

Me: Just what I need. Get us lunch from Kiki's today.

Carlos: And people wonder why am I always happy to go to work.

He squirms and run out. I take a seat and start reading the cards.

I hear laughter from outside. Will's face show up in my door.

Will: Hey sis. I thought we should celebrate.

Sis?

Me: Now?

Will: Yes. Or are you busy?

Me: Absolutely not. Geez is there alcohol?

Will: Sparkling wine.

Me: Bring it in!

Kate and Thabi come in each holding a bottle of sparkling wine and glasses. I laugh.

Me: Just the four of us?

Will: Carlos is fetching the snacks.

Me: Kelly is gonna fire us.

Kate: Honey we no longer have a Kelly in this company.

Me: What?

Will: You've been gone for so long Lexi. She's fired and arrested for stealing millions from this company.

Me: Told you she ain't no good.

Will: And I looked into her closet. I found the skeletons.

Thabi handed us glasses.

Will: To the best Team in this entire company.

Us: To us.

We raise our glasses and drink up.

Me: I can feel the good aura of Kelly's absence kicking in.

Will: And...

He holds Kate's hand, Kate smiles shyly.

Will: Babe.

I choke on wine. Somebody please dial 911!

Will: Somebody please get her some water.

Me: I do not need water. I need to know for how long!

Kate: 5 months?

Me: You're cheating on your wife?

Will: I was 2 months then I divorced her.

Me: You need help Will.

Will: I got one. Right here beside me. We're getting married.

She waves her hand in the air. Thabi is paralyzed on the couch.

Me: I'm not coming.

Will: Lexi.

Me: I'll send you a 6 set of mugs.

Whew I take a seat.

Me: Congratulations by the way. Where's Carlos and snacks.

Kate: When you're done digesting come congratulate me.

Will: We'll be at my office in the meantime, kissing.

They laugh and take one bottle of wine and leaves. I look at Thabi.

Thabi: Pinch me.

Me: She brings out the best in him. I've never seen him so happy and so free. Will doesn't kid around, ever!

Thabi: Work is gonba be so impressive these days.

Me: Girl do not mention it. Bheki is getting married.

Thabi: You'd be too if you don't ignore Nqaba.

Me: I am scared. I can't really throw myself at him, I need to atleast do some back ground check on him.

Thabi: What is Mvelo saying?

Me: She doesn't know him that well that's the thing! Nqaba is a sealed bottle from 1860.

Thabi: Then fucking break it!

Me: I can't. Enough about him.

Thabi: I suggest you speak to him, just hear him out.

Me: No. I just broke up with Jake. I need a break.

She puts her hands up and get up.

Thabi: See who our first interviewee is so we can get to work.

Me: Now that's what I need to do.

She winks and walk out. I turn on my pc. She comes back running.

Thabi: He's here!

Me: Who?

Thabi: Bheki.

Me: What? Tell him I'm not here.

She walks out and comes back in.

Thabi: Too late.

She closes the door. I'm so not in the mood for his face but I smile anyway when he gets in followed by Gugu pushing a stroller. She is different from the woman I saw months ago. She's a modern beautiful woman.

I give them a warm welcome and offer them a seat. I call Carlos to bring in something to drink.

Bheki: We aren't long. We just came by to say hi.

Me: Well Hi. I found this when I arrived here. Congratulations.

Them: Thank you.

Me: You live here now?

I ask Gugu.

Gugu: Yes. Finally took charge of my own life.

Me: I'm glad. I see the little one is grown.

Gugu: He is and quite handy.

Me: Aren't they all

We laugh. Carlos comes in with drinks.

Carlos: Dr Zungu is here for you.

Now? How will I shout at him!

Me: Is he? Please send him in.

Bheki: A doctor? Are you okay?

Me: I am perfectly fine.

This is awkward. I smile, the door pushes open. Nqabayethu Zungu walks in, not wearing a Brentwood or his famous carvela today but a sweatpant and a casual tee and flops, yes flops!

He adjusts his glasses and put the Zara bag on my desk.

Nqaba: Sanibonani. I didn't know you had company.

Me: Oh its okay. This is Bheki and his wife and their kid.

Nqaba: Well helo. I brought you this.

Me: Work?

Nqaba: I'm off.

Me: How?

Nqaba: There are 4 Drs in that surgery.

Me: That's interesting. Bheki and Gugu are getting married and I'm invited, so is Mvelo and Nduna.

Nqaba: Congratulations you both.

Gugu: Thank you.

Nqaba comes over to me and massages my shoulders.

Nqaba: Won't you open the bag?

Me: Behave we've got company.



He gets his hands off.

Nqaba: Sorry.

Bheki: Its okay. I guess we should leave now.

Me: Thanks for stopping by.

I walk them to the door. I shut it and sigh.

Nqaba: What were they even doing here!

Me: To see me. Where have you been?

Nqaba: At my place.

Me: So you don't take calls when you're at your place? Or what, you have a wife?

He frowns.

Nqaba: Wife yani manje. Didn't you tell me to leave you alone?

Me: And you did?

Nqaba: Yeah I tried. I am here aren't I?

Me: I don't care! Where were you the past 2 days?

Nqaba: Bengisendlini ngipheka ubhontshisi no jeqe. (I was at home cooking beans and steamed bread)

He sits on my chair.

Me: Nqaba you can't just be there, showing me you love me and then I tell you to stop and you stop!

Nqaba: Are we pregnant?

Me: I'm serious!

Nqaba: Thixo wase moria I hear you. But what did you expect me to do? You've been ignoring me and I've been in your ass like a white lady's snooty puppy.

Me: Because I don't know if I should let you in or not. You see that man that just walked out he-

Nqaba: He had that girl as his wife but not really his wife. I do not have a wife, a child or a crazy ex girlfriend. I just have a puppy named mathambo that you know and that's it.

He walks up to me. He put his hands on my shoulders.

Nqaba: I have a very little appetite for women, I wouldn't be persuading you if I had a wife or a girlfriend. Ngiyakuthanda Sabathile and I am willing to mend all that's broken inside of you, just let me in. Give me 3 months probation to prove myself. I will prove to you that I'm the piece that's been missing.

Me: Are you gonna tell me why didn't you take my call last night?

He sighs.

Nqaba: I left it in the charger in the lounge and went to sleep, I always. No one ever calls me at night but as of today I will sleep with it under my pillow.

I laugh.

Me: Sounds like a plan.

Nqaba: Does this thing suit me?

He points at his pants.

Me: Yes it does.

Nqaba: Mvelo bought it for me. I feel funny.

Me: You've never worn it before?

Nqaba: Yes. I don't even look at these things. Izinto zoku gyma lezi (they are for gyming)

Me: Not really. They are for lazy days.

Nqaba: I wore it to not embarrass you in front of your colleagues with Brentwood.

I laugh.

Me: You look snacky in it trust me I wouldn't be embarrassed. I don't understand the fuss your kind has over it but it fits y'all perfectly.

Nqaba: Huh thank you I'll never wear this thing....

I stare at him as he keeps on blabbering about how crazy and less-manly is it to wear a sweatpant. He's so imperfectly perfect. I am just gonna close my eyes and take this risk, if it fails, then I will take a break from men because unlike Jake, I actually have something strong I feel for him.

I tiptoe my way up to his lips. He serves me the most beautiful smile I discover he has a silver tooth!

We kiss. He makes me feel things I've never felt before, he must be the dangerous person to be with. I do not want to feel like this in a presence of a man. We break it off after a couple of seconds.

Nqaba: Is this one of the kisses we've shared or its a signature of sealing our husband-wife deal?.

What? I chuckle shyly.

Me: Its a signature to seal the deal.

Nqaba: Yes!

He sits on my desk and pulls me closer, he looks deep into my eyes, I am staring back.

Nqaba: Ngyabonga.

I can't read his face expression but he sounds emotional.

Me: My pleasure.

It comes out as a whisper. He hugs me tenderly. I am crossing my fingers for the best to come out of this decision....

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I love the honeymoon phase. Dr Zungu has been seeing me at every chance he gets, in the morning before he goes to work, at night when he knocks off. Its been quite a joyful week. I am tired of sms's. My contract has only 100 and it is finished due to texting the day we sealed the deal. He bought me a coat, the zara bag had a coat in it, matching one of his. He's like a cute little baby, he's always all over me and I can't get enough. He doesn't go to my place because his mkhulu would wake up from his grave and stab him with a spear if he ever saw him going to my dad's place. He doesn't care that he bought it for me, to him it is my dad's. Bonisiwe is seeing a shrink, the nightmares are still there but I'm hoping they will vanish soon.

Carlos comes in.

Carlos: Did you order a phone?

Me: Yes.

Carlos: But you just upgraded last month.

Me: Its for Nqaba.

Carlos: His broke?

Me: No. He has those tiny nokia phones and I want us to FaceTime and talk on WhatsApp.

Carlos: Renovate your man girl.

We laugh.

Me: I'll give you a lift.

Carlos: Let me go pack my stuff then.

Me: You better.

Fridays are short and fun. I clip together all the papers of the 2 interviews we've done so far and head to Will's office. I knock.

Will: Just a sec! Ok come in.

Ugh these two are gonna make me sick I swear.

Me: Eww eww eww!

Will: What?

Me: Were you having sex?

Kate: No!

Me: You were. Jesus. Here's the interviews, your p.a. is not on her desk.

Will: Oh she went home. I'll go through them on my own.

Me: Super.

Will: What are you doing on Sunday?

Me: Not sure. Need something?

Will: There's a gathering.

Me: I always forget to open the WhatsApp group chat. I'll come.

Will: Thanks.

Me: Kate, don't forget to edit the pictures.

Kate: I'm on it.

Me: Ok bye then love birds. I'm knocking off.

Will: Have a great weekend.

Me: Thank you. You do too.

...

Secretary: He has no patient.

She says as I try to take a seat.

Me: Oh thanks.

I get up and head to his office. I knock and wait, I hear moaning. He must be fucking kidding me. I try to open but its locked. I bang the door. He catches me before I fall as I attempt to push the door with my whole body. He's laugh.



Me: Let go of me!

He closes the door. Still laughing.

Me: You think this is funny?

Nqaba: No. Sawbona mawezingane.

Ok not now genius. I'm not gonna melt. Not now. Now that I noticed the tooth I can't miss it, it makes his smile even more beautiful.

He presses play on his porn.

Me: What if I ran away and got smashed by a car?

Nqaba: I knew you wouldn't.

Me: And how would you know?

Nqaba: Because...I just know. Come here.

He leans and kisses me.

Me: I missed you.

Nqaba: I called you 10 minutes ago but you didn't pick up.

Me: Oh its in my bag. Aren't you hungry?

Nqaba: For?

Me: Food.

Nqaba: My food or just food in general.

Me: Nqabayethu Zungu please. Not now. I'm talking about pap and steak.

Nqaba: Oh. I'm hungry if you are.

Me: I don't like it when you curve your lips.

He kisses my shoulder.

Nqaba: I'm sorry.

Me: You're watching porn now you're horny.

Nqaba: It doesn't have that effect on me. You do. Your scent alone sends signals to my body.

I go and lock the door. He's shirtless when I return. He picks me up and we kiss. He places me on the couch and unbutton my blouse, unhook my brallete and kisses me from the neck down. I help him pull up the skirt. He smiles at my naked body, suddenly I am shy. He curse under his breath when he puts his hand under my panties. He's gently and I can't help but moan.

Nqaba: I missed you.

Me: I missed you too.

We continue to kiss and I gasp when he finally inserts himself. He's going slowly and gently. We're making love, first time as a couple and it feels good.

Nqaba: Ngiyakuthanda.

He whispers.

Me: I love you more.

He gets off and sit. He pulls me up. I hate this part. I climb on top of him and start grinding. Swinging my hip in all directions his left grip on my left butt cheek and his right stroking my back I am gonna spit out some secrets.

I hold on to him tight as I reach my climax. I increase my pace to bring him closer to his. He's breaking my bones right now and that's a good sign. He releases himself and bury his face between my boobs.

Me: I'm feeling cold.

Nqaba: Its raining.

I get off him and look into my bag and take out my sinus towel.

Nqaba: I was still thinking about where are we gonna get that.

Me: I came prepared.

He laughs and goes to the bin to take off the rubber and comes back to clean himself. He puts on his briefs and goes to his desk, he picks up the phone.

Nqaba: Olivia, please order me 2 cups of large coffee. One black, one with powdered milk and close. I'm no longer taking any patients.

He turns to me.

Nqaba: What would you like to eat?

Me: Anything.

Nqaba: There's Nandos across the street.

Me: Its fine.

Nqaba: Liv? And full chicken at Nandos, chips, buns and green salad.

He puts it down and take out a fleece from his shelf.

Me: Amen

Nqaba: I sleep here sometimes.

He turns the heater on and we cuddle on the couch.

Nqaba: This feels like a dream.

Me: Does it?

Nqaba: Yes. Promise you won't leave me.

Me: Do you have a wife at home?

He chuckles.

Nqaba: No.

Me: Are you gonna beat me up?

Nqaba: Never.

Me: As long as you will treat me well. I will stay.

Nqaba: Do you really love me?

Me: I do.

Nqaba: I don't believe you.

Me: I do not believe it too but its true. I love you. Ever since we I left Durban I've been thinking about you every night.

Nqaba: Then why were you giving me hard time?

Me: I was scared of getting my heart broken.

Nqaba: I'm not him.

Me: I know but I just couldn't help it.

"I know she's here, her car is outside!"

I jump up.

Me: That's Jake.

Nqaba: He must not try to test me.

He dresses up and head to the door. I get back to the fleece. He flies in soon as Nqaba opens the door. He holds him before he tries to slap me.

Nqaba: You want to beat somebody boy?

Jake: Let go of me! I'm here to speak to my girlfriend.

Nqaba: You speak with hands? Go get some fresh air Lexi.

Me: No let him go

Nqaba: I said go get some fresh air. Ngisafuna ukukhuluma nalendoda. (I want to have a word with this man). Now Lexi!

I startle and run towards the door...

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NQABA

I let go of him and lock the door.

Me: Are you done living?

Jake: Fuck you. I'm not here for you.

Me: You beat women up?

Jake: That's none of your business.

I slap him, he falls.

Me: Get up you drunkard. I'm gonna tell you this only once, if I ever have to tell you again I'll put a bullet in your head. Got it? Don't ever follow her again, when you see her, walk the opposite direction. Go home now.

Jake: Who the hell do you think you are?

Me: You're bleeding. Consultation room is the second door, wait for me there I'll take care of that.

I unlock and he stumbles out. I take my phone and call Nduna.

Nduna: Gwabini.

Me: How did Jake know Lexi is here?

Nduna: He did?

Me: Yes!

Nduna: I'll contact these boys. They are careless.

Me: Tell them they are fired. Get people who'll protect her at all costs.

Nduna: Consider that done. I just got a report that Bonisiwe is out.

Me: Seriously you need to fire those bastards. Where is she?

Nduna: Hohoho. Lexi's house, Lexi is her guardian.

Me: That's impossible.

Nduna: Very possible.

She gets in.

Me: I'll call you later.

I hang up. I hug her.

Me: I'm sorry. Does Mrs McVeigh cook for you every evening?

Lexi: No, I eat her food only when I go to visit.

Me: Didn't you say your mother is with you?

Lexi: Oh no. That's my other mother, I have 2 moms.

Me: Really? Polygamy?

Lexi: No. My biological mother and my non biological mother.



Me: Oh.

Lexi: Yeah. Its complicated. I'm sorry about Jake.

Me: He'll never bother you.

Lexi: I wish.

I kiss her. After all the trouble I went through to get her out of that woman's wicked intentions. She took her in? She's such a little innocent sweetheart. That woman is not to be trusted, at all...

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I am woken up by soft touch on my cheek. I smile. The reflection of the sun in the mirror blinds me.

Me: What time is it?

Nqaba: Quarter to 9. Breakfast is ready.

Me: Uhh I hate waking up.

Nqaba: You don't have to. I can bring it here.

Me: No, no need.

I roll out of bed. He's staring at me as I walk to the bathroom. He gets in after me.

Me: You wanna watch me pee?

Nqaba: Yes. I can borrow you my gym trouser.

Me: Its not a gym trouser.

Nqaba: Ok whatever it is. I can borrow you.

Me: Thank you. And a tshirt.

Nqaba: There's a plenty of those to choose from.

Me: I need to take a shower first.

Nqaba: Sizodla nini? I'm dying here.

Me: I'll be quick I promise. Or you can go ahead without me.

Nqaba: I'll sit here and watch thanks.

I shower, as quickly as possible until he decides to join me and we do all the sweet stuff, kissing, giggling, scrubbing each other's back, him telling me how much he loves me, me crying because its too much. And it feels too good to be true, how I am comfortable with him, its something that has never happened before. I'm always not comfortable enough around people I am with but him, its a different story.

After an hour we get out of the shower and take another 30 minutes to lotion and dress up. I call Lunga on our way to the kitchen. Its a one bedroom flat, tiny kitchen enough for him and me when I visit.

Lunga: Miss McVeigh

Me: Hi Lunga. Is everything okay?

Lunga: Yes everything is perfect.

Me: Ok. Give me a call...

Lunga: Shall anything happen. We will, we ordered pizza and now we're watching movies. She didn't have any nightmares last night. Just enjoy yourself wherever you are.

Me: That's great. I'll call you again later.

I hang up.

Me: This place is so portable.

Nqaba: Thank you. Juice?

Me: No coffee.

I wonder why chose to stay here.

Nqaba: Ask.

Me: Mmh? Ask what?

Nqaba: Why do I stay here.

I chuckle. Does he read minds?

Nqaba: Don't act surprised. It is what everyone asks so i know you wanna ask too, I can see the way your eyes are scanning it.

Me: Tell me why.

Nqaba: Because I don't want visitors.

Me: Visitors?

Nqaba: Yes. I don't want people coming over. If you don't like it then I will buy a bigger one.

Me: I love it. It is perfect.

Nqaba: Don't you want space to do yoga?

I laugh.

Me: No I don't do much of that.

Nqaba: Sthandwa sam look, I am 33 and I am not married and I do not have kids. Looking at you I see someone that I'm gonna grow old with, I need to know if you're sure about this. If you're in it for the long run.

Me: I am sure and I am.

Nqaba: No pressure.

Me: I am sure. So you want kids?

Nqaba: Yeah someday.

I nod and focus on my plate. Kids are a very scary topic.

Me: So should we tell Mvelo and Nduna?

Nqaba: I told Nduna the day we sealed the deal.

Me: Mvelo is gonna get mad at me.

Nqaba: I told him not to tell her.

Me: I will video call her later. I bought you a phone.

He chokes on his food. I hand him a glass of juice.

Nqaba: You what?

Me: I bought you a phone.

Nqaba: How much did it cost?

Me: I got it on contract.

Nqaba: How much?

Me: R460 a month.

Nqaba: For how long?

Me: 24 months. What's up with all these questions. We can now facetime and chat on WhatsApp.

Nqaba: Thank you. You're the best.

He takes my hand and kisses it.

\*\*\*A week later\*\*\*

I didn't get time to see my man this week. I've had back to back meetings and he was also very busy at the surgery. Today I am

planning on spending the day here and then later go to my parents house.

Bonisiwe is good now. She cleans when Martha cooks she has made a little flower garden on the balcony. I put on my pyjamas after bathing. My phone rings as I pick up my laptop.

Me: Baby.

Nqaba: Awu uyangithambisa (you're making me a softie)

Me: What is it that you never oppose. How are you?

Nqaba: I'm not okay. I need to see you.

Me: I promised my employees that I will stay at home today.

Nqaba: I'll just take a hug and a kiss and then leave.

Me: Ok come.

Nqaba: Ngyabonga.

I chuckle. He's thankful of everything.

I hang up and put on a robe. Its cold.

Me: Morning.

Them: Morning.

Me: I'll go get coffee downstairs.

Lunga: I can get it for you.

Me: No I need to stretch a bit.

I smile and the lift closes. I get downstairs and order my coffee. I sit down and misuse their unlimited Wi-Fi. I download make up and hair tutorials until I smell Axe. I raise my eyes and I meet his, God!

Me: Are you trying to have my heart stop?

Bheki: Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you. Can I sit?

Me: Yeah but I'm waiting for someone.

Bheki: Boyfriend?

Me: Yes.

Bheki: Ohh. I wanted to apologize.

Me: For?

Bheki: Gugu, things took a different direction, she was there for me when baba passed on, she supported me after our break up and then one day I woke up and I was inlove with her.

Me: I'm happy for you. Its what you really deserve.

Bheki: Aren't you mad at me?



Me: Jesus no. I am glad you've moved on we can all now forget we ever did what we did. We are both with people we love and they love us back. I just wanna bury our past and never be reminded of it.

He nods.

Bheki: You will always be special to me.

I smile.

Me: I know.

I extend my hand to squeeze his.

Bheki: Can I get a hug?

Me: Sure.

We get up and hug. I see Nqaba coming in. Our eyes meet, he frowns and turn away. I let go of Bheki and take my phone and run towards the door.

Me: Nqaba!

He doesn't turn. Shit!

Me: let me explain!

He gets in his car and drive off. Dammit!

I call him. He declines the call. I rush back in and take the lift up.

Martha: Just in time for beef stew.

Me: Later Martha. Anyone seen my car keys?

Bonisiwe: Where are you going?

Me: I'll be back after an hour or 2.

Bonisiwe: But you promised to spend the day here.

Me: I know! But there's something I need to take care of. I'm sorry.

The lift closes...

\*\*\*

NQABA

I get to my place and head straight to my bedroom. I take sleeping pills and lay on the bed...

\*\*\*

ALEXIS

After 30 minutes I arrive at his place. I knock, no answer. I push the door it opens. I call his name and close the door. Both his phones are on top of the couch which means he's here.

I walk to the bedroom. He's sleeping. I climb on and shake him. He's not responding.

Me: Nqaba?

I see an empty bottle of sleeping pills on the side table. I shake him harder he's still not responding. My mind is going crazy. I am crying screaming his name. I pull my phone out and dial my insurance emergency number.

Me: Hi can I please have an ambulance?

Operator: Your address please.

I don't even know where am I. I jump out of the bed straight to his drawers. I look for any possible mails but there's nothing.

"Lexi?"

I turn. Oh my God he's okay.

Me: Uhm, I'm sorry. Can I call you again.

Operator: Ma'am I'm-

I hang up and run to him.

Nqaba: Why are you crying?

Me: Because...you wouldn't wake up. I thought you...

I look at the pills.

Nqaba: I wanted to sleep it off.

Me: I'm sorry.

Nqaba: What was it?

Me: An innocent hug. He asked for it and I agreed, my mistake.

Nqaba: Should I worry about him?

Me: Eww no. He's my...

I take a deep breath and tell him the whole story.

Nqaba: Shit.

Me: Yeah. So no you don't have to worry about him.

Nqaba: I need something to down this information.

He pulls me to the kitchen.

Nqaba: I'm sorry you had to go through all that.

He kisses my forehead before he opens the fridge and takes out polony.

Me: Do you have wine in this house.

Nqaba: Its finished. I haven't done much grocery shopping this month.

Me: But you have polony.

Nqaba: Yes I do.

Me: So I was right.

He laughs.

Mvelo and Nduna do not buy it so Simi, Nguquko's wife bought it for her 2 year old daughter. She complained that someone was eating it. And then one night I tasted it in his lips he denied and said it was a vienna so here we are today with his fridge short of everything but polony cause there's numerous 3kgs.

Nqaba: Now that you're my girlfriend, is my secret safe with you?

Me: Yes. So how did it start?

Nqaba: What?

Me: The addiction.

Nqaba: On my 4th year. I didn't have time to cook so it was the easiest thing to cook and eat.

Me: Now you can't stop.

Nqaba: Yes. And lollipops.

Me: Now I know how to apologize.

Nqaba: Don't push it miss.

He hugs me. He's such a hugger.

Me: Where's that man I met at Mvelo's wedding?

He chuckles.

Nqaba: He's here holding you into his arms.

Me: He's not hardcore. He doesn't furrow his brows.

Nqaba: You'll never ever see that cause he's inlove with you. You bring out this softie. Since I met you I've been a good boy, only focusing on getting you and keeping you safe.

Me: Am I lucky or what?

Nqaba: Its me who's lucky. I've finally met someone who makes me wanna be good and do right by them. You were right, I did own those taxis.

Me: Did own?

Nqaba: Yes. I sold them and bought the surgery so that I can get you. I convinced Anzuri to sell it to me. I knew one day you'd come but you were taking too long so I had to come up with a plan.

I tried to free away from him. He holds me tighter.

Me: Let go of me.

Nqaba: I paid her to send those flowers and have sex with Jake.

Me: Nqaba let go of me!

Nqaba: No. I don't want a relationship built on lies.

Me: Well it is built on lies if you poisoned me, paid someone to sleep with my boyfriend so that we can break up. How sick is that!

Nqaba: I did it because I love you.

He's calm.

Me: Fuck that and fuck you Nqaba. You're sick in the head!

Nqaba: So now you don't love me now?

Me: I do but how sick of you to do all that!

Nqaba: Because I would've killed him! It was either that or I kill him. I was done watching you be with someone you don't even love while I waited for you. Trust me if you were in my shoes you'd have done the same thing.

Me: No!

He lets go of me. I head for the door.

Nqaba: I'll get you someone to drive you home.

Me: I'm done.

Nqaba: Okay.

He sits down and eat his polony. The door doesn't happen.

Me: Where are the keys?

Nqaba: Sit down and wait for someone to drive you home. You can't drive while crying.

Me: You sick bastard I'm gonna call the police.

Nqaba: You left your phone in the bedroom.

I take a deep breath and head back to the bedroom.

He's behind me. He hugs me from behind.

Nqaba: There's nothing I wouldn't do for you. I'd kill for you, I have killed for you.



He smoothly runs his hand down my stomach. I hold it.

Me: Let go.

Nqaba: And I would do it anytime. When you've calmed down I'll be in the kitchen.

Me: Why are you using your touch as a weapon to calm me?

Nqaba: Is it working?

Me: I hate you.

He turns me around and kisses me and pushes me to the wall. He hold my hands against it and kiss me from my neck, going down while his free hand explore my breast. I let out an involuntary moan. He goes down inside my panties and finger me.

Nqaba: Open your eyes.

Me: No.

Nqaba: Open your eyes Lexi.

I do. He kisses me and stops.

Nqaba: Do you love me?

Me: Mmm.

Nqaba: Angikuzwa. (I can't hear you)

He's not stopping.

Me: Yes!

Nqaba: Yes who?

Me: Yes Nqaba.

Nqaba: Yes Nqaba what Sabathile?

I hate this man. I'm crying.

Me: Yes Nqaba I love you.

He take his hand out and hugs me...

42

I wake up. He's holding me tight like I'd escape or anything. I carefully take his arm off and roll out of bed. I go pee and come back to dress up. I watch him after dressing up.

Nqaba: That is very rude.

I startle.

Me: Sorry. I'm leaving.

He sits up right.

Nqaba: What time is it?

Me: 7pm.

Nqaba: I'll drive you.

Me: I'm going to my parent's house.

Nqaba: Ok.

I smile. He gets out of bed and dresses up.

Me: You don't have to drive me. I'll be fine.

Nqaba: I'm walking you to your car.

He makes me look at him.

Nqaba: I love you.

Me: I love you too.

He walks me to my car.

Nqaba: Don't speed okay.

Me: I won't.

Nqaba: I'll call you later.

Me: I'll be waiting for your call.

We kiss and off I go.

...

Melissa: Ha! I thought I'd never see you again.

Me: And why is that?

We hug.

Melissa: I haven't seen you in 5 days.

Me: In person.

She laughs. I FaceTime her everyday.

Melissa: Whatever. Are you hungry? Cecilia can prepare you something, we've already eaten.

New person every time because they always find their workers professional jobs at hotels or restaurants.

Me: I'd love something honestly. I'm very hungry. And something to drink too.

Melissa: Are you okay?

Me: I'll be fine. Where's dad?

Melissa: At the gym.

Me: What?

Melissa: Yes. Old age isn't so good to him.

We laugh.

Me: I'll go check on him.

Melissa: I'll join you soon.

I take the stairs up. I fail to hold it when I see him. He's on the fastest mode. He's serious!

Marcus: Laugh all you want but I'll be the sexiest man on earth next week.

Me: Next week? It takes months to build a sexy body daddy.

Marcus: Mine will take 2 weeks. Where have you been? We missed you.

He gets off the machine and grabs a towel and dab his sweaty face.

Me: Been busy at work I hardly found time to do anything.

Marcus: I feel like you're focusing too much on your mother.

Me: Dad come on. Mom always has her phone in hand that's why we always talk.

Marcus: I mean Bonisiwe.

Me: Oh. No we're just roommates. Nothing more.

Marcus: I love you, you know that?

Me: Ofcourse I do.

Marcus: And I'm used to being one of the important things in your life. When you don't take my calls or make any means to call me I get worried.

I only missed one of his call. When I called him back, he didn't answer but what can I say.

Me: I'm sorry. You'll always be the important thing in my life.

I hug him. Mom gets in.

Melissa: Your food is ready. Honey you need a shower then we can discuss the color of the apartment. We're starting some time next week.

Me: Yay! I'm so excited. Are my pajamas clean?

Melissa: Yes madam.

I laugh as the sarcasm.

Marcus: Are you staying over?

Me: Yes.

Marcus: Let me go take that shower.

They kiss on his way out. Hallelujah. We head downstairs. I find missed calls from Nqaba. I put it on do not disturb and enjoy myself with my mother. He's the last person I wanna talk to right now...

...

A night with my parents always turn to a game night. We played boardgames until 3am. Right now I have no intentions of waking up but I'm hungry. Its way past 10am and I'm surprised mom didn't wake me to go eat.

I take my phone from the charger, and call Lungani.

Lunga: Good morning.

Me: Hey. Everything okay?

Lunga: Yes everything is fine. You need to stop worrying.

Me: I can't help it. Have you guys eaten?

Lunga: Martha is making breakfast right now.

Me: Ok. I'll call you later.

Lunga: No problem.

Me: Can you please hang up?

I've got an incoming call. She's probably gonna shout at me. I answer.

Me: Hey babe.

Mvelo: Are you kidding me!

Me: I was tired and it died in my bag. I'm sorry.

Mvelo: I've been so worried. How are you?

Me: I'm good. How is yourself?

Mvelo: I'm...



She let's out a trembling breath and sniffles. I sit up straight.

Me: What did he do?

Mvelo: He....

She starts crying.

Me: Nomvelo talk! What did he do? Where are you?

Mvelo: In the bathroom.

Me: What did he do? Talk to me and stop crying please.

"Babe I'm sorry. Please open the door"

Mvelo: Go away!

Me: Call the police! Or should I call them? Now tell me what did he do.

Mvelo: He got me pregnant.

She sobs. I scratch my head. Really?

Me: You gonna have a baby?

Mvelo: Why do you sound like you're smiling?

Me: I'm not. That douche bag! I can't believe him right now.

I laugh silently. Oh my God we're having a baby!

Mvelo: Can I come stay with you?

Me: Ofcourse my love. Ofcourse.

Mvelo: Thank you.

Me: Stop crying. I love you.

Mvelo: I love you too.

Me: I have a lot to ask you when you get here.

Mvelo: Ok. I'll be there before the day ends.

Me: Ok. Bye

Mvelo: Bye.

Is this the beginning of drama? If she's coming here, what about work? I sigh and sit at the corner of my bed and read texts from Nqaba. I can't resist the urge to call him. I love him but I can't seem to process what he said. I actually need answers.

He answers after some time.

Nqaba: Sawubona.

Me: Hi.

Silence.

Nqaba: I'm glad you're okay.

Me: I am. What did you mean about killing for me?

Nqaba: How is your day going?

Me: Nqaba.

Nqaba: Babe?

Me: What did you mean?

Nqaba: Are you enjoying being home?

Me: If you do not answer me you'll never hear from me ever again.

I say calmly but I'm boiling inside.

Nqaba: If I had any idea what you're talking about. I'd answer.

Me: Do you want me in your life?

Nqaba: Ofcourse I do.

Me: Then answer me!

Nqaba: I meant that I care about you.

Me: Who did you kill?

Nqaba: Humans.

Me: Humans?

Nqaba: Correct.

Me: Stop playing games with me Nqabayethu and tell me what humans did you kill?

Nqaba: Bad humans.

I clench my fists.

Me: Its over Nqaba. Do you hear me? Its over!

I hang up. I am hyperventilating. I take off my pyjama top and walk to open the window. He's gonna be the death of me.

Him and Nduna are like Mvelo and I. If there's someone who knows this man well

Advertisement

its him. But knowing Nduna he'd never answer any of my questions. I sit down on chair and tilt my head back.

\*\*\*

Its been 4 weeks and I'm doing pretty good without a man in my space. He never called or texted and that's exactly what I needed.

I zip my luggage and put it down. We're heading to KZN, Bheki's wedding. Mvelo has been here ever since. And Nduna is letting her, I'm still struggling to accept that Nduna is letting his wife be 500kms away from him. Bonisiwe and I aren't happening. I've been trying to at least spend 10 minutes in her presence. Mvelo is always the best person to save awkward moments, she's been spending time with her.

She gets in with our dresses.

Mvelo: Damn the queue!

Me: At the tailor?

Mvelo: No. At debonairs.

Oh. We love pizza. She's 3 months but there's no bump. We went for the first ultra sound last week. We're really having an additional member.

Me: We should get going.

Mvelo: Yep.

I pull both the suitcases while she took the dresses. We bid Bonisiwe goodbye. She isn't allowed to leave the province so

she can't come. I hired 4 more guards. I feel like she's gonna escape at any chance she gets.

....

When the sunset, we drive in to KwaNcube. There's a tent and cars outside. I need to sleep. I park and they come help us with the bags.

We passed by the shopping centre and bought food. Mvelo has this Makoti in her. They show us to the room we'll be using, just the 2 of us. Super!

I throw myself in the bed.

Mvelo: I'm definitely not sleeping. Not after I smelt smoking meat.

Me: Bring me some when find it.

Mvelo: Imagine.

She laughs and walks out.

I take off my shoes and position myself right. I hear the door opening. I raise my head.

Bheki: Hi. Sorry I had no idea you were sleeping.

Me: I'm about too. How are you?

Bheki: I'm good. How are you?

Me: I'm good.

Bheki: Thanks for coming.

Me: I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Bheki: Yeah right. You didn't bring dates?

Me: Nope but Nduna will arrive tomorrow.

Bheki: Your boyfriend can come too.

Me: We broke up.

Bheki: Oh. I'm sorry.

Me: Its cool. Its so hot in this place.

Bheki: December is very hot this side. Wanna take a walk?

Me: Where to?

Bheki: To the tree with fresh air.

Me: I don't think that's a good idea with everyone here. They'll probably have some ideas if we leave on our own.

Bheki: We won't be on our own. Mvelo is coming too.

Me: Ok. Let's go then.

Bheki: Get your bathing material. We might pass by the river.

Me: Hell no. Jesus I'm not trying to get eaten by snakes there.

Bheki: Aisuka. I'll go inform the guards to accompany us.

Me: Aw you're also scared.

Bheki: No. I'm gonna be the chief soon so we might never know when am I gonna get assassinated.

He laughs. I laugh too.

Me: I'll be getting my bathing material so long.

He nods and walk out. My phone beeps. I take it out of my bag.

'We'll see you tomorrow'

Its from Nduna. Who's we? I'm so not in the mood for Nqaba's face.



'If you ever bring your stick legs here I'll get you arrested'

I send to Nqaba and get my bathing material and Mvelo's. A little boy comes and call me.

We head away to the bush. I keep saying a little prayer that a lion or anything dangerous doesn't come out of this huge grass....

43

I am so tired! I need a good sleep. We spent the night peeling, well I was the peeler cause I'm not really good at cooking. Mvelo kept delivering those carrots and potatoes. I don't understand why there isn't catering. There are 4 kitchens and all of those were and still full of cooking people.

We just slept an hour ago and here we are, up again.

Me: I hate it hear.

Mvelo: I wanna go home right after this wedding. That was slavery.

Me: Plus I miss your mom. We have a lot to talk about.

Mvelo: Do I need to know about it?

Me: Nope.

I plug in the kettle and take out our bathing towels.

Mvelo: Is there something going on between you and Nqaba?

Me: I ended it.

She sits up right.

Mvelo: And you didn't tell me?

Me: It was not serious.

Mvelo: If you're the reason he went back to Jo'burg then it is!

Me: Its complicated Mvelo. He's not okay in the head.

Mvelo: I'm listening.

I sit on a the couch and fold my legs.

Me: It started when we were at your house. I was doing it just to get over Bheki but I found myself doing it for me. I fell for him, it seemed to early to move on so I cut him off when I went back to Johannesburg. He's not good for me Mvelo, I lose myself in his presence. I become someone I can not recognize.

Mvelo: That's why you ended things?

Me: No. He bought Jake's girlfriend to send those flowers, he says he had to come up with a plan. How sick is that? Like that wasn't enough he paid her to sleep with him! He says he's killed for me and won't let me know who he killed.

Mvelo: I knew it!

Me: Knew what?

Mvelo: That he had something to do with you being rescued from your mother. Oh my God

Me: Wait. Rescued from my mother? No, Onika saved me.

Mvelo: They probably paid her. He's right he did kill for you, but what happened then he fell in love with you? I've always sensed that they are more than what they choose to show.

Me: I don't understand.

Mvelo: Your father came up with a plan that your mom should go seduce Bonisiwe's husband. I volunteered to do. I went home and then the following night he told me you were on your way home and that shall he ever hear me talk about seducing men. He's gonna kill me. I think he meant it.

Me: What am I hearing?

Mvelo: I'm just putting the pieces together and they fit in so well.

Me: So he's known me from then?

Mvelo: He was there for my lobola negotiations.

Me: I never saw him.

Mvelo: He was there. He was the leading negotiator.

Me: I'll be right back.

Mvelo: Where are you going?

Me: You should bath.

I take my phone and walk out. I look for a quiet place but there's none. I see the toilet. I head there, I'm not going in there, a snake could come out of that seat. I stand aside and call Nqaba. He picks up on the first ring.

Me: I'm gonna ask you questions and I dare you to lie to me.

Nqaba: Ngilalele. (I'm listening)

Me: How long have you known me?

Nqaba: Long enough.

Me: When did you know you like me?

Nqaba: When I first saw you.

Me: When?

Nqaba: Mvelo's lobola negotiations.

Me: Tell me about Zimbabwe.

Nqaba: Its where you were kept.

Me: How do you know that?

Nqaba: Because Nduna called in the middle of the night and told me you were abducted so I made a plan.

Me: How did you know where was I?

Nqaba: I know people who know people. I made calls that's how we found you.

Me: And you killed people?

Nqaba: I didn't pull the trigger but I gave orders.

Me: So you saved me and all of a sudden you feel like you own me? You feel entitled? Like I should be with you and nobody else?

Nqaba: Yazin Lexi. I'm getting tired of you and your games. Make up your mind and choose whether you wanna be with me or not. I'm doing everything I've never done before. I do not change for anyone but I did for you, I do not answer such questions but I am answering yours. You think I started loving you after that? I liked you the first day I saw but Nduna put me out of it. I stayed away because it seemed childish to be friends and date friends, when he told me to help him track you down he told me I can go ahead and hit on his wife's best friend. I did it because I wanted you safe not because of his go ahead. My gut wouldn't let me just stop caring about you. I had to make sure you're okay all the time. I was able to resist what I felt for you then but I couldn't after Durban. I just couldn't because Lexi I knew that you loved me and I saw it when I dropped you off at the airport. I've seen it every time I look into your eyes and right now you're focusing on me killing for you, you don't care why I did it. I'm doing everything that I do because I love you but you're old enough to decide whether you want this or not. I'm done trying.

The line dies.

"Lexi?"

I sniffle and wipe off my tears before I turn and force a smile.

Bheki: Are you okay?

Me: Yes I'm fine. Work stuff. I needed a quiet place.

Bheki: There's a lot of empty rooms in the big house. You should've went there. Aunty just arrived she's looking for you.

Me: Let me go talk to her.

Bheki: I hear you were peeling in the kitchen.

Me: Indeed we were. Your mom fetched us.

Bheki: She's such a drama queen. I'm sorry.

Me: Nah don't worry.

He glances at his watch.

Bheki: I better go get ready.

Me: Me too. Haven't even bathed yet.

Bheki: I'll see you later.

Me: I doubt. You'll be with your wife later.

He chuckles.

Bheki: I'll see you later before you leave.

Me: Go get ready.

I open the door. I find Mvelo and gogo laughing.

Mvelo: She can tell that I'm pregnant.

Me: Really?

Granny: Yes. I have eyes old enough to see that.

Me: I'm never buying a pregnancy test.

We laugh and I hug the old lady.

Me: Are you well?

Granny: I am good. I thought you were playing games with me when you said you'll be here.

Me: Why would I though. And I bought you a dress.

Granny: Alililili....

Mvelo: Its beautiful like you.

She gets up and dance. So energetic. I pour water on a bathing basin while Mvelo takes out gogo's dress.



In such an environment. We're gonna have to wear natural make up or else we'll draw ourselves unnecessary attention.

We get ready. Everyone else is done but us. The yard is filling up each and every second. They sure are famous here.

Mvelo: Oh he's here.

Me: Is that a smile?

Mvelo: No.

Me: You poor thing. Let's go.

We take our clutches and go to meet Nduna. My phone beeps. Its mom.

'How is everything going? I still don't understand why you have to torture yourself like that'

I chuckle.

'Everything is fine and I'm not torturing myself. I love being here'

The looks we're getting as we head to the red X5. I can not wait until we're there cause I can feel my knees kissing each other: stage fright. Nduna hops out, Nguquko follows.

Mvelo: Where is Nqaba?

Nduna: hello to you too. I missed you.

He kisses her. I look inside the car  
there's no one.

Mvelo: I missed you too. Nqaba isn't coming.

Nduna: He is on duty and beside why would he come? Nguquko is here cause he got an invite as a fellow captain.

Mvelo: Ohh.

Me: let's go before our seats are taken.

Nguquko: There isn't really that here. You sit everywhere.

Me: Oh. I had no idea, either way let's go.

Nguquko: Since we both do not have dates. Please be my date.

He bows dramatically. We laugh.

Me: With pleasure.

He takes my hand and we walk to the tent. Seems like Nguquko had no idea what he was talking about. We have a table with our names, we ticked our names at the entrance and we were given a number. I've got to give it to them, this is beautiful. I am getting really uncomfortable by the weird looks I'm getting and some people whisper to each other and point at me. I guess they know.

Me: Did you bring your glasses?

I whisper.

Mvelo: No. What's up?

Me: The looks.

Nduna: Screw them.

He says a little loud.

Me: Please don't.

Nduna: If you see one person staring at you. Tell me I'll go punch them right in the face.

We giggle on the low. We're asked to bow our heads as the Prince soon to be chief makes his way in. They say his praises that I don't understand half of. We're freed to look up again.

Nduna: He's nervous.

Nguquko: Who wouldn't be nervous thinking of committing himself to a woman.

Me: Excuse you.

Nguquko: No offense but you're devils.

Mvelo: Why do you marry us then?

Nguquko: Because we love you.

Me: Ncoa that's sweet.

"Shhhhh!!"

Ooops. I hide myself with my clutch. The least I need is Bheki thinking I am disrespecting his special moment.

We're told to stand up to welcome the bride. We stand up. They say her praises. She has praises, I didn't know women had those....oh its clan names. Her dress screams royalty, so does her face. I turn to look at Bheki, he's tapping his foot and cracking his left fingers, he's really nervous. Our eyes meet.

"You gonna be fine" I mime. He smiles and nods. Someone clears their throat. Its his mother, I quickly turn away to look at the bride.

She finally gets to the front. The program director takes us down the history of their relationship and that this is their second wedding, what's different now is that love is involved.

Its time to exchange vows. Bheki is the one to start. I drink water, Nduna looks at me.

Bheki: I never thought we'd do this one day but here we are, looking at you soon to be officially my wife. I don't have many words because I've already told you everything but I'm gonna tell you this one again. You're the best thing that I've ever had in my life and I love you.

The crowd cheers. I get a poke on the shoulder. I turn.

Him: I'm gonna need you to leave.

Me: Excuse me.

Him: You're not welcome here.

He grips my arm harshly. I squirm. Nduna jumps on him and punches him, on the other table they are dragging gogo out.

The old man on the entrance is shouting. "You're not welcome here Danisile! You and your descendants are not welcome in my father's grounds!"

Bheki: Leave them alone!

The men holding gogo let go. Nduna punched that one away.

Old man: What are you doing? Take them out! Bheki:  
Babomncane stop!

Old man: Shut up Bhekisizwe. You ruin everything! How can you let her in while she hasn't cleansed us for falling pregnant for a commoner! She made us a laughing stock!

Gogo: So you keep telling everyone! You're a sorry excuse of a man Mandlenkosi. Your greed to be the chief has you ruining my nephews wedding. Take this old rack to the dungeon!

The old man laughs.

Bheki: Did you not hear the princess!

The men take him away. Bheki whispers to the director and he leaves.

Director: The chief has something to take care of. He says you can help yourselves with refreshments and the people in the

list to speak about our lovely couple must get ready. We're sorry for the inconvenience.

Nduna: Let's go.

Mvelo: No baby. Bheki is gonna be heartbroken if we leave.

Nguquko: Just taste the cake already. This was made from heaven.

I'm still not in good state to communicate. What just happened?

....

Against all odds the wedding resumed and the fun that followed we ended up forgetting about that little incident. Our time to head back to our homes came. I went to say goodbye to grandma and everybody else I met this time. I looked for Bheki but didn't find him.

Me: Are we driving to a lodge? I can not spend more than an hour on the road.

Mvelo: We are.

Nduna: I thought-

Mvelo: We're tired.

Nguquko: I will drive home to my lovely wife.

Nduna: Mvelo

Me: You guys can go. I will stay at the lodge and drive to New Castle in the morning.

Mvelo: I'm staying with you.

Nduna: Babe we have 2 cars here.

Mvelo: I'll take a taxi tomorrow morning.

Nduna: Let's go to that lodge.

Nguquko takes the car they came with and we get in mine.

We drive to the lodge. 45 minutes away. The waiting at the front desk makes me wanna scream. Finally they hand us our keys. I kiss Mvelo goodnight and we go into our different rooms. I connect my phone on the charger and head to the bathroom. I fill the tub and get in. What a day. Now I can love Nqaba without any guilt. His words replay in my head, he sounded like he was crying at some parts. I wrap a towel afterwards and go to my phone. I buy airtime and call him.



He answers and say nothing.

Me: I love you and I wanna be with you.

Nqaba: Were you waiting for him to get married so you can be sure that you want to move on?

Me: No.

Nqaba: I don't want to play games with you.

Me: We won't. I really mean it.

Nqaba: Let's give you a week and see if you still feel the same.

Me: Nqaba.

Nqaba: Goodnight nkosazana. .

He hangs up. I sigh and get inside the covers like that and close my eyes. I really mean it...

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"Here we go. Here we go again and now you're telling me that she is just a friend, that's why she's calling you at 3 o'clock in the morning. I can't take this no more, ohhh..." I startle.

Me: What's wrong with you. I was getting to my favorite part.

Mike: Well I was tired of shouting like a crazy person. Do you have sugar here?

Me: I think there is.

Bonisiwe: Its finished. I used it on the steamed bread.

Me: Let's go get it. Mom is gonna freak out if she gets here and find out she can't make tea.

Bonisiwe: I'll go take the clothes out of the dryer.

She disappears.

Mike: That didn't come out right.

Me: What?

Mike: The mention of your mother.

Me: Oh. Let's go.

Mike: Lexi.

I take my purse and head to the lift. He follows me.

Mike: You have to cut her some slack.

I fasten my seatbelt.

Me: Do you remember when you told me to allow myself to fall in love?

We drive off.

Mike: Yeah.

Me: I did. The outcome? Horrible.

Mike: And your point is?

Me: I'm never taking anything you say.

Mike: Why did you bring her here then?

Me: Because she needed my help.

Mike: Atleast try to entertain a conversation with her.

Me: We do talk. We just do not have much to talk about that's it.

Mike: I've been here since Sunday and all I've seen is you listening to headphones in her presence.

I sigh.

Me: I just have a lot going on right now.

Mike: Try to make her welcome atleast.

Me: Mike please. Having her staying at my place is welcoming. I truly do not owe her anything.

Mike: Don't you think she regret it?

Me: She doesn't. Let's drop this please.

Mike: Ok. Wanna talk about Nqaba?

Me: He's not taking my calls, I drove by his place when I came back he wasn't there. I called his work yesterday they said he's not in.

Mike: Do you love him?

Me: I do but I think he's kind of fed up with me. He said he's giving me a week to be sure that I really wanna be with him.

Mike: Do you really wanna be with him?

Me: Yes.

He looks at me and smiles.

Mike: Then look for your man baby. Forever isn't promised.

His phone rings.

Mike: Baby...okay I'm coming.

He hangs up.

Mike: I've got to go home. That sounded like forgiveness.

Me: But why do you cheat?

Mike: Its a habit that I'm trying to fight trust me but its hard.

Me: Try harder! She has a little baby, she doesn't deserve all this.

Mike: I know. I'm trying to be a better man.

Me: That's what she deserves.

We drive to his place. I drop him off and drive away after warning him to not tell Tasha he was at my place. I can't be known for keeping a cheater in time of need.

I start off at the mall and drive to Nqaba's place. I knock until the guy who lives next door comes out.

Him: Hi.

Me: Hi. Did I wake you? I'm sorry for making noise. I...

Him: Its okay. He hasn't been here since Thursday.

Me: Oh thank you.

Him: You're welcome.

I bid him goodbye and leave. If I drive to surgery right now I'll be late. My parents are gonna arrive anytime soon. I click on Nduna's contact and put on an earpiece. This is weird.

Nduna: I'm gonna win lotto. Babe its Lexi!

I laugh.

Me: You might. How are you?

Nduna: I'm good Alexis, how are you?

Me: I'm good, I'm good. Have you heard from Nqaba?

Nduna: No

Advertisement

his phone isn't going through.

Me: Could you know where he is?

Nduna: No. I called his mother but he's not home.

Me: Ok thank you.

I hang up. Where could he possibly be? I'm getting worried now. I call the surgery.

Mfundo: Dr Zungu's office, good morning.

Me: Morning, is Dr Zungu in?

Mfundo: Unfortunately no but Dr Johnson is standing in for him. I can transfer you.

Me: Oh no. I strictly need Dr Zungu. When will he be back?

Mfundo: I have no idea ma'am.

Me: Ok thanks.

I hang up.

....

I find my parents already arrived. We exchange hugs and mom helps me unpack.

Melissa: So are you hosting for Christmas?

Me: What? Not in 5 years to come.

Marcus: No one wants to host this year so I guess everyone will spend Christmas at their place.

Me: Not me. I'll be home.

Melissa: I think we should just do that road trip earlier.

Me: Road trip?

Marcus: Yes your mother and I were thinking we'll go for a road trip as a family on new year's eve.

Me: That would be so much fun. When are we going now?

Melissa: Are you okay with spending Christmas away from home?

Me: Absolutely.

Marcus: Then we should go this weekend. Is it okay with you both?

Me: I'm in.

Melissa: We need to shop

Marcus: Bad idea. We'll shop on the way.

Me: I'm so gonna enjoy myself.

We do a group hug. Someone clears their throat. We let go.

Bonisiwe: Good morning

Them: Morning.



Melissa: I peeped through your pot. The smell, I couldn't hold myself.

Bonisiwe: Its okay.

Marcus: I'll go get some fresh air.

Bonisiwe: I'm gonna prepare the food. Lexi said you usually eat outside.

Melissa: Yes we do. I'll help you.

Me: Let me go fix the shelter. The sun is not nice out there.

I pour a glass of juice. Bonisiwe seems surprised. She asked my parents to come over, I guess we'll find out soon why.

Me: I need a little help here.

He's deep in his thoughts. I doubt he even heard me.

Me: Dad.

Marcus: Mmmh?

Me: I need help over here.

Marcus: Oh

He gets up and helps me open the shelter.

Me: Why are you avoiding Bonisiwe so much?

I say after we sit down.

Marcus: Why do you say that?

Me: Because you avoid being in the same space as her every time.

Marcus: I can't stand her. I tolerate her for your sake.

Me: That's all?

He frowns.

Marcus: What do you mean?

Me: I mean is that all?

Marcus: Yes that's all.

They emerge from inside. I get up to help them prepare the table. We sit and pray before we dish up. We're silent, awkward silence.

Her food tastes really nice. She's a good cook I've concluded because her food always leaves me and the guards wanting more. Martha had to go home so I paid her and she left. I miss

her; she knew kept Bonisiwe entertained not that Lunga and Steven can't but she did it better.

Bonisiwe: You know I was trying my luck when I asked you to come.

Melissa: We are not like that

Bonisiwe: You're not like that. I just wanted to thank you for letting your daughter stay with me. I know it wasn't an easy decision but thank you.

Melissa: She did it out of love.

I clear my throat involuntarily. She looks at me and then back at mom.

Bonisiwe: My accounts are unfrozen. I am gonna look for a new place. By Thursday I'd be out. I just wanna thank you Lexi for keeping me under your roof and making sure I had everything I needed, the therapist and all. I'm really grateful.

Marcus: That is good news. Now I can sleep well at night knowing you aren't there trying to strangle my child.

Me: Dad!

Melissa: Marcus!

Marcus: Its the truth. I never wanted you here Bonisiwe and frankly. I wish you were leaving today!

He tosses the napkin on the table and storms inside. Mom follows him.

Me: I'm sorry.

Bonisiwe: Its okay. I understand.

Me: You don't have to move out.

Bonisiwe: I want to. I can see that I'm invading your space. You're never here.

Me: That's because I have things to do.

Bonisiwe: No you're avoiding me.

Me: I'm not.

Bonisiwe: I wasn't born yesterday. The way you instantly stop laughing when I get in when you're with your friends explains everything. You don't want me here.

Me: If I didn't want you here you wouldn't be here.

Bonisiwe: Then why are you treating me less than a mother.

Me: Because you're not!

I take a deep breath.

Me: You know since you've been here I've been expecting this one thing whenever I saw you. Whenever I walked in from work and find you in a couch. I'd expect to hear those words but you've never. If you do not see anything wrong with what you did then I really have nothing to discuss with you.

Bonisiwe: How many times you want me to apologize?

Me: You've never apologized. And you know what? Its okay. You don't have to because when you leave here that'll be the end of it all. My life will resume like you never existed.

Bonisiwe: Lexi.

Me: Thanks for the food.

I get up and head in. My parents are sitting in the kitchen drinking wine. Weren't they shouting at each other just now?

I take my phone and find a message from Mvelo.

'Nqaba is at his place. He just called Nduna'

I feel a relief. I try to call him but it goes to voicemail. I go to my bedroom, I pack my overnight bag and put on sneakers.

Melissa: Whoa! Where are you going?

Me: To degrade myself before a man. Wish me luck.

Marcus: What man?

Me: Your son inlaw.

Them: Jake?

Me: No. Nqaba Zungu.

Dad chokes on the wine.

Me: Sorry.

The lift closes....

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NQABA

My burner phone rings in my left pocket.

Me: Yes.

Marcus: You son of a bitch.

Me: What have I done?

Marcus: You shagging my daughter?

Me: You woke me up for that? And I didn't know she's your daughter until I fell inlove with her.

Marcus: Didn't she tell you her last name?

Me: No.

Marcus: Break up with her. You hear me? I'm not gonna have you as my son inlaw. My child can't be with a thug.

Me: Daughters marry their fathers. Bye Marc.

Marcus: I'm gonna kill you.

Me: I might do it first. Your parcels just landed. Send your boys to go get them before Bheki Cele gets suspicious.

I hang up.

"Nqaba I know you're here"

I get up and open. She's not wearing a wig. I find myself smiling.

Lexi: Can I come in?

Me: Yes.

I hug her and close the door.

Me: I missed you.

Lexi: Why weren't you taking my calls? I was going crazy.

Me: Who told you I'm here?

Lexi: Mvelo.

She hugs me again crying now.

Lexi: don't ever do that. You stressed me out. I love you.

Me: I won't. And I'm sorry. I love you more.

She lets go.

Lexi: I bought you pyjamas.

Me: What? Why?

Lexi: To wear on our lazy days.

Me: Haw ngeke sthandwa sam. Lezo zinto ezabantu abagulayo esbhedlela ai thina zinsizwa. (Never. Those things are for sick



people at the hospital not us) haw ne gown? (And the gown?)  
Nedlozi lingangijikela malingangibona ngigqoke lelijazi lama  
coconut. (My ancestors would turn their backs on me if they  
saw me wearing this)

She laughs.

Lexi: I know one day you will need them.

Me: Angeke! (I won't)

She leaves me standing there and head to the bedroom  
jumping. Is she really happy to see me? I missed her

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\*\*\*7 months later\*\*\*

My new title is Godmother of a very cute goddaughter Anathi Priscilla Mlangeni. No one stood up against Nqaba when naming her Priscilla because the parents just grew heart eyes when he said it. She is 6 weeks old now, it took all the power in the world Nqaba to even hold her, his beliefs go against holding infants, I had to emotionally blackmail him about what will he do when we have ours, he fell right into my trap and agreed.

So far so good. The Ncubes demanded demages, my dad paid them in a snap. Uncle Bheki and Auntie Gugu are expecting, they are happy and I am happy for them. Mike is getting married, Philani got married in May so did Will and Kate. The past months have been quite busy and fast. So much happiness around me. Gogo visits anytime she wants, she loves my mother but what's there not to love about that woman? Bonisiwe is bringing her business back to it's feet, we talk sometimes. Jake is married too! He invited me but I was too busy to attend so on Monday he sent our magazine an invite to his new home, we're more than glad to go, we've taken interest in businessmen's house tours. Our last issue everyone kept talking about Mzwakhe Mbongeli's house so we now gonna have house tours on each issue.

The parents have met Nqaba, at a mall after I convinced him to drive me to get cosmetics because his famous grandpa will stab him to death if he ever steps his foot to my father's house while he hasn't paid lobola for me. The things that can't be done because of his grandpa that will stab him are numerous. Its annoying really.

My phone rings as I head to Will's office. Its mom.

Me: My love.

Melissa: Hey baby. I just saw your call.

Me: Its okay. How are you?

Melissa: Yes I am fine. Can you try harder on convincing Dr Zungu to have dinner with us tomorrow evening?

Me: I'm not promising anything.

Melissa: Tell him its my birthday.

I chuckle.

Me: Okay I will. Let me call you back later.

Melissa: Your dad says hi.

Me: Send my love to him.

Melissa: I will baby. Bye.

Me: Bye.

I hang up and greet Snazo, the new pa.

Snazo: He's with Mrs McVeigh.

Me: Please tell him I'm here.

She nods and call him

Snazo: You can go in.

Me: Thank you.

I push the door open.

Me: If you get pregnant we gonna name that baby Office.

They laugh. They are so inseparable.

Kate: I brought the report.

Me: I see. I brought this too, I need your signature and the stamp. We're going to Sandhurst.

Kate: Shoot! I forgot

let me go look for the perfect lenses.

She runs out.

Me: William!

Will: What?

Me: Stop distracting her please.

Will: I don't.

Me: Why is she here? Don't you all share a bed?

Will: We do. You wouldn't understand.

Me: I give up.

He signs, stamps and give me the papers back.

Me: We probably gonna spend the whole day there.

Will: Keep the boys off my woman.

Me: Yes sir!

He laughs and wishes us luck. I leave.

Where's Carlos anyway? I pack my things and leave. I send Kate the address and I drive there.

...

The wife gives us a warm welcome and serves us cocktails as we wait for Jake to come attend to us. She looks nervous.

Me: We are not TV people. Relax.

She laughs nervously.

Tammy: I know I know. I just can't help it. What if the cleaner didn't clean thoroughly and people zoom in and find mistakes?

Me: Oh my God calm down. That will not happen.

Tammy: More drinks?

Me: Yes please. These taste heavenly you should share the recipe if its not a secret.

Tammy: Ofcourse not! I'll write it down for you.

She walks away. Kate takes a sip.

Kate: Does she know?

Me: I don't think so. She wouldn't be so nice. This house is truly beautiful.

Kate: It could've been yours.

Me: Oh please.

Kate: Don't you wanna turn back the time?

Me: No. I'm good where I'm at babe trust me.

Kate: He's using a spell on you. He's a total opposite of what you'd go for.

Me: That's what makes him special.

Jake: Good day good people.

Us: Hi!

That came out a little too loud. He shakes our hands and sit on his single red fancy chair.

Jake: Shall we start?

Me: Yes Sir. Your wife is a sweetheart.

Jake: I know right.

She comes back with more cocktails.

Me: Thank you boo.

Tammy: Pleasure.

She goes to stand behind Jake and massages him.

Tammy: When are we starting?

Jake: Right now.

Kate gets up and set her camera on stand by.

Me: Let's start with this beautiful lounge. I wanna know about the paint, chairs, couches, flowers and e everything else in here.

Tammy takes a shaky deep breath and sits on her husband's lap. So cute.

Tammy: Uhm babe, let's start with the kitchen.

Kate: Awesome! But we don't have much time. Lexi you gonna take the different wing with either of them.

Tammy: I guess my team will be winning. Let's go Lexi.

Jake: I'll take Lexi with me since what's in her hand are questions for me. I'll be answering them on the tour.

Tammy: Ok. I'm gonna miss you.

He hugs her close and they kiss. So much love around here. My phone beeps.

"Sawbona mama wezingane I miss you"



Well I am not responding to this. He thinks he can not see me last night when he was supposed to and then text me only twice? He's not sorry.

Me: Shall we?

Jake: Ofcourse.

By the time we finish I nolonger wanna be here. There's giving someone a tour in your house and then there's bragging. Jake bragged it bored me.

I'm just glad we're done...

\*\*\*

NQABA

I bid my last patient goodbye and relaxes on the chair. I hate it when this place is packed. I don't appreciate these different faces I see everyday.

"Mr McVeigh is here for you sir"

She says with her head half in. I sign for her to let him in. I look for my micro phone in my drawers. He makes his way in with a smirk on his face, now I would rather see my patient's faces than his. He sits himself down.

Marcus: Is that a mic?

Me: Yes. I figured you don't hear me well when I speak to you on my normal voice.

I turn on my speaker.

Marcus: Stop playing hard to get for fucks sake!

Me: Christ's sake would've softened me up.

Marcus: Just come back already. You know you're the master mind. We are all stuck.

Me: Maybe its about time you all quit old men. How old are you all? 50 but you still wanna be involved in pharmaceuticals? Come on.

Marcus: That's how we earn money. These frickin companies do not bring enough money Zungu you know that.

Me: I don't because I make R3000 an hour and that's enough for a man who's ready to settle down and finally have a family.

Marcus: With my daughter?

He scoffs. "Lexi is not marriage type. Let alone a family! She loves and values her figure more than anything. Just wake up from that fairytale and come back to work"

I increase the volume and pat my mic.

Me: I AM NOT. CAN YOU PLEASE GET UP AND LEAVE MY OFFICE?

Marcus: We'll be waiting for you. I know you will not be enough with that R3000 per hour. Your appetite for wealth is huge.

Me: GET OUT.

He gets up and leaves. I pack my things and prepare to leave.

....

My new place! Such a warm beautiful home. Mom outdid herself with the deco. I fell inlove the moment I saw it after they finished. Nqaba wouldn't sleep at the penthouse so I had to move in here before I even wanted to. He said he feels like my dad is watching us. I don't know what's wrong with these men because Bheki didn't like much the idea of spending the night there.

I throw my bag on the couch and change to pyjamas. I have pyjamas for days, winter always has me buying pyjamas every time I go to the shops. Nqaba's are still here even though he never wears them but they are here just in case he changes his mind. I fix myself a sandwich, my fridge is now also a polony factory.

I settle in front of the TV but don't pay attention because Mvelo and I are texting. She's yearning for sex but there's a lot of weeks left till she can have some.

...

"Lexi?" I'm shook. I open my eyes, the tv is still blabbering.

Nqaba: Hey. Why are you sleeping on the couch?

Me: I must've fallen asleep. When did you arrive?

There's a smell of freshly cooked food.

Nqaba: Just now. I brought food. Are you okay?

Me: Yeah. Why are you whispering?

He chuckles. And let out a sigh. He gets up and put his hands in his jacket pockets. He's not himself. I sit upright.

Me: Are you okay?

Nqaba: No. My knees are wobbly and my palms are sweaty.

He takes a deep breath and looks the other direction.

Nqaba: Do you mind having my surname?

Me: Huh?

Nqaba: Ngithi awufuni na ukuba owaka Zungu?

Me: You're speaking in riddles.

Nqaba: Babe what I mean is. Do you mind having my surname, kids, we share life together forever.

I laugh. He laughs.

Me: I think I get you. God you're so terrible at this.

Nqaba: Do you want to?

I get up and hold both his sweaty and trembling hands.

Me: Yes I'll marry you Nqabayethu.

Nqaba: Ngiyabonga sthandwa sami.

He takes a box out of his pocket.

Nqaba: Shit This is harder than I thought.

Me: Are you for real? You really proposing?

I'm shaking now. This here before my eyes is a very beautiful ring.

Nqaba: Yes I am. Please don't cry. Lexi no I'm also nervous.

Me: Wait wait.

I wipe my tears. I reach for my phone and start recording.

Me: Ok pop the question.

Nqaba: What?

Me: We need to capture this moment. For our kids.

Nqaba: We gonna have kids?

Me: Yes, little Brentwood wearing kids with unruly hair if they take my genes.

He goes down on both knees.

Nqaba: Sabathile Alexis McVeigh. Would you please be my wife?

Me: Yes!!!!

He slid it in. It fits!!!

I kneel too and we hug. I'm crying, with all the hard time I've given and still giving him, he's seen me worth to be his life partner.

Me: I love you so much.

Nqaba: I love you so much and so glad you're in my life.

We get up. He runs to the bathroom. I rush after him. He's peeing. I chuckle.

Nqaba: Ei ngidinga udokotela. Ngagcina ukusaba kanje ngenkathi ngibona utikoloshe when I was 14. (I need a Dr. The last time I was this scared in my life was when I saw a zombie.) Yeses my knees need me to rest.

Me: Come let's eat and sleep.

He finishes washing his hands. He smiles and picks me up heading back to the lounge.

Aunt Mary is the first one to receive this video after I tell my parents tomorrow at dinner...

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He might as well just move in because he spends his entire days here.

Me: What kind of a CEO that is always free?

Will: An advanced one. He attends meetings on skype.

Me: Advanced indeed.

Will: Plans for lunch?

Me: Not any.

Will: Ok. Can we go to the mall? I have no idea what to buy for Melissa.

Me: Me too honestly.

Will: Let's get her a car.

Me: Really?

Will: Yeah, she hasn't bought a car in 3 years I think a new one will do.

Me: Perfect.

Will: See you in an hour.

Me: Cool.



He walks out. Its really hard to get a gift for someone who has every thing and worse; Picky.

I finish editing and make myself coffee. Carlos gets in.

Carlos: Someone's here for you.

Me: Let them in.

Carlos: ok.

What's that suppressed laughter expression. My mouth hangs open when he walks in. I never prepared myself for this. He puts the flowers and the paperbagon top of my desk.

Me: Hi

Its high pitched. He smiles and take a box out of the gown pocket.

Nqaba: You forgot your ring.

I look at my finger.

Me: Jesus thank you baby. I'm not used to such things.

I even forgot I own it. Infact I forgot I agreed to be someone's wife. I slide it in. I see relief in his eyes, now we address the dress code. He turns around and waves the robe.

Nqaba: I look like a mad man, right?

He laughs.

Me: No you look good.

I kiss his lips.

Nqaba: I feel funny.

I laugh.

Me: Why did you wear them?

Nqaba: Because you're soon to be my wife, you'll now have power to force me into them so I decided to wear them willingly. I brought you food.

Me: Thank you love.

I take it out, we sit on the couch and we eat. Trust my man to wear pyjamas in public but I love him as crazy as he is.

Nqaba: Have you told your mom?

Me: No we gonna tell them tonight.

Nqaba: Tonight?

Me: Yes. We talked about it yesterday.

Nqaba: We did?

Me: Yes Nqaba we did.

He blinks a few times.

Nqaba: I agreed?

Me: Yes.

Nqaba: Is your dad gonna be there?

Me: Yes. It's mom's birthday dinner.

He scratches his head.

Nqaba: What about his friends?

Me: Uncle Sbopho and his wife might come I don't know about the rest.

Nqaba: Is he black?

Me: Yes and friendly.

Nqaba: Ok.

He takes my hand and kisses it.

...

We had to use the McVeigh card to get atleast the car keys while they processed the purchase. We accompanied it with some flowers and chocolate.

Nqaba is looking at me as I get dressed. I found him still here when I got back.

Nqaba: You look great.

Me: Really? Isn't the slit too much?

Nqaba: For me, no its not but it is for the strange men that'll be there drooling over your thighs. I am not planning on punching anyone tonight.

I grab the black dress and slide into it. Its been 2 hours of me getting ready I know he's pissed but won't say a thing.

We start off at the garage to fill the tank. He gets inside to get us snacks. The drive is quiet, just thigh rubbing, hand holding and kissing. I am enjoying it.

Nqaba: Am I gonna get paid or what?

He says after we arrive at the McVeighs.

Me: For what?

Nqaba: Ukuba uring boy.

I look at my hand and laugh. I forgot it again.

Me: Yes Ofcourse you gonna get paid.

I kiss him.

Me: My head is failing to get this in. I never thought this moment will ever come in my life, I am yet to adjust.

Nqaba: I understand.

Me: Stop being sad.

Nqaba: I can't help it.

Me: I love you when you're being a baby.

Nqaba: Don't tell anyone. I am a hardcore.

He says with a little smile that makes my hairs stand.

We hop out. I spot aunt Mary's car. Mom!

Me: My bitter aunt is here. Don't mind anything she says.

Nqaba: As long as she won't comment about my race.

Me: She will.

Nqaba: Its not too late to turn back, you can tell your mother I couldn't make it.

Me: No. Can I have that jacket? Its really hot

Nqaba: Hhaibo Lexi. That would be disrespectful of me.

Me: My dad doesn't believe in that. Relax.

Nqaba: Stop convincing me. Let's go.

He takes my hand and we head in. Kate rushes to us and hugs me.

Kate: Your people are too much for me. Hi Nqaba.

Nqaba: Hello.

Me: Where is Britney?

Kate: Somewhere snuggled up in her husband's arms. Your aunt took Will and they vanished.

Me: Let me find mom and then we'll find a spot for ourselves.

Nqaba: I forgot the gift in my car. I'll go get it.

Me: Ok. I'll go find mom.

\*\*\*

NQABA

I walk out. I do not want to be here. Spending more than an hour in Sbopho and Marcus's company won't be pleasant.

I unlock the car and take out the gift bag. I turn to Sbopho after closing.

Sbopho: You're a very brave man.

Me: Sawbona nawe Ngwane.

Sbopho: Do you have good news for me?

Me: Yes. I'm getting married.

Sbopho: Don't fuck with me Zungu.

Me: Ok.

He grips my arm as I attempt to walk away.

Me: Don't start. Not at my girlfriends home.

He lets go.

Sbopho: We don't wanna play hide and seek with you Nqaba.  
You do not fall in love, wake up from that damn fairytale!

Me: That's what Marcus McVeigh installed in me, turns out I do fall in love and karma chose his daughter to be the one I fall inlove with. I am done with that life, I have repaid you all for that sponsorship now I'm done!

I rush in before I lose it and burst. 13 years serving these bastards, I repaid the money they paid my fees with and gave them more. I am done being their puppet.

I bump into Marcus on my way in followed by Lexi.

Marcus: We were on our way to get you.

Lexi holds me.

Lexi: Are you okay?

Me: Yeah I'm fine.

Sbopho walks in. Lexi looks at him and then pulls me away.

Mrs McVeigh is the first one to greet and hug me. This western life. Mother inlaws do not do the hugging back home



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infact you avoid social contact with them.

Mrs McVeigh: I am so happy to finally meet you.

Me: Likewise ma.

Lexi: Everyone this is Nqaba, my boyfriend. Baby this is, Aunt Mary, Kate, Will, Aunt Zethu, Britney and Matthews.

Me: Good evening.

Them: Hello.

Aunt Mary: I know you.

Me: Me too.

Aunt Mary: Lexi, you have a horrible choice in men. This boy once mugged me. Why don't you date men with tangible careers?

Lexi: He's a Dr.

Aunt Mary: Where did you buy your qualification?

Me: E Wits.

Melissa: Mary please do not ruin my birthday dinner. You may take a seat.

We sit down. They pray and the best part of life comes, dishing up. I am unfamiliar with most of the food so I just stick to what I know.

Lexi: Uhm family, mom sorry to moment but...

She waves her hand in the air. Everyone's fork drops, Marcus chokes on his food. Lexi is laughing.

Aunt Mary: Finally! Thank you thug boy.

Marcus: I need to get wine for this, Nqaba can you come help me.

Me: Yeah sure.

I wipe my mouth and follow him.

We head to the kitchen. He turns and push me against the wall with his elbow on my throat.

Marcus: You son of a bitch.

I push him off.

Marcus: I told you to leave her.

Me: I do not take orders from you McVeigh.

Marcus: You're forcing my hand to let her know the real you.  
You think she'll love you after that?

Me: Try and we'll see who'll win because I will tell her who you  
are and what you do. Imagine losing your one and only  
daughter, tragic.

Marcus: You wouldn't dare.

Me: Wouldn't I? Try me Marcus, try me. Where's the wine?

He storms out. That's the thing about people, when you stop  
dancing to their tune they go crazy...

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Its really happening. Its terrifying. 5 weeks ago I agreed to marry a man and today he's bringing lobola, I am going to commit my life to a man. I never thought someone would see me and think I'm fit enough to be his wife and actually wife me. My dad isn't really happy that I'm really heading to marriage. Parents do not know what they want. I glance at my wrist watch. I have been going up and doing absolutely nothing. I am just nervous. I stand over the window and watch tree move left to right, this wind is frustrating me. The clock is ticking.

Mvelo gets in.

Mvelo: Take a seat and breathe.

Me: I can't. They're late.

Mvelo: Lobolas are like this. Something always got to go wrong.

Me: What if he changed his mind?

She laughs.

Mvelo: Just seat down and breathe!

Me: I'm gonna call him.

Mvelo: Their phones aren't going through.

Me: Maybe something happened to them.

Mvelo: Nothing happened to them. They are on the way.  
Should I fix you something to down the nerves?

Me: No Mvelo. I wanna see the Zungus at my gate.

I am getting emotional. I sit down on the chair and take a deep breath. What am I gonna do if they don't show up at all? My phone rings. I jump up and grab it. Its him.

Me: Hey

Nqaba: We forgot the livestock permit at home. I'm sorry.  
What is the pin for the Absa card?

Me: Where are you?

Nqaba: Mandela square.

Me: Nqaba

He chuckles.

Nqaba: Are you nervous?

Me: I'm dying!

Nqaba: They must be at your gate now.

I hear cows mowing.

Me: What did you mean by livestock permit?

Nqaba: We couldn't go past Volkrust without permit.

Me: Babe we agreed on money.

Nqaba: There is but I couldn't sell the rest.

Me: You said there won't be live cows last night.

Nqaba: I love you.

Me: I love you more.

Nqaba: Let me get a drink. I'll call you later.

Me: Okay.

Nqaba: Take a deep breath.

I do.

Me: Talk later.

I hang up. Whew!

Mvelo hugs me. I cry in her shoulder.

Me: I thought he changed his mind.

Mvelo: He wouldn't. He loves you khalathi lakhe.

I laugh and we let go. Nqaba's younger brother calls me that. We met 2 weeks ago when he came to see Nqaba. He's friendly than he looks. He complained about hunger after saying he misses his mother's beef stew. I had to make a plan. Mike delivered that stew from Kwathema restaurant. I've been reading recipes but the outcomes are never good because if its not burned, the taste buds can't handle the taste.

Me: Now I'm crossing fingers dad doesn't ruin this for me.

Mvelo: He won't. Puff your face, they will call you anytime from now on. I'll go check on my desert.

Me: Bring me Anathi.

Mvelo: Ok.

I puff my face in the mean time...

\*\*\*

NQABA

He comes back from the resr rooms. He takes a seat across me and chuckles.

Me: Yini? (What?)

Mbuzo: You're really doing this?

Me: Ini? (What?)

Mbuzo: Loving someone and wanting to marry her.

Me: Yeah.

I take a sip of my coffee.

Mbuzo: What's special about her?

Me: Everything.

Mbuzo: She can't cook

you broke up with Lindi for Pam because Lindi couldn't cook and clean.

Me: That was my definition of a good woman. A woman I thought was best to live with Ma.

Mbuzo: Now you don't care?

Me: Yes. I'm marrying Lexi for myself, not ma or any of you.

Mbuzo: You're the first born. The woman you marry is for you and ma.

Me: Well I'll crown one of you to take my place.



Mbuzo: I'm glad you finally saw goodness in marriage. Mangubo will be happy to have someone to change her in taking care of umah.

Me: Yeah.

Our food arrives. I check if Nduna has texted. He hasn't. Those old men must be giving them hell....

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ALEXIS

I get to my room and take a deep breath. Mom and Mvelo laugh.

Me: My insides are turning.

Melissa: Here. Drink some water. If you feel like this at the negotiations you're definitely dying on your wedding day.

Mvelo: Please tell her. I wasn't this nervous on my negotiations.

Me: I'm getting married Mvelo. I just knelt before my inlaws, nodded when Nduna said they finally have a wife that will cook for them!

Mvelo: He was just pulling your leg relax.

Me: That's what is expected of me.

Melissa: Everyone can cook and they measure everything right. When the day comes, we'll skype and direct you how to make whatever you're making.

She makes it sound so easy. I lay down next to Anathi. They leave me to serve the live cows bringing people. I know my dad can't wait for this to be over so he can burn me for these cows.

...

Isn't the couple supposed to see each other after the negotiations?

I finish putting on pyjamas and go downstairs to pass my gratitude to uncle Sbopho for representing us.

Sbopho: So early?

He says when I walk in.

Me: Its 8pm.

Sbopho: That's early.

I chuckle and sit next to daddy dearest.

Me: I wanted to thank you for coming. It really means a lot. I don't know how we would've handled this without you.

Sbopho: We're family dolly.

Me: Yeah I know.

Sbopho: You're now someone's bride to be. You know what does that mean?

Me: I do.

Sbopho: You now have someone you report to your every move. You chose a very demanding tribe. I hope you know that.

Me: I do.

I don't wanna have such a conversation with them.

Me: Let me go sleep. Its been a long day..

I get up.

Marcus: You still have time to change your mind.

Me: About what?

Marcus: Marrying him.

Me: Dad

He shrugs.

Marcus: Just saying.

Me: Goodnight old men.

Them: Goodnight baby.

I leave...

...

I woke up early this morning and prepared to go meet up with Nqaba in Sandton. He loves it. We spoke until late last night. He managed to calm me down because I was mad he didn't come to see me.

I wait for him at the cafe. I am surprised he isn't here because he was rushing me saying he's leaving his place. I order coffee and chat with Mvelo. We chat until Nqaba Zungu arrives, looking like my true Zulu husband to be. He leans over to kiss me and sits down.

Nqaba: Traffic. You look beautiful.

Me: Thank you.

I am wearing a dress. He's never seen me wearing one.

Nqaba: So you're officially Mrs Zungu to be

Me: Yes I am.

He smiles shyly and keeps playing with my hand.

Nqaba: The way everyone around is surprised by this. They're making me nervous.

Me: Me too. I hate it

Nqaba: Umuntu ozothi nywerenywere nje from now on ngizomfaka unyawo. (If anyone says anything from now on I'll kick them"

I laugh.

Me: I'm opposing.

Nqaba: You'll see. We are here to shop.

Me: Really?

Nqaba: Yes. More dresses and skirts.

Me: Why dresses and skirts?

He raise his brows.

Nqaba: Because usuwumakoti wakwaZungu.

Me: Nqaba.

Nqaba: We are going home soon. You need to own dresses and skirts because omakoti abalifaki ibhulukwe. (Wives do not wear pants)

I forgot that part. I now have 2 problems about going to his home.

Me: I forgot. When is soon?

Nqaba: When you get time.

Me: I'm free next weekend.

Nqaba: Then we'll go. What did you do the cows?

Me: Dad took them to Standerton. He was so annoyed.

We laugh.

Nqaba: Ubaba didn't agree on selling all the cows. I'm sorry.

Me: Its okay my love.

Nqaba: Thank you for agreeing to be my wife Alexis.

Me: Its my pleasure babe. I love you

Nqaba: I love you more than anything.

"Nqabayethu!" I jump and spill the coffee all over the table.  
Isn't she everywhere!

Pam: I don't know what I did not do right but I know she didn't do half of it because she's nothing but a stupid hood rat.

She's crying. She looks miserable.

Nqaba grabs my hand and pull me up.

Nqaba: Let's go.

Pam blocks him.

Pam: You leave without a word and then a year later you're paying lobola for someone else? How could you do this to me. I waited for you. I still am.

I look at Nqaba. He shakes his head. I withdraw my hand.

Nqaba: Can you not do this here?

Pam: Why? Why are you hurting me so much?

Nqaba: I'll call your mother.

I don't even know why am I still here. I walk away. Nqaba follows after me.

Nqaba: We used to date. She's on drugs.

Me: You told her we would be here?

Nqaba: ofcourse not. Sthandwa sami listen.

He grips my arm. We stop.

Nqaba: She comes to that cafe every morning to meet her dealer. I'm sorry about that.

Me: I'm hungry.

I free myself from his grip and head to another restaurant....



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I slam my boot and head for the front door. He stops me. I look at him. He sighs. He looks drained.

Nqaba: Can we please go to my place.

Me: No. I wanna go home and lie down.

Nqaba: I think we need to address this.

Me: Did you know me then?

Nqaba: When?

Me: When she had me arrested?

Nqaba: Who?

Me: That woman! Did you know me!

Nqaba: No. I didn't.

Me: So you're still with her?

Nqaba: No.

Me: She said she's waiting for you. You left without a word. She still has hope. Why are you making someone feel like they still have a chance with you?

Nqaba: I'm sorry. I did what I thought was best then. I don't wanna fight.

Me: Me too.

Nqaba: Now can we please go home?

Me: Hop in.

Nqaba: I'm driving.

I give him the keys. He walks with me to open the door for me.  
We drive off.

Nqaba: Why did she get you arrested?

I snort.

Me: She touched my hair and I slapped her.

He laughs.

Nqaba: Haw nkosi yami uPam wabantu. (Poor Pam)

Me: I was frustrated. My dad had cut down my allowance and they told me to look for a job.

Nqaba: You should've looked for me. I'd have been your blesser.

I chuckle and adjust my seat back.

Me: Why did you leave her?

Nqaba: I didn't love her. Not how much she wanted me to.

Me: You should've told her.

Nqaba: I did, many times but she wouldn't accept it so I had to leave like that.

Me: Why me?

Nqaba: I don't know Sabathile. I asked myself that every night. You feel like what they call a soulmate. I've never wanted to change my ways for anyone but I did for you. You're special to me.

He takes my hand and kisses it.

Nqaba: I never knew I am able to cry until I met you. You bring out the real Nqabayethu Zungu. I've lived to be this take no nonsense kind of guy, feared for existing and knowing a certain people, never laughs and hold down a conversation for more than 10 minutes but you've changed all that. Worst of all I had a temper, I was a ticking bomb. I can't thank you enough for agreeing to be in my life.

He's got glassy eyes. He's such a cute big baby.

Me: Pull over.

He looks at me with a frown and pulls over.

Me: Come.

I hop out. He does too via my door. I wrap my short self around him.

Me: There's no better feeling in this world for someone you love to be themselves around you. I am glad you can open up to me. We're partners for life.

Nqaba: Sizoba nini nengane? (When are we gonna have a baby?)

Yes he's random like that. I move my head from his chest and tilt it to look at him. He smiles.

Me: You have a little dimple on your chin.

Nqaba: Do I?

Me: Yes. It's so tiny.

Nqaba: Should the baby inherit it?

Me: Yes it can.

Nqaba: Next year or 3 years to come?

Me: Why don't we start trying sooner?

Nqaba: When is that?

Me: 30 minutes.

Nqaba: Babe I'm serious.

Me: Me too. We can throw out all those condoms now.

Nqaba: My head is spinning. You scare me when you agree to anything.

I laugh.

Me: Why? Isn't that what you want?

Nqaba: It is but you used to challenge me.

He kisses my forehead.

Nqaba: Let's go park there and order food.

Me: No let's go. I wanna cook.

Nqaba: No!

Me: Yes!

Nqaba: I'll be dead by the time you finish.

Me: I'll make you the nono sandwich.

Nqaba: Ok ke.

We hop in and drive away...

\*\*\*\*

I am tired. I want to drink pills that will knock me out until tomorrow morning. Mom wouldn't let me sleep, we baked until

3am this morning. 3 20Ls. The fuss of me marrying to Nqaba is annoying. She advised that we drive by the mall and buy groceries.

How do you even buy groceries for people you do not know?  
Nqaba doesn't make it better by saying 'anything is fine'

Me: Do they eat pickles?

Mvelo: No but you can buy it for yourself. Go get yeasts.

Me: For? Do I need to do more baking?

Mvelo: Yes. Steamed bread.

Me: I can't make that thing.

Mvelo: Take it!

I sigh. Nqaba has ditched me with some of the grocery. I'm left here to get the little things.

Me: What about breakfast?

Mvelo: Just get lots of polony because you know your person.

Me: Already bought that.

Mvelo: Eggs and margarine. Don't forget teabags and milk, powdered milk.

Me: I bought liquid.

Mvelo: Its okay but buy powder now.

Anathi cries.

Me: I'll call you later when we arrive.

Mvelo: Ok we love you.

Me: I love you more.

I hang up and get everything else that I think is needed and go to check out.

I need a special teacher to teach me how to be a good modern makoti. Most of all I need a personal trainer for cooking.

I find him standing with Mbuzo outside the car. I greet them.

Mbuzo: Are you good makoti?

Me: I'm good. How are you?

Mbuzo: I'm great. I didn't expect to see you this soon.

Me: Here I am.

Mbuzo: How do you like our town?

Me: Its small and easy. I can come on my own next time.

Nqaba raises his brows. I hit him playfully. He laughs.

Nqaba: I know you won't come alone.

Mbuzo: Don't discourage her. Makoti, I'll see you all tomorrow.

Me: Ok go well.

They finish putting the plastics in the boot. I walk to my door and hop in. Nqaba follows after a while.

Me: Doesn't he live with you?

Nqaba: He does. He's going to his wife.

Me: Oh.

I don't get it though.

Me: How far are we?

Nqaba: 30 minutes.

Me: I wanna take a nap.

Nqaba: Your aeroplane pillow is on the boot.



That's supposed to be my neck pillow.

Me: I'll manage.

I adjust my seat a bit lower and close my eyes.

...

I am woken up by noise of little children screaming. I open my eyes. We're here, this is many kids. I didn't bring enough goodies for so many little people. Nqaba opens my door.

Nqaba: We're here.

Me: That was quick.

Nqaba: Come, you need to rest.

Me: What about the groceries?

Nqaba: They'll come take it.

I get off and head inside the house we're parked in. There's 1 main house and rondavels and flats. They all look new.

This flat smells new. Fresh cement. It's pretty big, enough to accommodate the queen bed, 3 piece wardrobe, a tiny computer table, couch

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tv stand and a laundry basket. There's still space left. I wonder who set it up for him.

I put my tiny bag on the chair below the bed and and take off my shoes. I throw myself on the bed. Its so comfy!

My blood cells must be rejoicing to lay down. Nqaba walks in with my 2 luggage.

Nqaba: Is it comfortable?

Me: Yes.

A young man walks in. He looks like Nqaba and Mbuzo, tall as they are.

Him: Sanibona.

Nqaba: What's the rush? Why are you so tall?

He hugs him in and brushes his head.

Him: I can't stop growing.

Nqaba: How tall are you gonna be when you're 18?

What? Nqaba laughs.

Nqaba: he's 16. This is Mbuzo's first born. Bahle this is Mam Sabathile.

Bahle: nice to finally meet you.

Me: Likewise.

We shake hands.

Bahle: Mkhulu is here.

Nqaba's face changes.

Nqaba: Get some rest. I'll come with hot water.

Me: Ok.

They walk out. I strip naked and wrap a towel around me. I climb on the bed and text mom, Mike, Mvelo and dad. A knock comes through.

Me: Come in.

A woman gets in. She's dressed like all the other women I've seen here. The cape, I do not understand it.

Her: Yehheni. Ulele?

She laughs. I jump off the bed.

Me: Shouldn't I?

Her: Your mamazalas are coming to see you.

Me: No.

Her: Yebo ntombi. Put on some clothes, you're really beautiful.

Me: Thank you.

Her: Oh, ngingu Mangubo. (I am Mangubo)

Me: Alexis.

She laughs.

Mangubo: Aibo, sizokubiza ngomaMalveigh. (We'll call you maMalveigh)

Me: It's McVeigh. And you don't have to, I don't mind being called by my name.

Mangubo: They will call you maMalveigh. Let me go prepare for tomorrow.

Me: What's happening?

Mangubo: Its Saturday, Sabbath. We're Nazareths.

Me: Oh.

Mangubo: I'll see you later.

Me: okay.

She walks out. I change into the dress I was wearing, a jacket and a doek. This is woman abuse. Its too hot for all these things.

I sit on the chair and wait for them. A little boy gets in and lay a grass mat a bit far from the bed. He walks out. My phone rings, the door opens as I reach for it. I put it on silent and sit back down.

Old woman: Angikaze ngikuzwe! Uqhwakele emzini?

Not so old: Awukahle sisi. Sawubona ngane yam.

I get up.

Me: Yebo ma.

Not so old: There's a mat behind you.

I turn and see it. I take it and lay it then sit. They sit too.

Old woman: Hhai imikhuba yo Nqaba.

She claps her hands. Monster in law one.

Not so old: We are your mothers. I am MaNkosi Nqaba's step mother and this is MaNgubane Nqaba's uncle's wife. Nqaba's mother is not well so we're here on her behalf.

MaNgubane: Do you know what that means?

Me: No

Mangubane: It means she drinks medication at 7am in the morning and-

Mankosi stops her.

Mankosi: We welcome you KwaZungu. We looking forward to know you and teach you all that you need to know about this home.

Me: Thank you.

MaNkosi: If you need to ask anything, just buzz me.

She takes out a piece of paper and place it down.

Me: I will.

The little boy gets in again and ask for MaNgubane.

MaNgubane: Let's meet tomorrow morning.

She leaves. I finally breathe.

MaNkosi: You can sit on a chair.

I chuckle.

Me: I wouldn't risk it.

She narrows her eyes.

MaNkosi: Thank you Sabathile. This is gonna be the first in 12 years that Nqaba sleeps at home.

Me: He never sleeps here?

Mankosi: No. This flat had to be built after the negotiations. He's never bothered to build himself a house here. Just know I appreciate your presence in his life. Maybe you'll convince him better to mend his relationship with his father. I've accepted that him and I will never connect but his father, he breaks every time when he talks about how close they used to be before I came into the picture.

Me: I will try.

She smiles.

MaNkosi: I'll see you tomorrow after church.

Nqaba walks in. MaNkosi gets up and bid me goodbye. Nqaba doesn't even acknowledge her. He throws himself on the bed and grunt.

Nqaba: Couldn't they come at least tomorrow?

Me: Its okay.

Nqaba: Mam MaNgubane is too forward. Didn't he mention umaka boy?

Me: Was she supposed to?

Nqaba: She always mention it to me.

Me: She didn't. What's her deal?

Nqaba: We used to date. She fell pregnant and said the child is mine.

He laughs.

Nqaba: MaNgubane agreed it was mine when they came with it.

Me: Why did you deny it?

Nqaba: Because we weren't active. Mathambo is missing.

Me: I'm sorry. Since when?

Nqaba: They say he was here in the morning. Maybe he's out to see his girlfriend.



I get up and take the piece of paper.

Me: You look less worried.

Nqaba: You want me to cry?

Me: Yes. Your baby is missing.

Nqaba: Mkhulu is nearby he'll-

Me: Stab you.

He laughs and nod.

Nqaba: We haven't kissed in...1 hour and 30 minutes.

Me: You're counting?

Nqaba: No. Woza la. (Come here)

I shake my head and run to the couch. I know that smug. I switch on the t.v.

Me: This room smells new.

Nqaba: It is.

Me: Where do you usually sleep when you're home?

He sit up right.

Nqaba: Lodge. She told you didn't she?

Me: She meant no harm.

Nqaba: She did. What if I told you the opposite?

Me: It wouldn't matter.

Nqaba: It would. She also told you about baba.

Me: Do you wanna share what happened?

He lies on his back.

Nqaba: No but I'll tell you.

I take off the jacket and go lie next to him and rest my head on his chest. His heart is beating too fast. I do not like this but I do want to know...

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I woke up at 4am per Mvelo's instruction. I only did because its spring and at 4am there's already some light. I made porridge and tea.

I put Nqaba's on a tray and walk to the flat. Its close to 6am. I had to keep it in the stove long enough to be sure it is ready.

I find him dressing up.

Nqaba: Please tell me that is not cooked food.

Me: It is.

The look on his face is not excitement that I expected.

Nqaba: Is there any left?

Me: Yaa

Nqaba: Shit! Lets go. Put that down. Mamkhulu is gonna murder you.

I run behind him. Why? Am I not supposed to cook?

Mangubane comes flying our direction.

Mangubane: Weh weh weh!

She put her hands over her heard and continue screaming.  
Nqaba tries to shush her but she's not having it.

Mangubane: Nenzani emzini ka Mbube? Nqaba ningenzani?  
(What have you done at Mbube's home? Nqaba what are you doing to me?"

Nqaba: She had no idea mamkhulu.

Mangubane: We told her we are Nazareths marn! Ey wena ntombazane, are you here to kill us?

Everyone emerges from their houses.

Me: I'm sorry.

Mangubane: Go right now and get rid of that hot water and porridge!

I rush to the kitchen with tears running down my face.

Mangubo gets in after me.

Mangubo: Sorry sisi. Let me help you.

Me: thank you.

We carried the pot out.

Mangubo: Wait. Let me get my phone.

We put the pot down and she rushes to her house and comes back. We pick it up and walk.

We are heading to the back gate. There's a little little on the other side. I'm hoping we do not get into it.

Mangubo: Here is fine.

We put it down. My hands are already aching. This pot is big and very much heavy. She glances at me and laughs.

Me: What?

Mangubo: Never let her get to you. She's a bully.

Me: She doesn't like me.

Mangubo: She doesn't like anyone and frankly, nobody likes her. Its a good thing she doesn't have a son or else his wife would live in a burning hell. Extra hot.

Me: She scares me.

Mangubo: I just wish ma was well. She's such a good woman.

Me: What's wrong with her? Nqaba didn't seem like he wants to share.

She lays her cape down and take out a black plastic from her boobies.

Mangubo: Sit.

Me: Here?

Mangubo: Yes. The porridge is getting cold.

She takes out spoons from the plastic. I laugh.

Me: No you didn't.

Mangubo: Do you prefer it with margarine or peanut butter?

Me: I eat it however.

I look around for a snake or any tiny animal that might munch on my poor butt and then sit. The grass isn't civil to me either but I'll handle it.

We dig in after putting sugar on our sides.

Me: Are they not gonna have a problem?

Mangubo: If you tell them we ate it. I used to do it all the time. I had a a place by the river. I'd go there and cook my own food until I got caught.

She laughs.

Me: You're so silly.

Mangubo: Hhaisuka I wasn't used to this life of cold food.

Me: I don't know how I will survive without a cup of coffee. Let alone bathing with cold water.

Mangubo: When you want to bath, talk to me. I'm a woman with a plan.

Me: I smell corruption.

We laugh.

Mangubo: We were talking about ma.

Me: Mmmh yes.

Mangubo: She can't walk nor talk. Infact she's non functional. I bath her, feed her, and everything else.

Me: That's...why couldn't he just tell me.

Mangubo: Probably ashamed.

Me: She didn't make herself sick.

Mangubo: Yeah but still.

Me: I should go see her.

Mangubo: She'll be delighted.

Me: Isn't stressful to work and also take care of her?

Mangubo: I do not work. I have my degree hanging over my lounge but it's never worked. She got really sick, stroke, right after I got married which was the same year I finished my course. I had to be a wife and take care of my mother inlaw.

Me: Couldn't they get a nurse?

Mangubo: Who would've paid it? Mbuzo had money enough to feed us and pay for her Drs appointments.

Me: Nqaba?

Mangubo: Nqaba had left home 4 years before. He didn't put his degree into use. He sort of gave up on life.

He didn't mention that last night when he told me about him and his father. Apparently he found a woman, stopped paying for Nqaba at university to marry her. He had to work, he ended up failing his 3rd year, he got into illegal things to make a living for himself until he finished his studies. He said he was taking of his mother and his siblings with that little money.

The woman left, his father finally came back home cause he had ditched his mother and then later found MaNkosi. Their relationship was never repaired. I asked him why is he letting MaNkosi actually think her arrival was the cause of their fued.



He just sighed and changed the subject and I decided to let him be.

Me: So you gave up on yours too?

Mangubo: No. She needed me Sabathile.

She chuckles but there's pain reflecting in her face. She's crying.

Mangubo: And then her son thanked me with another woman. I swear I felt like I was gonna have a stroke when he told he's taking a second wife.

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Mangubo: I did.

I furrow my brows. She laughs.

Mangubo: I'm here for ma and my kids but we ended a long time ago. I have a man that loves me.

Me: And he's okay with you being married?

Mangubo: Yes. Don't tell Nqaba though. Nobody knows. I am happy you're here, although I'll see you on 4 occasions a year but I'm glad to have a sister.

I smile and rub her shoulder.

Me: I'm glad we get along fine.

"You're corrupting Lexi now"

We turn to find Mbuzo.

Me: Hi. This was my idea.

Mbuzo: I know it wasn't. I came to check if you're okay.

Mangubo: We are fine. Why are you back?

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Me: What about the pot?

Mangubo: We'll leave it here. It is a curse now.

We walk back home.

...

He smiles when he sees me.

Nqaba: I missed you.

He's cleaned. It smells good.

Me: You should've come to get me.

We kiss.

Nqaba: I didn't want to disturb your eating.

I laugh.

Me: We didn't eat it.

Nqaba: Or don't you like your porridge however?

I laugh.

Me: You should stop being a stalker.

Nqaba: I can't help it. The Water can will arrive soon.

Me: There's no taps?

Nqaba: No love there isn't. We buy water.

Me: Ok. Let me rest since today is a lazy day.

Nqaba: I'll go get you some fruits on the forest.

Me: Did you find mathambo?

Nqaba: No. I'll also look for him.

Me: Take your phone with you.

He chuckles.

Nqaba: I'll see you soon.

He kisses my cheek and walks out. I take off the doek and climb into bed. I call mom to inform her about the incident.

...

Yesterday was quite a day. We started cooking around 6pm. I could never survive on consuming cold food for the whole day.

This morning we were woken up by Mangubane telling Nqaba to take her to town. Who goes to town at 5am?

I told Nqaba to go. He wanted to cry, he hates being disturbed from his beauty sleep. .

She called an hour later and said she wants beans, I should fetch wood to cook it. Mangubo came through for me, she sent the boys to fetch us wood. When Nqaba and Mangubane came back we were already done cooking.

I placed his tray on the coffee table.

Nqaba: Let's go get breakfast in town.

Me: We cooked. And that would be crazy.

Nqaba: I need espresso and bacon.

Me: Mamkhulu would flip if we went to eat breakfast in town.

Nqaba: She wouldn't. She can walk over anyone but not my wife. She has this thing of thinking she owns this home.

Me: Just let her be.

Nqaba: Never.

Me: I wanna see your mother.

He looks at me blankly.

Me: Mangubo told me.

He sighs. We're leaving today or tomorrow morning. When am I gonna see her if I don't see her today?

Nqaba: I'll take you when you're done changing.

Me: I'm changed.

Nqaba: You wanna go to town dressing like that?

Me: Yeah. What's wrong with my dress?

Nqaba: Nothing. I just thought maybe you wanna do your eyebrows, wear that yellow tight dress or something.

Me: No.

He raises his brows.

Nqaba: Okay. Let's go see ma then.

I check myself on the mirror if my doek is still in place and we walk out.

I get more nervous as we get closer.

All these houses do not only smell new inside but the furniture is also new. We get to her bedroom. It is spotless and smells as fresh. Mangubo does really outdo herself. Nqaba pulls a chair for me.

Me: They said I'm not allowed to sit on a chair.

Nqaba: Mah doesn't mind.

She smiles. I guess that's approval. I take a seat.

Me: Sawubona ma. I am Alexis.

Nqaba: She's beautiful isn't she?

She smiles and nods.

Nqaba: I love her. She agreed to have babies.

Her eyes widen in surprise. We laugh.

Me: Am I making a mistake?

She nods smiling. I laugh.

Me: I know right?

They look like her. Mamas boys.

Nqaba: I'm not that bad.

She raises her brows. Oh that's where he got it from. It seems more like a habit than an expression.

Me: You are bad.

Nqaba: We will have beautiful babies.

Me: True but how will they behave?

Nqaba: I am a true sweetheart.

She laughs.

Me: That's a no.

Nqaba: You will see on our child.

His phone rings.

Nqaba: You'll find me outside.

I nod. He walks out. We sit there in silence. Just exchanging smiles.

Me: I love your son. I truly do. Thank you for bringing him into this world. He has his issues but they are everything I can handle. He came to pay lobola while you haven't even met me, I know you somehow had doubt. I'm from Jo'burg, born and raised there. I have no idea how things work around here. I would twist my ankle if I had to put on a 20L bucket in my head, let alone starting a fire. I grew up with technology all around me. I will try to be the best daughter inlaw I can be. I just want to know if we have your blessings.

She smiles and nods. She opens her hand. I place mine on hers.

Me: Thank you.

Mangubo walks in.

Mangubo: You have 2 daughters now. She likes you. She doesn't let people come that close to her.

Me: You don't know how happy am I.

"Mam Lexi baba is crying"

Us: Why?



I rush out.

Me: Where is he?

Bahle: His house.

I head there. I find him hugging a dog. Its mathambo.

Nqaba: I thought I had lost you.

I sit next to him.

Me: You found him.

He put it down.

Nqaba: Yes.

Me: And you're crying.

Nqaba: No.

I wipe his face and laugh.

Me: Hi Mathambo. You better not go missing again or else daddy will be sad.

He wiggles his tail.

Nqaba: This is mommy.

Mangubo walks in pushing Nqaba's mother, followed by Mbuzo, MaNgubane, MaNkosi, and kids.

Nqaba: and then?

Mbuzo: Did we miss the show?

Nqaba: What show?

Mbuzo: You crying.

I laugh.

Me: Unfortunately you did.

They all sigh in disappointment.

Nqaba: Leave ma and get out.

They laugh and walk out. I wheel ma to Nqaba and switch on the tv...

## **Last Chapter**

Its been 3 weeks since we came back from Vryheid. As much as we say we haven't moved in together but we have because we spend each and every night together. Either at my place or his. The Mlangenis are failing to get over my cooking on a Saturday incident. Mvelo brings it up every time we speak. It was so sad when we left. I just got attached to Mangubo.

I missed her. She didn't even have WhatsApp, her reason being 'I don't have people to text' I made her download it. We video call almost everyday. She's such a sweet soul.

Our conversations are always long because she always have some coffee to spill.

Today is gonna be a long day. I woke up and went to visit my parents. I haven't spent quality time with them in a while, mom complains everyday. Husband suggested I go see them, I would have gone tomorrow. Saturdays are our day. He's always too tired during the week so we lazy around on Saturday, and then be productive on Sunday. We went to church last week. He kept whispering things. Commenting about the pastors shoes and everybody else's anything that he doesn't get.

Mvelo and Mangubo are my google. I just finished cooking beef stew. Mangubo is the first person to ever win Mvelo's heart. The Skype was fun because they are both crazy they kept cracking jokes here and there, screaming at me for putting too much of anything and then make fun of me.

Dad pours a glass of water and put it near his plate.

Melissa: Let's pray.

Dad takes her hand.

Me: We pray two times now?

Marcus: We-

He laughs.

Melissa: Old age.

They are gonna taste something cooked by me for the first time in their lives. Perhaps they think they are gonna die.

Me: It won't give you a stomach bug.

Marcus: whew!

Melissa: I feel like I'm on fear factor.

Me: Mom!

We laugh.

Me: I'm hurt. Let's eat.

I start eating. They follow. I see their lips curving. I know right, I did everything those master cooks told me. There's no way this would have tasted bad.

Marcus: Mmmh. Wow

Melissa: This is amazing baby.

Marcus: Why couldn't you cook for us all these years?

Me: We had a chef.

Melissa: You didn't have one at the penthouse.

Me: You brought me food every time.

Marcus: You're preparing yourself to be that boy's slave.

Me: Can we eat please.

Marcus: Do you even love him?

I put my fork down.

Me: I do dad. I do. Why do you always ask me that?

Marcus: I just wanna be sure

Me: Sure of what? I'm engaged to this guy. Why would I be with someone I do not love?

Marcus: Money, maybe?

Me: Money?

Marcus: Yeah. He's loaded.

Me: You think very low of me Mr McVeigh.

Melissa: That's what my dad used to ask me about him. Honey when you're inlove with someone you careless about what they have.

Me: Thank you my love.

Marcus: I'm just a concerned father. How well do you know him? What if he's a criminal? Involved in some shady dealings.

Me: As long as that doesn't effect us in any way then I'm good. Men are never perfect, you aren't too. I'm sure of that.

Marcus: What?

Me: You're a business man. There's noway on earth you're legit. I could've came with him but you make him uncomfortable.

Marcus: He knows I will see right through him that he's a criminal.

Me: Is it because he's black?

Marcus: What? No!

Me: Would you ask all these question and assume he's a bad guy if he was white?

Marcus: That's absurd Alexis. As your father I am allowed to have concerns. I didn't like that Jake either. I liked Bheki.

Melissa: Let it go Marcus. Baby I'm sorry.

Me: He's hurting me mom.

Melissa: I'm sorry. Marcus apologize to the child.

Marcus: I'm sorry I was-

Melissa: Apologize decently please.

Me: I thought you wanted me to get married.

Marcus: I didn't think it'll be him.

I laugh. What's wrong with him.

Me: Well I'm sorry daddy.

Marcus: I had accepted that you won't get married anyway.

Melissa: You're gonna be the reason we never see her again after she gets married.

Marcus: I'm being honest!

I laugh.

Me: I'll go get desert.

Melissa: Please bring me my favorite bowl.

Me: I will.

I collect our plates and go to the kitchen. Mom's deserts have so many names that I end up forgetting but I never forget how good they taste. This one is my favorite. It has biscuit crumbs and cream and there's nothing I love more than that in my life.

I hear noise coming from the lobby. I rush there. This is the last person I expected to see here. She's shouting but I can't hear a thing she's drunk. She notices me.

Bonisiwe: You're about to get married and you never saw it fit to let me know?

Me: I tried. You never picked up.

Bonisiwe: Lies! Did they convince you to not let me know?

Me: No.



Bonisiwe: I know this conniving satan did. Marcus, I want my baby back.

Marcus: Take her.

Bonisiwe: Where are you going? Come back here and tell me what did you do with the lobola money. There's supposed to be inkomo kamama in that money and that belongs to me.

Marcus: Unfortunately you're not considered that. Now please leave my house.

Bonisiwe: Where's your pathetic wife? Tell her thanks for babysitting for me but I want my baby now.

I leave to dish up desert for mom and I. Dad can deal with his sidechick alone. He knows her better.

I find mom nibbling on ice cream.

Melissa: These are the best.

Me: There's Bonisiwe.

Melissa: I opened the gate for her haven't they killed each other?

Me: No. She's here for lobola money.

Melissa: I sent her a text and an email telling her that there are people coming but she never replied or show up.

Me: I did call her too. A couple of times.

Melissa: That means we are not at fault. She can bite off her boyfriend's head.

I hold her hand.

Me: I could never do it the way you do.

Melissa: It's you that I love more than anything. I bought you some too. Do you remember how you used to cry for that ice cream boy when you were little?

I chuckle.

Me: Yes and you will always promise to get it for me the next day.

She laughs.

Melissa: You reacted to cold foods. I just couldn't give you ice creams carelessly.

Me: You've always been spoiling me.

Melissa: You're my little girl. I knew I was losing you the day you left us at your place and said you're going to our son inlaw.

I laugh.

Me: We weren't even on good terms. I was going there to fix things.

Melissa: That's why I do not question if you love him. You're not the person to ever try fix anything with anyone.

Me: Everything feels right to do with him. That job asked?

Melissa: Yeah, what about it?!

Me: Its for my sister wife.

Melissa: The one who looks after your mother inlaw?

Me: Yeah.

Melissa: Your dad said there is available space. You should go to HR on Monday and give them her CV.

Me: I don't have it. I want it to be a surprise.

Melissa: Tell Gwen to close the post then.

"Fuck you Marcus! You took advantage of me. I was 19 for Christ's sake you old hag!"

Melissa: That's the pool side calling us.

Me: I haven't swam in a while.

Melissa: Saint please bring us cocktails!

Saint: Coming right up!

New worker again. She's obsessed with tv. You'd swear she's not here. We take our deserts with us. Bonisiwe and her baby daddy can kill each other in peace now...

...

"Why were you not taking my calls" is the first thing I got when I finally called him back. I put my phone and silent when I arrived because I knew he will keep on calling and I will end up not giving my parents enough time.

I put on my slippers and walk out. He's here outside. 10pm, he drove from his place to here because he can't sleep.

He opens the door for me and I hop in. He walks around to his side. He's getting obsessed with pyjamas. Its the gown that has no hope.

I see nasal sprays and pain relief pills.

Me: You are sick?

Nqaba: Yes. I'm coming down with flu.

Me: So much medication.

Nqaba: I don't know what helps. I can't remember the last time I was sick.

Me: Uhh my poor baby. I'm sorry, you gonna be better.

Nqaba: When?

Me: In the morning.

He looks at me for a while and smiles.

Nqaba: I missed you.

Me: And you couldn't sleep.

Nqaba: Yes. Its so addictive sleeping next to you.

Me: Well you better get used to it.

He frowns.

Nqaba: Why?

Me: I've been thinking. I thought we'd discuss this tomorrow but we might as well discuss it now.

Nqaba: Your dad doesn't like it that we spend every night together?

Me: No. He doesn't make such calls. Let's go for a drive.

Nqaba: No. Tell me why should I get used to it...

He takes a brief pause.

Nqaba: Are you breaking up with me?

Me: You've got worst scenarios in your head babe. I want to exchange Mangubo.

Nqaba: exchange?

Me: Yeah. Look after ma, let her come here to work.

Nqaba: Whoa whoa whoa. That is not happening

Me: She deserves her big break. Your brother's second wife works

she's living how she wants. Thembisile also deserves that.

Nqaba: What about you, your family and work?

Me: My family knew this would come. I will work from there.

Nqaba: Haw ngeke sthandwa sami.

Me: Nqaba

Nqaba: No Sabathile. You're my wife, not ma's. And besides, I've tried doing that before, got ma a nurse but Mangubo refused. She's fine.

Me: She's not.

He starts the car.

Me: We're still talking.

Nqaba: We are done. You are not going to stay in Vryheid. End of discussion.

Me: Are you afraid I won't be able to treat your mom with care?

Nqaba: No. I do not want you to go there. Mamkhulu, and everything else. No marn.

Me: I will treat her very well. I promise.

Nqaba: No.

Me: Nqaba please.

Nqaba: Let's go grab something to eat.

Me: You're not changing the topic

Nqaba: I want lot of fries and fruit chutney wings.

Me: I'm not going there. Go alone.

I try to open the door but it is locked.

Me: Open this door.

Nqaba: Fasten your seat belt.

Me: I'm not going wherever you're going to. I wanna go home and sleep.

Nqaba: Baby.

Me: No. Open this door, now!

I hear the unlocking sound. I open and walk without looking back...

....

\*5 days later\*

We haven't seen or spoken to each other all these days. I've been working from home, rejected his calls. I have to get my way.

I startle when mom peels off the duvet.

Me: What's happening?



Melissa: I bought you tests.

Me: What tests?

Melissa: Pregnancy tests.

Me: Mom please. What time is it?

Melissa: 9am. Get up.

Me: You woke up and went to get pregnancy tests?

Melissa: Yes. I'm worried about you.

Wine has made me throw up 2 times in a row this week. My periods are a week late but I don't wanna face that. Its scary.

Me: Ok let me prepare myself

Melissa: 20 seconds

I sigh and stretch. I roll out of bed and take the test. Mom hands me a little measure cup. I chuckle.

Me: You came prepared, didn't you?

Melissa: Granny excitement.

Me: It could be a false alarm.

Melissa: No. You never throw up unless you eat nectarines of which you didn't eat so there could be a little Zulu Prince/princess in there.

Me: My heart is beating out of it's rib cage.

Melissa: I'll be here waiting.

I get into the bathroom.

Me: Get in.

I pee on the cup and give it to her. She laughs nervously.

Melissa: I'm scared too now.

Me: Do it.

I keep still on top of the toilet seat. She dips it on the urine and hold it in her hand. I take the cup and pour the urine into the toilet and flush. I lean against the wall.

Me: What does it say?

Melissa: Be patient.

Me: I can't. What if I'm pregnant?

Melissa: You are going to be a mother.

Me: What kind of a mother?

Melissa: I'm saying you're pregnant. 3 weeks!

She jumps on her feet and hug me.

Melissa: You're gonna be a perfect mother!

I didn't think this through.

Me: What if I don't love it?

She lets go of me. She gazes deep into my eyes.

Melissa: You're not her. You're having a baby with your soon to be husband. You have me, your father, Mvelo, Nqaba and everyone else who cares about you. We will walk this journey with you and make it worth it.

Me: I'm just scared.

She caresses my cheek and wipe my tears.

Melissa: I love you.

Me: I love you more.

Melissa: Which room will be perfect for the nursery here?

I laugh.

Me: it's only 3 weeks.

Melissa: Yes! Enough time to create a beautiful one. Ooooh I'm so excited! Thank you lord!

She pulls me out. I wonder if Nqaba will be happy...

....

I'm woken up by my phone ringing. Its him. I have been calling him the whole day but he wasn't picking up. I got depressed and slept through out the day.

Me: Mmmh?

Nqaba: Can I fetch you?

Me: Hello Nqaba how are you?

Nqaba: I'm fine Sabathile. I'm outside.

Me: Ok stay there.

Nqaba: Mama wezingane we need to talk.

Me: I don't wanna talk.

Nqaba: Ok we won't talk. We'll just stare at each other. I have a surprise for you.

I hang up and change into jeans and a hoodie. there's chilli air coming through the window.

I take my phone and decline his call.

Me: I'm going to see Nqaba outside. Is dad back?

Melissa: Yes he's upstairs taking a shower. Are you going to spill the beans to hubby?

Ugh I forgot! Mom laughs. I run upstairs to get the pregnancy test and then back down.

Me: See you later. Tell dad.

Melissa: I'll tell him at night so that he will faint in his bed.

We laugh and I walk out.

I find him looking at the flowers. I open the door for myself and hop in. He gets in after a while.

He smirks and starts the car.

Nqaba: I'll bring you back later.

I fasten my belt and connect my phone to Bluetooth and start playing music.

He's dancing to it. He's in a jolly mood.

Me: She might've given you real fun.

Nqaba: Who?

Me: Whoever you were with when I called you.

Nqaba: Ohh.

Me: Wow.

Nqaba: Wew.

Me: Nqaba.

Nqaba: Yebo mama.

Me: Why weren't you taking my calls?

Nqaba: I was driving baby I'm sorry.

Me: What if I had an emergency?

Nqaba: Did you?

Me: Yes!

Nqaba: I'm really sorry. I didn't even hear it.

He pulls up in front of the gate written Manzini. We're still in the neighborhood.

Me: Your relatives?

Nqaba: Yes.

He presses the remote and the gate slides to the side.

I've always loved this house. I wish my dad can rebuild his like this.

I am obsessed with glass as walls.

I laugh when I see the registration of the car we park behind. Its my Name.

I hear ululation. Mangubo appears waving a white cloth in her hand. I scream and hop out of the car.

We hug and laugh like idiots.

Me: What are you doing here?

Mangubo: I heard you want me to spread my wings so here I am baby!

Me: Hell! Wait...where's ma?

Mangubo: She's inside. Let's go meet her.

Nqaba: You dropped this...

He has the test in his hand. He's looking up.

Mangubo: What is it?

Me: Its a pregnancy test.

Mangubo: Is he crying?

Me: Yes.

Mangubo: let me go get my phone.



She rushes to the house. I walk to hubby and hug him. He sobs, this is awkward. Why is he crying?

He goes down on his knees and kisses my stomach.

Nqaba: I'm going to be a perfect father to you. I will always put you first. Sthandwa sam ngyabonga.

Me: Its my pleasure babe. Stop crying you're making me cry and that's not good for the baby.

Nqaba: Can I be your midwife? I laugh. Me: Yes you can.

Nqaba: Let's go tell ma. I help him up and we walk inside.

Nqaba: This is your house anyway. And out side is your car.

He says carelessly. Me: Why are you saying it like its nothing?

Nqaba: Do you like it?

Me: I love it babe! Thank you. Oh my God I love you. Can I test drive my car? Nqaba: Yes. Later

Nothing could've prepared us for what we find in the kitchen. She's slicing lemons.

Ma: Tequila anyone?

She's standing on her feet. She's speaking. She laughs, probably at our surprised faces.

Ma: Hhei you'd wrinkle in a day if you let men use you. I'll explain next month when I've settled down.

She takes a seat on the high chair and takes a sip on her tequila. She grunts.

This is too much for one day....

.....**The End**.....

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