



For daily latest books please visit <https://novelsguru.com/>

And also visit my Facebook page, and like and share it

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3345453369055623>

Thank you guys for downloading this book from my site please keep visiting <https://novelsguru.com/> for supporting me and also don't forget to share it with your friends. Dear Friends please download these books direct from <https://novelsguru.com/> bookmark this site for latest African books, and also supporting me Thanks.

1

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 01

At Holy Word Church.

People are humming softly while the pastor prays over the church. He finishes up and they all say Amen in unison.

Mkhwanazi: Today is a good day bazalwane, this is the day that the Lord has made for us to rejoice and be glad in it. So praise the Lord bangcwele!

The church stands up and starts whistling, some screaming and clapping hands.

Mkhwanazi wipes off the sweat with his napkin.

Mkhwanazi: Today umama wekhaya, Uma wethu is the one who's going to be leading us. Let us welcome her.

They clap hands for the pastor's wife as she ascends the alter while an usher is holding her hand. She thanks the lady and

stands over the pulpit smiling. Mrs Mkhwanazi, she has been married with the pastor for 25 years now and they have two children, Nelisa(26) and Hlengiwe (18).

Beth:Amen Bazalwane, I am honoured to be given the chance to give a sermon today. When a man like Bab'Mkhwanazi gives out an opportunity like this, you grab it by both hands.

The church laughs softly.

Beth:Without wasting any time bazalwane, can we please open John chapter 8 verse 32.

The sound engineers open up the verse and it shows the projectors screens for everyone to see.

Beth:Christ Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". Now I want us to talk about the importance of truth, Jesus says the truth will set you free.

She continued preaching, Nelisa who was sitting near the elders was looking down the entire time reading the Bible to match her mother's sermon.

Beth:Many people die withholding the truth, leaving the people behind to suffer the consequences.

Nelisa shakes her head wondering if she isn't judging. But this was Beth Mkhwanazi, judging people was her daily job. And she hid behind being the pastor's wife.

Beth: Abantu banamanga, they are full of lies!

She shouts at the top of her voice, making the church to clap their hands.

Nelisa forces a smile and claps with them.

Beth finishes off her sermon sweating, she goes back to her seat and the pastor stands up to pray.

.  
. .

@ Around an abandoned building.

Two men look at each other and exchange the bags they were carrying. One man nods and walks away. The other one remains and opens the bag. He smiles nodding seeing it's exactly what he wanted. He was ready to go when someone dressed in black comes out of nowhere and stands in front of him.

"Who are you?", he asks him.

The man dressed in black doesn't answer but throws a punch at him, sending him to the floor. He tries to fight back but the man overpowers him, making the bag to slip away from his hands.

The man dressed in black shoves a rag inside his mouth and cuffs his hands.

He takes the bag and peeps inside, the device was still untouched.

“Do you even know what is this you are messing with?”, he asks him. The man tries to talk but with the rag in his mouth, he only makes muffled noise. The man in black punches him again, knocking him out.

He closes the bag and taps on his wrist watch.

“This is Agent 4567847. The device is secured and the suspects are apprehended. I’m going to need an extraction team.”, he says.

“Stand by Agent 4567847. Extraction team coming right up.”, a voice speaks back.

.  
. .  
.

NELISA

Church was over and we were bidding farewell to people as they left. I needed to be home now, and rest my feet. I’m tired. I see mom approaching me and I want to roll my eyes but I stop myself.

Beth:Nelisa.

I nod.

Beth:I saw you yawning during the service. What's wrong?

Nelisa:Nothing, I just felt a bit lightheaded.

She touches my forehead.

Beth:You're not hot, so it must have been the demons trying to get to you.

I look at her, seriously? Demons?

Beth:Let's hurry home, so that we will pray for you.

Nelisa:Mom have you talked with dad about that thing?

She sighs..

Beth:Not today Nelisa, you are not moving to an unknown province. You are still a child.

Nelisa:I'm 26 years old.

Beth:Nelisa you know that you have to take note of everything that is happening in the church. This is your legacy. Your father is about to retire soon.

Nelisa:Ma I love God and I'm all about the holy spirt, but I don't want to be a pastor mom. Please talk to dad.

Beth:Your father has spoken Nelisa

you will take the ropes and fill his shoes..

Nelisa:I wonder when will you start acting like my mother.

THABANI

I walk in with the extraction team carrying the device, and they take the culprits away. My colleagues clap hands for me..

“This is the 25th criminal you’ve taken down this year.”

I raise my shoulders egoistically.

Thabani:What can I say? I’m the best. Where’s the boss?

“In his office”...

I walk to Mr Zulu’s office and knock. He tells me to come in. I find him dealing with paperwork.

I sit down and take out the device.

Thabani:I arrived just on time..

Zulu:I knew I could trust you. We need to lock this up so it doesn’t fall to the wrong hands again..

Thabani:I’ll get on it Sir.

Agent Zulu said I can be excused. So I left his office and I went to the parking lot and got into my car. Driving straight home. I opened the gate and parked on the garage.

I unlocked the door and got inside.

Well, first things first. I'm a secret agent, a spy if you might say it like that. I have been working with The Developers for 10 years now. I was 23 years old when I was recruited to be a secret agent, I didn't even know that we have secret agents and spies in South Africa. I thought you only see those things on American movies and stuff. But I guess that's why it's called, "secret agents". This job that I do, has its pros and cons. It's nice putting the bad guys away and keeping the world safe, but you create enemies unknowingly. That's why we have to keep our identities a secret by all cost. I do have an other job, to keep the public eye away from me. Because you know people, they like poking their nose on your business. They will be asking how you can maintain all this luxurious life if you are not working. I have money, since I receive a double salary and being a secret agent pays well. I have travelled, drank on a cruise ship, done everything. I'm at the point of not knowing what to do anymore. It's at times like these where I wish I at least had friends, but I have failed miserably in making friends; and I'm scared to put someone in danger when my work comes in between us.

I once had a girlfriend, five years ago to be exact. Her name was Angel, she was my beautiful white girlfriend. I was ready to live the rest of my life with her.. But something happened, someone got to her and eliminated her. It was one of the people I put away years back, I don't know how he escaped.



But he did, and he killed her. I later found out that she was three months pregnant, so I lost the both of them. I'm still hurt and sad, I miss Angel everyday. I loved her so much, and I still do. She knew how to make my heart jump and she made me happy so much. We had been together for 3 years, I was planning to marry her and make her my wife. But things took a turn.

I am scared to move on, because I don't want to seem like I'm disrespecting her. Our child would be 4 or 5 years today. I wonder how she or she would have looked like.

NELISA

I am kneeling down and they are placing their hands on top of me. Father prays and asks God to remove the demons that are attacking me. Mom adds in and asks that I don't allow earthly things to shift me from the presence of God. I say Amen when they are done and stand up.. We all sit on the couch..

Beth:The demons are gone. God heard our prayers.

My parents are so dramatic, what was the need to do this?

Beth:Baba, Nelisa is ready to take after you..

I looked at this woman. I don't want to be a pastor. I love God and I believe in Jesus, but I'm not cut out to be a pastor. I believe that to be a pastor, you have to be called into it and

your heart has to accept and be content with the position. But I'm not.

Nelisa: Does Nelisa at least have a say in this?

Dad quickly looks at me and looks back to mom..

Mkhwanazi: Nelisa you are a child here, whether you have a say or not it doesn't matter. You will take after me, the legacy of the church have to remain within the family. In the next two months, we will be ordaining you. I have already spoken with Bishop Ndlela and we agreed that you should marry his son.

I opened my mouth wanting to say something but words failed me. I found myself tearing up. When will my parents allow me to make my own decisions? I'm 26 years old and I've never done anything that was decided by me. They even made me study something that I don't like. They don't want me to move out so that I can start my life. They care more about being seen as good parents by the church members, than actually being good parents. . And now I'm ordered to be a pastor and marry the bishop's son. Being a female pastor is not something new, so the church would be happy. But what about me? Should I be forced into something that my heart doesn't want? I should pray to God and ask for guidance.

I look at mom hoping that she will defend me.

Beth:That's a good thing, the Bishop's son is respectful and he is a good match for our daughter.

.

To be continued.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 02

Two days later.

NELISA

I am washing the dishes, while my mother is preparing lunch. The Bishop's family is coming for a visit, with Mngqobi. They say we have to get to know each other. I thought my parents would change their minds about this but no, they are adamant into marrying me off. An arranged marriage! I don't even know Mngqobi, I just know he's the Bishop's son. He recently came back from studying in Pretoria, he's now working this side.

Beth: Nelisa they are here, go freshen up.

She pats me on my shoulder, pushing me to the direction of my room. I sigh and go to my room. I wrap the head wrap properly in a style. I apply a bit of lip stick. I was told to not put any heavy make up, I have no problem with that because I don't know how to do make up. I've tried, and failed. It's just not my thing.

I head out and I hear loud laughter coming from the dining room. I'm going to need all strength for this lunch.

It was the Bishop, his wife and Mnqobi.

I smiled and greeted them.

Bishop:Nelisa my child, you are so grown.

Beth:And she is starting to stray to the devil's path. It's a good thing you are here, so you will pray for her because I have tried.

Ma'Bishop:Is Nelisa a trouble child yini Mamfundisi?

Beth:Mam Bishop you know these kids, once they start getting older they want to forget about the rules and the teachings we raised them up with.

Ma'Bishop:It is exactly like that. Even Mnqobi wanted to stay in Pretoria and work there.

Beth:These kids!

They laugh and I'm just standing there, forcing a smile. I look at Mnqobi and he seems so bored. I clear my throat and bring out my hand to him for a handshake. He looks at it and looks the other way. Shamefully, I bring my hand back and sit down.

Beth:Nelisa who's going to serve us when you are sitting down?

I stand up and head to the kitchen. The food was already dished to the big bowls. I brought everything to the dining room and

placed the plates near everyone, together with the cutlery. I went back to get juice and water.

Bishop: Thank you my daughter.

He said after I gave him water to wash his hands. By the time I sat down to eat, they were halfway with their food. I said a little prayer and started eating too.

Mkhwanazi: So Mnqobi, how is your work going?

Mnqobi: It's going good baba, my career is booming. Very soon I will be my own boss..

Beth: That is impressive. Maybe you can teach a thing or two to Nelisa. She studied Business Administration. She wanted to be a fashion designer, but it doesn't pay. She would have stayed for years without a job.

Being a fashion designer is still my dream. Being on the business sector is really not what I want. Even when I did my internship at some company, I felt out of place and I had to force myself to get some work done. But what can I say? I can't go against my parents. What they say goes.

Mnqobi laughs a little.

Mnqobi: I don't mind, are you currently working Nelisa?

Nelisa:No, I finished my internship last month and I'm still looking for a permanent position.

Mnqobi:I'm sure something will come up. At work, there are posts that are coming out soon. I'll let you know when so that you can apply.

Ma'Bishop:Ahhh look at them. They already understand each other.

Mkhwanazi:This means their marriage will be smooth..

Bishop:Indeed, God is with them.

Mkhwanazi:Bishop we should start arranging the Lobola negotiations.

Bishop:What date do you think is suitable Mkhwanazi?

Mkhwanazi:When Nelisa becomes pastor, she has to be married already. So maybe in the next two weeks to come, so we can get everything ready.

Bishop:Alright we can arrange that.

Ma'Bishop:I can't believe my son is getting married. Oh I am so happy.

I saw Mnqobi mumbling something. I stood up and took their plates since we were done eating. I placed them on the sink at the kitchen. I opened the tap to wash them.

“Nelisa we are waiting for desert

Advertisement

what is holding you now?”, O look back and it was Beth.

Nelisa:I’m washing the dishes.

Beth:Nelisa you are about to become a pastor and a wife, this attitude of yours you need to throw it outside the window. The Ndlelas are waiting for desert.

I leave the dishes and take the desert back to the dining room, with the tiny bowls. Everyone dishes up and I take the empty bowl and go back to the kitchen. Can’t this day end already?

I wash the dishes with a heavy heart. I have cried so much that I don’t have any tears left. I hear someone coming to the kitchen and it was Mnqobi. He was carrying the desert dishes.

Mnqobi:Let me help you.

He stands next to me and takes a dishcloth, he wipes the dishes I have already washed. Being next to him was awaking a lot of feelings. I have so many questions.

Nelisa:Why are you allowing this to happen?

Mnqobi:Do you think I want this?

Nelisa:You’re not saying anything.



Mnqobi:It's for the best Nelisa. Our parents want what's best for us. There's nothing I can do.

Nelisa:I don't want to get married to you.

Mnqobi:Ouch..

Nelisa:Sorry, but I don't want to get married.. I don't even want to be a pastor. Mnqobi I've never lived my life, I've never made my own decisions. I always have to follow my parent's rules.

Mnqobi:I'm used to it. Look Nelisa I know this is not an ideal way to meet someone, but can we at least try to make this work? It's gonna happen, whether we like it or not.

He was right, it was going to happen. With or without our consent.

.

.

.

Later during the day.

Bishop's family had left and Hlengiwe was back from school. She is doing Grade 12 and is off to Tertiary next year, but I don't think this girl is interested. My parents have already applied for her, courses like Medicine, Engineering, Education, all those over the top careers. Hlengiwe is the one who knows how to

stand up to mom and dad. They raised us so strictly, with a metal hand. You know when you are even scared to chat with your parents, because you don't know how they will react.

We are in her room and she's taking off her uniform.

Hlengiwe:I cancelled the application your parents did for me and did a change of mind.

Nelisa:You did what?

Hlengiwe:How can I study medicine and engineering when I'm doing General studies?

I laughed a little.. They know that Hlengiwe is doing Mathematical Literacy, Tourism, Geography and Economics. I don't think those subjects are the requirements for Medicine or Engineering.

Hlengiwe:Anyway how was the lunch? And how is Mngqobi?

Nelisa:It went well I think, they are already planning negotiations.

Hlengiwe:I feel for you sis, I really do.

Nelisa:It's fine Hle, I will adjust.

Hlengiwe:But it is not fair. What mom and dad are doing to you is wrong, they should allow you to make your own choices.

.

.

.

At The Parent's bedroom.

Beth is cleaning her face and applying some cream, to prepare for sleep.

Beth:I think the lunch went well. What do you think?

Mkhwanazi:Yeah it was fine.

Beth:Okay what is bothering you? You have been moody since evening.

Mkhwanazi:I'm just worried about Nelisa. I don't think she's ready for this. Do you think we are harsh when it comes to her?

Beth:No, Nelisa will be fine. She will do great. She will lead the church like you did. Don't worry about her.

Mkhwanazi:I don't know Beth, she looked sad today. I just didn't want to say anything.

Beth:She was probably overwhelmed. Relax baba, Nelisa is a big girl. We have been training her for this.

Mkhwanazi sighs and leans on the pillow. He wasn't liking this anymore. He knows they are a bit harsh sometimes to their children. But he didn't like seeing Nelisa so sad today, he

doesn't know how to go ahead and marry her off when it seems like it's only bringing his daughter pain?

Beth: The only person you should be worrying about is Hlengiwe. That girl will send me to an early grave. I got an email from her school again.

Mkhwanazi: What has she done again?

Beth: Bunking classes and being rude to teachers. She doesn't listen. The demons are having a field day with her. We should hold a session and pray harder for her. Maybe an exorcism will do, because she's heading directly to the devils way.

.

.

.

To be continued....

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 03

THABANI

Today was my off day on my regular job, so I had to complete an assignment. I pin the name tag on the coat and fix my glasses. I take the clipboard and head to the ward room. She was seated on the bed.

Thabani:Hi, I'm Doctor Nzuzza. How are you feeling today?

"Better, but I am hungry."

Thabani:I'm sure they will bring you something, we had to pump out everything from your stomach. Did you eat anything bad yesterday?

"Not that I know of. I only ate my lunch which I had brought in from home, and that's when I started feeling sick."

Thabani:You made it?

"Yes I cooked it myself. I don't know how poison would have gotten in it"

Thabani:I see. Well you can rest. I will see you later.

I said goodbye and walked out of the ward room, I passed the real Dr Nzuzi and looked down to avoid him. Luckily he was looking away.

I rushed out of the hospital and went to my van, in the back.. I took off the disguises, the heavy moustache is painful when you rip it off. I took off the coat and reached for my bag. I took out overalls and wore them quickly. I wore a blonde short hair wig over my head and an aesthetic face mask. I shoved the tools on another bag and passed through to the driver's seat. I drove to F. O Inc. I parked my van on a distance. I got out and went inside. I passed by the receptionist and she asked me who I was.

I cleared my voice and disguised my voice.

Thabani:I'm the plumber, I was called in to fix the security room. They said a pipe was leaking.

"Mhhh, they didn't tell me about any plumbers coming in today."

Thabani:Oh well they called.

I took out my phone and showed her the call history and text messages.

Thabani:You can call them and confirm.

I said holding my breath.

She looked at me for some time, that I even felt uncomfortable. But I kept a straight face.

“Okay, go ahead. Third floor, second door on your left”

.  
. .  
. . .

NELISA

Staying home all day is boring. I am delaying the process of finding a job, I’m just not interested. I don’t like my degree. Not even a bit. If it was by me, I would study fashion but where? I don’t even have a cent in my name. My parents control all the finances in this home. Even if you want to buy something, you have to ask them first and it’s not guaranteed that they’ll agree.

Beth:Nelisa bring me my bag, I need something from the shop.

Nelisa:Okay.

I go to their room and take her bag. I give it to her. She takes out R100.

Beth:Go and buy some baking powder, I feel like baking today.

Nelisa:Okay..

I hurry to the tuck shop to buy the baking powder. It is always nice to go outside and feel some fresh air, and not be cooped up inside the house. My old school mates, some of them are still around, others are married and have their families. And I'm stuck here. This life! No balance.

I return and give her the baking powder.

Beth: Thank you.

I go to my room and check my phone. I had missed calls from Mngqobi. Oh what did he want? We exchanged numbers yesterday. I decide to call him back.

Mngqobi: Nelisa?

Nelisa: Hey, I just saw your missed calls.

Mngqobi: Yes I was calling you, I thought you were ignoring me.

I laughed.

Nelisa: Sorry, I just went to the shops. What did you need?

Mngqobi: I was just checking up on you.

Nelisa: You were?

I don't know why, but I found myself smiling.

Mngqobi: Yes

Advertisement



you didn't look okay yesterday. Which is understandable, I wish there was something I could do to stop this too Nelisa but my hands are also tied. You know how pushy our parents are, my life is just like yours. They always want me to do what they want.

.

.

.

THABANI

I close the door and lock it. I disable the cameras for a bit and take out my laptop from the bag I was carrying. I open it and transfer the CCTV footage of the past month to my laptop. I hear footsteps and I quickly close it and enable back the cameras. I put the laptop in my bag, and unlock the door. I take the plier and pretend like I'm doing something on the wall. Someone opens the door.

"Hey Larry I need you to run a d... Uhh who are you?", I turn back to him.

Thabani:Bob the plumber.

"Well in that case, shouldn't you be Bob the Builder?", he asks and laughs until he holds on to the desks.

"Hahaha", I force a laugh too.

“Let me not disturb you Bob.”, he walks out and closes the door.

I get off from the chair and Google something quickly on my phone. The bastard! I call one of my colleagues.

“Agent Ncobela”

Thabani:Hey listen, I need you to run a background check quickly on someone who works F. O Inc. Tall, dark man, wears shiny suits and has a beard. Has a watch on his wrist.

“On it.”

I hear the computer’s keyboard making noise.

“Alfred Nombela, 30 years old. Was a CEO at F. O Inc and got demoted because of allegedly harassing workers. He’s now working as a consultant.”

Thabani:Thanks Zen, I think we got our guy. I’m going to send you something for real quick.

I opened my laptop and sent her that footage.

Thabani:You got it?

“Yes”

Thabani:Okay, look into it. I need to get out of here. He’s coming back.

I said and I looked at him from the cameras. I hung up and took all my stuff. I went out of the room and took another exit that led me outside. I got inside the van and called back Zen.

Thabani:Find anything?

Zen:Alfred has been coming to the security room a lot, and has been seen snooping around with the victims who got the poison.

Thabani:He had a red stain on his hand, it's him. The poison he used is a red powder, it has no scent but it is strong. Hence it left a stain on his hand.

Zen:Are you sure?

Thabani:I'm sure.

Zen:But why would Alfred poison five people?

Thabani:What do all the victims have in common?

She keeps quiet for a while.

Zen:Well, four of them are the allegedly harassed workers. It was never proven, so he got away with it. The last one is the CEO who was put after him.

Thabani:He has motive.

Zen:Will you need an extraction team?

Thabani:No, the men in blue will deal with this one. It's not in our level.

Zen:Sure thing boss.

.  
. .  
. .

MKHWANAZI

He is only coming back home now, he had a long day. He can't wait to retire and rest. He finds Beth in their bedroom.

Beth:Oh you're back baba, please freshen up.

Mkhwanazi:Where are we going?

Beth:To Wednesdays prayer. Have you forgotten?

Mkhwanazi:Oh, my mind is just all over the place. I'll take a quick shower.

Beth:Don't worry, when you have retired. You will have all the time in the world.

Mkhwanazi:I hope so. An old man like me shouldn't even be still working.

Beth:You're still 63 baba, you're not old.

Mkhwanazi:You're saying that because you are still in your 40s.

Beth:Late forties, I'm also turning 50 soon. Now you see why we should hurry up and get Nelisa married? We should also get Hlengiwe a husband.

Mkhwanazi:Ibambe lapho (Hold it right there). Can we have at least one day where we don't talk about this?

Beth looked at him shocked. Since when is he not wanting to talk about this? Making Nelisa a pastor and marrying Mnqobi was his idea or has he forgotten?

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 04

## NELISA

I am helping clean the church for the Friday prayer night. Mostly old people are here with me, the youth of this church barely comes to help out. But people are busy, some are working, some are studying. It's us omahlalela who have to get the work done.

"Nelisa wipe those chairs. They have dust", one of the women I'm with tells me. I do as told until I'm done. By the time we finished cleaning, the time was almost 17h00pm. I have to get home, I'm tired and I'm hungry. The church is just a walking distance from home, so I won't travel long. I take my things and wait for everyone to get out. I lock the doors and the gates and we all walk to different directions.

I arrive home and the lights were already on. I found my mother on the living room..

Nelisa:Hi mom..

Beth:Nelisa you are back.

Nelisa:Yes..

Beth: Good, you can start with the pots. I had already defrosted the meat for you.

I scoffed and closed my eyes frustrated. She didn't cook and waited for me? Mom does not work, she has a shop in town that is managed by her workers. She only goes once or twice per month to check how everything is going. Most of the times she's here at home, so why did she not cook? I'm tired, from cleaning at church and now I'm supposed to cook!? She didn't even want to come with to help with cleaning.

Nelisa: Ma'am why didn't you cook?

I ask with my mouth formed, I was agitated seriously.

She stopped what she was doing and looked at me.

Beth: Uquvele bani umlomo?

I breathed heavily and tried to calm down.

Nelisa: I'm tired ma, you know how long it takes to get the church clean and now you want me to clean!?

Beth: Nelisa I said it that you are straying to the devil's path. I have never taught you to back chat an adult! It's the demons again!

Nelisa: The way you are always obsessing about the demons is annoying! Take time to reflect on the kind of parent you are, and see why we are not happy as your children!!! Maybe you

are the one who is possessed by the demons that you are always complaining of.

I clicked my tongue and walked away to my room. I'm not doing no damn cooking.

.

.

.

THABANI

I was visiting Angel's grave today, and delivered fresh flowers. I miss her so much. I can't move on, I still need her. And I don't think there's a woman I will love like I loved her. We had our life planned out. We were happy. But they took her away from me, together with our child.

I'm at The Developers, trying to get new assignments to get my mind busy.

Zulu:There is nothing for now.

Thabani:Seriously? No one is smuggling drugs or something?

Zulu:When something comes up, I will let you know. And besides, there are many agents here that can do the work..



Thabani:I can't just sit by, I need to do something.. Can't I go on patrol or something?

Zulu:Why don't you go to a spa? To get your body to relax?

Thabani:A spa?

Zulu:Yes, they will massage your body and keep you calm.

Thabani:Well I have been stressed lately, so it wouldn't hurt.

.

.

.

Two hours later.

Nelisa was still in her room and have been ignoring her mother. She decided to call Mngqobi.

Mngqobi:Hello.

Nelisa:Hey are you busy?

Mngqobi:No I'm not. What's up?

Nelisa:Uh nothing, I don't even know why I called.

Mngqobi:What's wrong? You don't sound okay.

Nelisa:It's my mom, she's draining my energy everyday Mngqobi. I'm tired of this woman. She wants to control everything I do, if

it was possible I would be running away from home. I can't take it anymore. I can't!

Mnqobi:Okay listen, I'm coming there now..

Nelisa:To do what?

Mnqobi:To take you out of the house before you lose your sanity. I will be there soon, okay?

Nelisa:Okay.

She hung up and waited for him. Getting out of the house would be a good thing. A while later

Advertisement

Mnqobi sent her a text that he was outside. She wore her shoes and headed out..

Beth:Nelisa where are you going?

She shouted after her but she ignored her and walked out to Mnqobi's car. He opened for her and she got in.

Nelisa:Hi.

Mnqobi:Hi. So where do you want us to go?

Nelisa:Just far away from home.

Mnqobi:Alright.

He started the car and drove them to the house he was using before he moved back to his parent's house.

Nelisa:Whose house is this?

Mnqobi:Mine.

Nelisa:You have a house?

She asked in shock. She didn't own anything to her name, so it was surprising to learn that Mnqobi has a house.

Mnqobi:Yeah, let's go in.

He opened for them and they got in. Luckily, it was clean. They sat on the couch..

Mnqobi:Do you want anything to eat or drink?

Nelisa:Do you have food here?

Mnqobi:No.

She laughs.

Nelisa:I'm fine.

Mnqobi:We can order in.

Nelisa:That will be much better.

He took his phone and got busy with it for a while..

Mnqobi:It will be here within an hour.

Nelisa:Okay.

They sat in silence for a while. Not knowing what to say to each other. Mngqobi shifted closer to her and put his arm around her. Nelisa looked at his arm.

Mngqobi:So... what has your mother done?

Nelisa:\*Sighs\*My mother is stressing me out Mngqobi. We just had a small misunderstanding.

Mngqobi:I'm sorry, I guess that's how all parents are, because mine are also like that.

Nelisa:What are they doing to you?

Mngqobi:Being pushy, wanting me to do what they want, and putting pressure on me. I even went to study in Pretoria because I wanted to get away from them. But they brought me back, and that's when they told me that I have to marry you. I don't know why they are doing this to us.

Nelisa kept quiet and laid on him.

Mngqobi:But would it be so bad?

Nelisa:What?

Mngqobi:Us getting married?

Nelisa moved from him and looked at him.

Nelisa:What are you saying Mngqobi?

Mnqobi:I'm just saying, you are a nice and beautiful girl Nelisa. I kind of like you.

Nelisa:Whoa.

Mnqobi:I'm not playing with you, I'm serious. When I saw you again during that lunch, I knew I wanted to be with you. I am not the type to beat around the bush, I just want you to be mine.

Nelisa:Whoa Mnqobi, this is new information. I..

Mnqobi:Shhh don't rush....

He pulled her to sit on top of him. Nelisa looked down blushing. This felt different, but good at the same time.

Mnqobi reached for her lips and kissed her. Nelisa froze, she has kissed someone before but it was a long time ago and she was scared to embarrass herself.

Mnqobi:Relax.

He whispered to her with his eyes closed. She relaxed and kissed him back. Mnqobi started to touch her all over her body, making her feel like she could scream. She's not used to be touched like this, and the kiss feels so good. She moans a little breathing heavily.

Mnqobi snakes his hand under her t-shirt and came in contact with her boobs, she was not wearing a bra. Small tits. He played

with her boobs and took off her t-shirt. She stops kissing him and looks at him.

Nelisa:I've never... uhm...

Mnqobi chuckles, he knows she's a virgin.

Mnqobi:We won't do anything. Are you uncomfortable now?

She nods slowly.

Mnqobi:Okay let's stop here.

He helps her wear her t-shirt and she sits back on the couch properly. He pulls her closer to him.

Mnqobi:So you've never been with a man before?

Nelisa:No sex before marriage. Have you?

Mnqobi:I long broke that rule. Varsity was full of pressure, I got tempted.

.  
. .  
.

At Mkhwanazi's house.

Beth hears her husband's car driving in and she hurries to the kitchen and chops onions quickly, getting them closer to her eyes. She blinks a few tears and hurries back to the living room.

The door opens and she cries a bit loud, making Mkhwanazi to come rushing in. He hugs her and ask her what's wrong, but she was crying nonstop.

Mkhwanazi:Mkami talk to me what is wrong?

Beth:It's Nelisa, she insulted me.

Mkhwanazi:That doesn't sound like her.

Beth:She did. I asked her nicely to cook because I was at the church cleaning and she said no. She went on to say that I'm a bad parent. She broke my heart baba. After raising her for 26 years, she does me like this! Yooo!

She shakes her body still pretending to cry. The door opens and a happy Nelisa comes in, but she stops smiling when she sees her mom crying. Beth cries louder when she sees Nelisa, and she throws herself dramatically on the floor.

Beth:Aw aw ifuna ukungbulala lengane baba(This child wants to kill me baba).

Nelisa frowns wondering what's the drama for now! With her mother, there's always something.

.

To be continued.....

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 05

Still at Mkhwanazi's house.

Nelisa frowns wondering what's the drama for. She just got back from Mnqobi and she enjoyed the time she spent with him.

Mkhwanazi: Bethany stop this!

He shouts at her, even a child can tell that she's putting up an act. She gets up from the floor and sit back on the couch..

Mkhwanazi: Nelisa sit down.

They all sit down..

Mkhwanazi: Now what is going on here? Nelisa your mother says you insulted her.

Nelisa: \*Shocked\* I insulted her?

Mkhwanazi: What happened then? Because she's crying and throwing herself on the floor.

Nelisa: Today I went to church to help with cleaning, and came back late. Mom then said I should start cooking, I asked her why she didn't cook because she was home the whole day and I



was tired. She did the usual thing, blaming the “demons”. I don’t know how she says I insulted her.

Beth:You said I’m a bad parent.

Nelisa:\*Mumbling\* Well I wasn’t wrong.

Mkhwanazi:What was that?

Nelisa:Nothing.

Mkhwanazi:Bethany I know you, we have been married for 25 years. Nelisa would never disrespect you, I don’t know why you would lie against your daughter like this. You were home the whole day and you didn’t cook, you are the mother and wife of this home not Nelisa. I don’t want us to talk about this again.

Beth:But s\_

Mkhwanazi:Go to the kitchen and cook. I wake up everyday to work for all of us, and I come back to no dinner. I will have to wait for two hours because you also take your time when it comes to cooking.

Nelisa smiles a little, this is the first time her father is standing up for her.

Bethany stands up sniffing and goes to the kitchen.

Nelisa:Baba can I talk to you about something?

Mkhwanazi:I'm listening.

Nelisa:I hope I'm not out of line, but can you reconsider the idea of making me the pastor?

Mkhwanazi frowns and looks at her. Nelisa wishes to immediately swallow her words.

Nelisa:I'm sorry, forget I said anything.

She stands up and quickly disappears to her room.

.

.

.

HLENGIWE

She said she was on a study session, but of course she lied. She's at some gathering with her classmates and they are bringing it down. Every type of alcohol you can think of is here, music is blasting loudly and others are dancing while others are twerking . Her friend, Nkanyezi shakes her and snaps her out of the trance she was in.

Nkanyezi:It's late now, we should go.

Hlengiwe laughs, the drug was fully in her system and she was seeing double.

Hlengiwe:Don't be a party pooper moon, it's still early.

Nkanyezi:Your parents must be worried.

Hlengiwe:Don't tell me about those two. They are such hypocrites!

A well known song, SETE starts playing and the kids go wild. Hlengiwe runs to the front singing and dancing. This was the happiest she's been, being at home she always has to listen to her parents preaching. But here, she gets to be herself and do whatever she wants. She is a risk taker, who wants to do anything dangerous.

She raise her hands up as she sings along to Young Stunna's verse, "Aw' mina ngawe ngigqwele ngyak'tshela

Zange' bang'fak' umoya ngawe ngay'fela

Mangith' ngyaphuma ngyo'funa ma'cent

Kuze wena nomndeni wami n'betese

K'dala ngik'funa ngay'themba

Manje usu'ngo wam' inhliziyo ifudumele

Ng'cel' ama'phutha angaling' as'test-e

Njalo manginawe ngizizwa ng'phelele

Angith' uthanda mina? Ng'cela kungashintshi

Uyang'sanganisa, ofana nawe angek' aphind' akekho nak'lelizwe".

She cross her arms across her chest feeling the lyrics of the song hit deep.

Nkanyezi drags her away from the crowd.

Nkanyezi:It is close to 10pm, we should go. We have a test tomorrow Mahlengi.

Hlengiwe pushes her and stumbles over empty bottles of alcohol. She takes an unopened bottle of Savanna and opens it. She raise it over her mouth and drinks it without taking a break. Nkanyezi snatches the bottle away from her, but Hlengiwe takes it back. Nkanyezi drags her outside with her bottler.

Nkanyezi:We are going home!

She drags him all the way, Hlengiwe kept singing and making noise on the road. Luckily, this was a safe neighbourhood so they didn't have to worry about people who would want to harm them. They arrive at Hlengiwe's home and open the gate. Hlengiwe was still singing, with the savanna in her hand. She knocks nervously on the door. How was she going to explain why Hlengiwe is drunk like this?

Mkhwanazi was the one who opened, wearing his night gown and rubbing his eyes.

“Aww umfundisi madoda.(The pastor)”, Hlengiwe mocks.

Mkhwanazi lets them in and switches on the light. He opens his eyes wide when he sees Hlengiwe drunk.

Mkhwanazi:Hlengiwe.

Nkanyezi:I have to go.

She runs out, before she can also get reprimanded at her own home.

Nelisa and Beth come to the living room after hearing the noise.

Beth:Baba what is happening here?

Mkhwanazi:Your daughter is drunk! Look at her!

He points at Hlengiwe who was now kneeling on the floor, with the savanna not leaving her hands.

Beth:Hlengiwe who gave you alcohol?

Hlengiwe:If it isn't deputy Jesus! The woman who's obsessed about demons.

Nelisa laughs a little. Beth looks at her and she stops.

Hlengiwe:Yazi namaxoki Nina!(Do you know you are hypocrites!)

She stands up and goes to her mother. She places the bottle on her mouth.

Hlengiwe:Here taste this

Advertisement

maybe you'll stop being uptight!

Beth moves the bottle away from her mouth. She has never touched alcohol in her life and she's not planning to.

Mkhwanazi:Nelisa take your sister to her room.

Hlengiwe:Whoa mfundisi ngisafuna ukunitshela iyndaba zenu Nina! (Hold on pastor, I still want to tell you off!)

Nelisa drags her away before she can say more, once Hlengiwe start talking she doesn't stop.

Hlengiwe:Ngiyekele Nelisa(Leave me alone Nelisa).

She doesn't listen, but takes her to her room and locks the door. Hlengiwe throws herself in bed and burst into laughter. Nelisa shakes her head wondering ukuthi udle hlobo lwuni lwama drugs.

Hlengiwe:Sistaz I am so high.

Nelisa:What did you take?

Hlengiwe:I don't know the name, they were passing it on there..

Nelisa: You could have gotten hurt.

Hlengiwe: Weee please don't be like your parents. Don't worry I will frustrate them some more for you until they shift the attention to me and leave you alone.

Nelisa looks at her and tries to understand her statement.

Nelisa: What do you mean?

Hlengiwe: All this rebellion is for you, they'll focus on me and give you a break. Nawe mtase you are too nice, you can't even raise your voice.

She turns the other way and sleeps. Nelisa takes her shoes off and her jeans.

.

.

.

In the morning.

She is dressed and ready to go to school.

Hlengiwe: Ngizwile kancane that we are writing today.

Nelisa: \*Laughing\* You didn't study.

Hlengiwe shrugs her shoulders laughing.

Hlengiwe:Sizobona khona ephepheni(I will see with the test). I have to go.

She takes her bag and goes to the kitchen to grab an apple. Her mother was making breakfast.

Hlengiwe:Good morning and goodbye Bethany.

She runs out. Beth sighs and leaves what she was doing.

Hlengiwe will make her grow grey hair.

She goes to Nelisa's room and finds her making the bed..

Beth:Nelisa.

She looks up.

Nelisa:Oh hi mom.

Beth:What is wrong with your sister?

Nelisa:You're asking the wrong person mama. You should ask her.

Beth:I won't be surprised if it's you who is influencing her behaviour. You have changed Nelisa, yesterday you called me a bad parent. I have done everything in my power to raise you girls with love and kindness but you threw that right to my face. I don't know what I should do with you Nelisa, you have drained all strength within me.



Nelisa stops making the bed and decides to get everything out of her chest.

Nelisa: You know mom I have heard of toxic parents, and guess what? You are one of them. You are so toxic and bitter. You want everyone to bow down to you! Your way or the highway! You hide behind being a Christian but we both know that you have an evil heart. You are so evil! Marrying me off wasn't enough and now you want to blame me for your bad parenting! Have you ever taken the time to ask yourself why we are not happy? Do you ever see us sitting with you and laughing like most families? You and dad control our lives to the point that there's no single thing that I have to my name, yet I am 26 years old. You forbid me from doing anything! And stupid me listened because the Bible taught me to be respectful to my parents. you and dad are bad parents! There I said it! And I mean it!

Beth: Nelisa?

She whispers her name.

Nelisa: No no no, you are a bad woman Bethany! A bad woman! And please tell your husband that I'm not getting married to anyone, and I'm not becoming a pastor. I have allowed you to control my life for far too long! Not anymore. You can disown me if you like, because that's what you always threaten me about, I don't care anymore.

- .
- .
- .

At school..

Hlengiwe submits her answer sheet and gets out of class,  
Nkanyezi was waiting for her by the gate.

Nkanyezi:How did you write?

Hlengiwe:I did not understand a single thing that was being  
asked there. What were we writing?

She asked confused..

Nkanyezi:Tourism.

Hlengiwe:Oh, yeah I'm definitely going to fail.

Nkanyezi:Mahlengi we are going to write the trials soon and  
you need to take your education serious. Don't you want go to  
University next year?

Hlengiwe:I want to.

Nkanyezi:Then start studying, you are smart Mahlengi don't  
forget that. You remember how we used to get 80s and 90s  
together?

She smiles remembering those times.

Hlengiwe:I remember. But I think it's too late moon.

Nkanyezi:It's never too late Mahlengi, if you excel at the trials, you will be fine with the finals. I trust in you.

Hlengiwe:/Ey you are right, I have been acting rebellious because I wanted to frustrate my parents. I don't like what they are doing to Nelisa, because they know she does everything they tell her.

Nkanyezi:I'm sorry, it's not like them to do this. At church, it's like you guys are the happiest family ever.

Hlengiwe:Weee ebhishi. Can you believe that my sister is still a virgin? At 26 years!

Nkanyezi:Maybe she's practicing the no sex rule.

Hlengiwe:It could never be me. I want to break my virginity this year.

Nkanyezi:Haybo Mahlengi.

Hlengiwe:I'm serious, just because my parents are Christians who act holier than thou, doesn't mean I am too.

Nkanyezi:You don't even have a boyfriend sis, how will you break your virginity? And you are still heartbroken over your ex.

Hlengiwe:Kodwa why are you reminding me? Abafana abalungile yazi, abasayiphuli inhlliziyo sebeyayiqoba.( Boys are not good, they no longer grate your heart, they chop it).

Nkanyezi laughs, she remembers how heartbroken Hlengiwe was when her boyfriend broke her heart.

Hlengiwe:But I will find another boy, we should go out when schools are closed. It's been a while.

Nkanyezi:Okay, I have been saving up.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 06

#Unedited.

HLENGIWE

Going back home and I don't feel like going back anytime soon, I know I'm still going to be given an hour lecture. I remember what I did yesterday, and I know my mother is mad at me. I don't even know the name of the pill I took. Life is short, I believe in doing anything dangerous. I live for the danger. I just don't like what my parents are doing to Nelisa, because they know that she's too soft. She says yes to everything, she never questions them. I don't know why she's allowing them to do this to her, Nelisa is 26 years old but she has nothing to her name. They even made her study something she doesn't like, there is respecting a parent and there is setting boundaries. It's like my mother wants to live her life through Nelisa, and she allows her. I hope all attention will be to me for the next weeks so they can give her a break. Though, I have to get some studying done today. I will cross night.

I head to my room quickly to avoid my mother.

.

.

.

NELISA

I had a lunch date with Mngqobi today, it was nice I won't lie. He seems like a good person, and it wouldn't hurt to get to know him. But I don't know about being in a relationship with him. I've never been in a relationship, I once tried in Varsity but my parents checked up on me now and then that I barely had time. I don't even know how you behave yourself in a relationship.

We are back to his house, just to spend time. I don't want to go home yet.

Mngqobi: So did you talk to him?

Nelisa: I asked him and he looked at me badly. I didn't ask any further.

Mngqobi: I think you should sit him down and talk to him..

Nelisa: I don't think he will even listen to me. My father is a hard man Mngqobi.

Mngqobi: Just give it a chance, please. Have a talk with him.

Nelisa: Okay I will try.

Mngqobi: Good, now kiss me..

I turned around and gave him a kiss. I was getting better now at this. Even though it got heated last time, I'm fearing it's leading there even right now. I'm sitting on his lap, and I can feel his member rising.

He chuckles and pulls out of the kiss.

Mnqobi:Let me stop before I have you right here.

.  
.br/>.

@The Developers.

Agent Zulu is talking with another agent about Thabani.

Zulu:I don't think he's gotten over her death.

"He hasn't, he keeps her pictures in his office and stare at them all day."

Zulu:Ncobela is one of our best agents here at The Developers, we can't afford to have him lose his sanity.

"What do we do boss?"

Zulu:There is a place that can help him. It was an organization started by The Developers, they will help him get closure and be himself again.

“You mean one of our headquarters in China?”

Zulu:Yes, but it will be hard to convince him to go. It will only be two months. He will get help.

“Good luck convincing him. Where is he now?”

Zulu:On a mission. I told him to rest but he wouldn’t listen.

“I think he uses work as a coping mechanism.”

.  
.br/.

Bethany is visiting her husband, she has a lot to talk about with him. She arrives at his office and he smiles when he sees his wife. He stands up to hug her and give her a kiss.

Mkhwanazi:I didn’t know you would be coming here today.

Beth:I wanted to surprise you..

Mkhwanazi:Let’s sit.

He closes the door.

Mkhwanazi:So what’s going on?

Beth:I’m not okay baba..

Mkhwanazi:What’s wrong?



Beth:Do you think our children are happy?

Mkhwanazi:\*Confused\* What kind of question is that?

Beth:I'm asking, do you think they are happy? Have you ever seen all of us sitting as a family and laughing, having a good time?

Mkhwanazi:What is this all about?

Beth:It's something Nelisa said to me. She said we are bad parents..

Mkhwanazi:Nelisa said that?

She nods.

Beth:I took some time to think about what she said and she was right. We have been so hard on her, that she is not happy anymore. What have we done baba?

Mkhwanazi blinks his eyes. He has been seeing it recently, Nelisa hasn't been happy. But he didn't know how to approach the situation.

Mkhwanazi:We will have a meeting with them tonight and we will talk. They will pour out their feelings and we will listen. And we will apologize Bethany. Nelisa has made it quite clear that she doesn't like to be a pastor, and I'm not too sure anymore about forcing her.

Beth:But...

Mkhwanazi:We can't force her Bethany. She is our child and her happiness should come first. So tonight we have a meeting, the four of us.

.

.

.

THABANI

He is standing over the tall building with his binoculars looking through them.

He sees him moving.

Thabani:He is moving, get ready to engage.

He says over comms.

"I'm ready boss".

He looks through his binoculars again.

Mr George, the well known business man around Durban, steps out of the building sweating and looks around. Anyone could tell he was nervous, he started walking, taking small steps.

The agent that Thabani was talking to, takes a deep breath and runs towards him. He bumps hard into Mr George, making him to almost fall.

“Sorry so sorry Mr George.”, he apologizes and walks away.

“It’s your turn T-man”, he says to Thabani.

Mr George’s bodyguards shoves him inside a car and drives off speeding with him.

Thabani takes the bag near him and go down the stairs, to the agent, Mandla.

They both get in the van. Mandla opens the computers and starts punching it.

Thabani drives.

Thabani:You find him?

Mandla:They are driving very fast, but I have a track on them. Go left.

Thabani:Let’s hope we don’t arrive too late.

Mandla:I think they strapped him with bombs.

Thabani:You saw?

Mandla:Yes, he was excessively sweating.

They drive for twenty minutes and Mandla tells him to stop.

Mandla:This is the place.

Thabani:Can you get a look inside?

Mandla:Okay, let me see.

He types like a maniac on the computer.

Mandla:I'm seeing multiple heat signatures inside.

Thabani taps on his watch.

Thabani:This is Agent 4567847, we need as many as possible available units to the coordinates we will send just now.

"Agent 4567847 this is Agent 556837, is the suspect armed?"

Thabani:We haven't had a look inside, but the victim is suspected to be strapped with bombs.

"All available agents coming now."

Mandla sends the coordinates.

Thabani takes his weapon and make sure that it's loaded..

Thabani:You going out with us?

Mandla:Oh no, I'm just the van guy dude.

Thabani:Pussy.

Mandla:Cunt..

He shows him the middle finger.

He spots the cars from the distance.

Thabani:They are here

Advertisement

keep me on comms. Try getting video feedback.

Mandla:Okay.

He sneaks out of the van and go to the other cars that were parked at a distance.

Thabani:Okay listen up, we don't know what we will find inside, be ready for anything. Let's try getting in without them catching on that we are here.

The agents nod, and they sneak inside the building. Others climb on ropes to get at the top.

Thabani walks with two agents and checks all the rooms. They walk to the one where Mr George was being held hostage at. Indeed, he was alarmed by bombs all over him, and he was crying.

They stood by the wall, Thabani pointed at the agents to surround the room.

"Mr George, we can do this the easy way or the hard way. Where is the vault?", the man asks Mr George.

Thabani gets in with his gun pointed at him.

Thabani: Drop your weapon and step away from him.

“Who are you?”

Thabani: Whoever you want me to be.

“I know you are not a cop, so you either pulling a prank on me or you are just at the wrong place at the wrong time. Boys, show him out”, he says to his goons.

Thabani: \*Smirking\* Been looking for a fight.

The goons come to Thabani and try to fight him but he takes them down within a minute.

“How did you..?”, he asks him.

Thabani: Like I said, drop your weapon and step away from him.

“Look pal I don’t know who you are, but this does not concern you. You see this?”, he asks holding out the remote in his hand.

“Just a click and he goes boom.”

Thabani takes a few steps closer to him, the man plays with the remote pretending like he is going to press the button.

Thabani looks at Mr George and he looked tired, his tears had dried out.

Thabani: \*Whispering\* Sky team engage.

“Who are you talking to?”, he asks Thabani.

He looks around and out of nowhere someone falls on top of him, Thabani quickly grabs the remote from him. The agent who fell on top of the man makes him stand up and cuffs him, walking away with him.

Other agent get in.

“All the thugs have been brought in”, they tell Thabani.

Thabani:Okay, we need to get him out of those bombs.

They all move to Mr George and hear something beeping.

“It has a timer”, one agent say out of panic..

Thabani:And it’s at two minutes... okay okay...

“Do you know how to disarm a bomb?”

Thabani:I’ve never tried it.

Thabani:anyone with a knife?

They give him the knife.

Thabani:Okay, it has five wires. The last one is black, so I have to cut the fourth one.

He places the knife on the wire, but scared to cut it. He has never done this before, what if he’s wrong?

“15 seconds!”

An agent shouts and he snaps out of it.

Thabani:Okay here we go.

He grinds his teeth together and cuts the wire, they all cover themselves waiting for something to happen, but stop when the timer stops. They sigh relieved. Thabani takes off the bomb from Mr George.

George:Thank you so much. Thank you. Who are you?

Thabani:What did they want?

George:The password to my family's vault, which has information about every businessmen around the world and their fortunes. Who are you again? Because you are not cops.

Thabani:We are secret agents.

George gasps.

Thabani:But you are not going to remember that.

.  
. .  
. .

NELISA



Mom has been quiet today, it's unlike her. But, on the other news, me and Mngqobi are doing great. I just got off a phone conversation with him. I was smiling from ear to ear.

Hlengiwe comes to my room and tells me that the rents are asking for us. I wonder what it is this time.

I follow her to the living room.

I sit down, next to Hlengiwe.

Mkhwanazi: Thank you for coming my children. I called this meeting because I want us to talk as a family.

Mmmh, since when do we talk in this family?

Mkhwanazi: My children, I want the two of you to talk and share how you feel honestly. I'm begging.

Hlengiwe: I will start.

Oh God not her, once this girl starts talking. She never stops.

Mkhwanazi: Go ahead Hlengiwe.

Hlengiwe: I am not happy baba, I don't even remember being happy in this household. The only time I get to be free is when

I'm at school or around my friends. You and mom are strict, unnecessarily strict futhi. You control our lives to the point that you want us to report everything to you. You don't allow us to make our own choices and learn from our mistakes. Even when it comes to buying something, we have to consult with you first before you give us money. Sis Nelisa is 26 years old but you treat her like she's 15. A person her age should be her own person and making her own decisions. She doesn't want to be a pastor yet you are forcing her. Is that what you always Preach about? To make others miserable? We get it, you're our parents and you want the best for us but you are doing too much honestly. I don't remember a day where we sit as a family, laugh, and talk, every time we must listen to mom telling us that we are possessed by demons. Sorry for this, but you are not good parents. Not at all, and no one is better. Mom and dad are the same. Bad!

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 07

NELISA.

Hlengiwe is still speaking, I told you that once this girl starts talking, she never stops.

Hlengiwe:I love and respect the two of you, but sometimes you make it hard for me to behave.

I look at mom and dad and they are astonished.

Mkhwanazi:Nelisa, do you have anything to say?

I nod.

Mkhwanazi:Go ahead my daughter.

Nelisa:I agree with everything Hlengiwe said, I have been quiet all along because I didn't want to come across as disrespectful. And I'm not a person who knows how to stand up for myself. You raised us into believing that God is our everything and I thank you for that. But being a pastor, is not what I want. I believe to be a pastor, it has to be something that comes deep within you or when the holy spirit leads you to it, not when you are forced into doing it. When it comes to marriage, I'm 26

years, I've never dated that much, because mom was keeping an eye on me. I don't know how to behave around the other gender, I can't just jump into marriage without having to experience how dating feels like. I'm aware of the "no sex before marriage" rule and I'm planning to keep it, but I would like to live my life freely, not being pointed by my parents. I don't know Mngqobi that much, yeah from the time we've spent he seems like a great person, but that's not enough. A marriage is not child's play, that's someone I will be spending the rest of my life with. And I need to know him before I can decide to marry him.

Beth:But\_

Hlengiwe:Let her speak Bethany.

I side eye her to keep quiet.

Nelisa:As I was saying, I need to know him before I can marry him.

A wave of silence passed for a while. I saw dad rub his eyes and he took a deep breath.

Mkhwanazi:I don't even know where to start, I'm ashamed and embarrassed that I have been treating you like this. I'm sorry my children, I always thought we were raising you well. I only got to notice that Nelisa wasn't happy a few days ago, and I didn't know how to deal with the situation. I see now all that

we have been doing to you, my parents must be turning in their graves, they didn't raise me like this. I do want to retire as a pastor, I have been serving for the church for many years, now it's time to rest and enjoy retirement. But if your heart is not in it Nelisa you don't have to. I will talk to Bishop Ndlela about finding a suitable person to fill in my shoes. About marrying Mngqobi, you also don't have to do that. I thought your union will make the church stronger and the two of you will lead with success, but I didn't give it much thought about what it would do to you. Therefore I am truly sorry. I hope it's not too late for me to change my ways and be a good father to you girls.

I couldn't stop my tears, this is what I have always wanted to hear. I stood up from my seat and went to him, hugging him. I heard him sniffing. I felt a hand patting us.

Hlengiwe:That's more like it, we forgive you daddy don't worry.

We laughed a little.

Nelisa:We forgive you dad, I'm happy that you didn't use your authority as a parent to get your way and not own up to your mistakes.

Mkhwanazi:As much as I am your father, but I am also human and I need to see my wrongs.

I nodded and backed away.

Mkhwanazi: Bethany

Advertisement

don't you have anything to say?

She shook her head.

Beth: Can I be excused?

She stood up and left. We looked at each other and shrugged our shoulders.

Hlengiwe: Leave her, her demons are dealing with her.

Mkhwanazi: Hlengiwe!

Hlengiwe: Sorry.

.

.

.

A while later..

I was now in my room and chatting with Mnqobi, I was telling him about the meeting.

'Wow I can't believe your dad really said that' -Mnqobi

'I can't believe it either, it's unlike him. But he was serious, he really wants to change'-Nelisa

'So we don't have to marry each other now? 😊'-Mnqobi

'I guess so.'-Nelisa

'That's too bad, but you are still my girl. Maybe we'll get married in future on our own terms, who knows?'-Mnqobi

'I'm your girl?'-Nelisa.

'Yes, I'm your boyfriend.'-Mnqobi.

I blushed and thought about how to answer. I felt my phone getting snatched from me and it was Hlengiwe. She read the texts and laughed.

Hlengiwe:Tell me everything.

Nelisa:Everything about what?

Hlengiwe:About Mnqobi, so you are dating now?

Nelisa:Hlengiwe I'm older than you.

Hlengiwe:So? Tell me, do you love him?

Nelisa:\*Smiling\* I don't know.

Hlengiwe:Look at you smiling like an idiot. You love him! This is your first ever relationship, are you aware of that?

She laughs and sits next to me.

Hlengiwe:Your parents grounded me because I came home drunk yesterday.

Nelisa:What did you want them to do? Don't do that again Hle.

Hlengiwe:I won't, I promise. Things are cool now. But your mother!

She whispers the last part and claps her hands.

Hlengiwe:Did you see how ugly she was when dad said you don't have to be a pastor anymore, her demons were burning her.

Nelisa:Hlengiwe!

Hlengiwe:I'm telling you, she won't change Nels. People like her don't change.

Nelisa:Maybe she will.

Hlengiwe:She didn't even say anything. Hay that one is not make sure.

I laughed, Hlengiwe is crazy.

Hlengiwe:Yazi you are disturbing me Nelisa, I need to study and uyangixoxisa(you are chatting with me).

Nelisa:Haybo sisi you are the one who came to my room.

Hlengiwe:Whatever, I will see you later. Bye muntu kaMnqobi.



She walks out and closes the door.

.

.

.

THABANI

Mr George was back with his family and safe.

Agent Zulu called me to his office.

Thabani:You called for me.

Zulu:Yes, I need to talk to you about something..

Thabani:Okay I'm listening.

Zulu:I need you to go to China..

Thabani:Okay, is it a mission? I will get my passport ready..

Zulu:It's not a mission.

Thabani:I don't understand now.

Zulu:It's one of the organizations we started years back, to help agents deal with their loss.

Thabani:Huh?

Zulu:You have been deported. Your flight leaves tomorrow, you will be gone for two months.

Thabani:But I\_

Zulu:This is an order Agent 4567847, you are going to China for two months to deal with your loss. You will come back a better man. You are our best agent here, we can't let you slip to insanity.

.

.

.

At The parents' bedroom.

Mkhwanazi looks at Bethany.

Mkhwanazi:Sekwenzenjani ke manje futhi? (What is wrong now?)

Beth:Nothing, I just want to sleep.

Mkhwanazi:I thought after the meeting you will be in a better mood. You heard what our children said, we need to change our ways..

Beth:So we are being dictated by our children now on how to parent them?

Mkhwanazi:For a person who came crying to my office this is not what I expected from you. And no, we are not letting them dictate us. We are also humans and we make mistakes, but we

have to learn from them. You hear what they said, and you know that they were right. So now the both of us are going to make up for all the years we have treated them harshly. Uyeke nokuhudula umlomo ngoba umubi nje(And stop dragging your mouth, you are ugly).

.

.

.

HLENGIWE

I was getting some studying done but I was zoning out. I need someone to tutor me. I can't believe I have missed out on so much school work. I hear a knock on my window and I wonder who it is. I stand up and drag the curtain, I am surprised to see Nkanyezi. I opened the window and she jumped in.

Hlengiwe:What are you doing here?

Nkanyezi:My parents are fighting again. Can I sleep here for tonight?

She was carrying her school bag, I closed the window and hugged her.

Hlengiwe:Of course.

Her parents are always fighting, worse they fight in front of her. Sometimes the fights get physical, until the neighbours break them apart. She sat on the bed looking sad.

Hlengiwe:Hey I know what will make you feel better. I will make hot chocolate for you, and then you can teach me this Geography.

She giggled.

Nkanyezi:Okay.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 08

NELISA

The meeting we had yesterday helped, I feel free and at peace. Now I can do what I like and live my life, first would be finding a job and getting an apartment. I seriously need to move out of my parents' house. I've been here for 26 years. Maybe I'll get to study fashion in the next years to come, who knows? I am looking at the posts Mngobi sent me and applying, working won't be so bad after all. Dad sent me some money today, I was surprised actually. But I guess talking to him yesterday helped. It's my mom whom I'm still undecided about, I don't get her. She has been moody the whole day. I am even afraid to ask her what is wrong.

I head to the kitchen feeling a bit hungry, I find her cooking. I want to turn back but she has already seen me.

Nelisa:Just here to make something to eat, I will be out of your way.

I quietly made a sandwich, she kept on moving around and bumping into me but I ignored her. I took my sandwich and headed out back to my room.

.

.

.

#Narrated

Mkhwanazi is here to see Bishop Ndlela and let him know about the change of plans.

Bishop:I'm surprised by your visit Mkhwanazi.

Mkhwanazi:Sorry for not telling you that I was coming.

Bishop:It's alright, you are already here. So what do you want to talk about?

Mkhwanazi:It's about our children.

Bishop smiles thinking he's confirming the date of the negotiations.

Bishop:Is everything ready for us to proceed?

Mkhwanazi:The wedding is not happening anymore..

Bishop lowers his smile confused.

Bishop:What?

Mkhwanazi:My daughter is not too happy by everything that is happening so I'm calling it off. I need your help to find someone who can fill my shoes and serve as a pastor under the church.

Bishop:What do you mean the wedding is off?

Mkhwanazi:I have realized that I have been parenting wrong. It was wrong of me in the first place to find a husband for Nelisa without discussing it with her.

Bishop looks at him.

Bishop:You are allowing a child to tell you what to do?

Mkhwanazi:You are not understanding what I'm saying, but the wedding is off. Please let me know if you can't find a suitable person and I'll look for him myself.

He says already standing up.

Mkhwanazi:I have to go. That's all I came to say.

Bishop nods and walks him out. Mkhwanazi gets into his car and waves at Bishop as he walks back inside.

He fiddles with his phone and puts it down. He drives away.

.

Inside Bishop's house.

He calls his wife who was in the living room.

Ma'Bishop:Was that Pastor Mkhwanazi?

Bishop:Yes it was him.

Ma'Bishop:Oh what did he want?

Bishop:He came to tell us that the wedding is off, that his daughter doesn't like what is happening.

Ma'Bishop:He is getting weak, it's that wife of his. I was happy that my son would marry Nelisa, that girl is humble and respectful. Now what will we do? Because we can't let Mngqobi just marry anyone who is not worthy and a heathen.

Bishop:I don't know, but we will see.

Mngqobi, who was eavesdropping by the passage hurries to his room. Unlike Nelisa, he is not brave enough to stand up to his parents. He is scared, his father is basically holding him by the testicles. He has never went against his parents, if they could find out that he's had sex before marriage, they would probably disown him.

.  
. .  
.

HLENGIWE

Nkanyezi was still a bit down. Her parents are really stressing her out, that's why she studies hard. She wants to go to University next year and leave them.



Hlengiwe:Let's go to the mall.

Nkanyezi:To do what at the mall? We have no money.

Hlengiwe:I have it.

Nkanyezi:Where did you get it?

Hlengiwe:Dad gave it to me this morning. Let's go

Advertisement

it will be fun. You can sleepover even today.

Nkanyezi:No, I don't want to burden you with my problems.

Hlengiwe:Me and you are one, your problems are mine.

Nkanyezi:\*Smiling\* Okay.

Hlengiwe:Now smile for me baby girl.

Nkanyezi:Shut up.

I pull her cheek and she can't help but laugh.

Hlengiwe:That's it.

We take a taxi, to the mall. We arrive and start by the clothing stores.

Nkanyezi:Mahlengi isn't that your father?

I look at where she was pointing, and it really was dad. He was carrying flowers and a small gift bag. Mmh must be to apologize to mom or something.

Hlengiwe: Trouble in paradise?

I look at where he's going, and he went to the parking lot direction. Must be driving home.

Hlengiwe: Leave my dad, let's go in.

I drag her inside and we browse the clothes.

Hlengiwe: Here try this one.

Nkanyezi: Why? We are not going to buy it anyway.

Hlengiwe: I will buy it for you moon bakithi. Go and try it.

She laughed and went to the fitting room, she came out seconds later looking good. It was a body hugging dress, showing all her curves and figure. Nkanyezi is a nice shaped girl.

Hlengiwe: Ohhh you look beautiful. If we had a matric dance at school, you would have worn a dress similar to this one.

Nkanyezi: Does it really suits me?

Hlengiwe: It does.

She went to take it off, and we tried some more clothes. We were not going to buy them all, it we just did for the fun of it.

.

.

.

BETHANY

I'm in our bedroom, I take my phone and call my mother.

Mom:Hello.

Beth:Hi mom, this is Beth.

Mom:Bethany?

Beth:Yes it's me.

Mom:I had a child named Bethany once, but she ran from home.

Beth:I didn't call for that. I'm just checking up on you.

Mom:I'm fine.

Beth:Mama I need to talk to you.

Mom:We are talking right now, aren't we?

Beth:I mean face to face. There are a lot of things that happened in the past that we never spoke about.

Mom:You know where I live if you want to see me.

Beth:I will come tomorrow. How is dad?

Mom:He's fine, just old age is playing with him.

Beth:Okay, I will see you tomorrow.

I hung up and went to Nelisa's room. It was slightly open and I heard her speaking. I stood by and listened, she was talking with a phone.

Nelisa:\*Over the phone\* Babe I don't know what to do with my mom now, she hasn't spoken to me today. I think I should apologize, I don't know, maybe she feels disrespected. Okay... haaa Mngqobi.. Okay I love you too...

She giggles. I closed her door and walked back to the bedroom. How did things get here?

And why isn't Mkhwanazi back by now? He said he was going to Bishop's house hours ago.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 09

In the evening, Mkhwanazi enters the house carrying flowers and a gift bag, finding his whole family in the living room watching TV.

He gives them to Bethany smiling.

Mkhwanazi: These are for you.

Bethany takes them smiling, wondering why she's receiving flowers.

Beth: Thank you baba. What's the special occasion?

Mkhwanazi: Nothing I just want to show you appreciation.

Nelisa and Hlengiwe look at them smiling.

Hlengiwe: Let us leave you love birds.

They leave the room.

Mkhwanazi sits next to his wife.

Beth: I am going to see my mother tomorrow.

Mkhwanazi: Are you sure? You haven't seen her for years.

Beth: Yes I'm sure, it's time to talk. I can't keep on carrying this within me. I see the effect it has on my family.

Mkhwanazi: Okay do you need me to go with you?

Beth:No I will be fine.

Mkhwanazi:Okay I love you.

Beth:I love you too.

Mkhwanazi:We are going to be okay.

.

.

.

NELISA

Hlengiwe:I need to go and sleep now, see you tomorrow.

Nelisa:Did moon leave?

Hlengiwe:Yes, she said her parents are okay.

Nelisa:You're a good friend to her, I've seen the two of you together.

Hlengiwe:She understands me.

I wish I had friends, being the pastor's daughter, you don't have time to make friends. Most of the times I'm setting up events at church and making sure that everything is ready.

Hlengiwe:Goodnight Nels.

Nelisa:Goodnight sweetheart.

She walked out and closed the door.

I got under covers and prepared to sleep. But my phone rang, disturbing me. It was Mnqobi.

Nelisa:Hello?

Mnqobi:Are you sleeping?

Nelisa:I was about to.

Mnqobi:Can I see you?

Nelisa:Mnqobi it's late, we can see each other tomorrow.

Mnqobi:I'm outside.

Nelisa:What?

Mnqobi>Please come, I really need to talk to you.

Nelisa:Eish okay, I'm coming.

I hung up and wore my robe, now I have to sneak out. My parents were still in the living room, looking cosy. I cleared my throat and they looked at me.

Mkhwanazi:Nelisa we thought you were sleeping.

Nelisa:Yeah but I'm feeling hot, can I go outside for some fresh air?

Mkhwanazi:Of course, you don't even need to ask.

I nodded and hurried out of the room. I saw his car parked at a distance and I quickened my pace going to him. He opened the car door for me and I go in.

Nelisa:What are you doing here?

Mnqobi:I just needed to see you. How are you?

I relaxed a bit.

Nelisa:I'm fine, how are you?

Mnqobi:I'm also fine. I missed you.

I smiled and blushed.

Nelisa:I missed you too.

Mnqobi:Look Nels I won't be long, I just have something to say.

Nelisa:Okay I'm listening.

Mnqobi:Can you marry me?

He just blurted out.

Nelisa:What?

Mnqobi:What?

Nelisa:What you just said.

Mnqobi:My parents want me to marry another person and I don't want to. I only want you Nelisa.



Nelisa: So you are using me as a shield to your parents?

Mnqobi: No I'm not doing that. I really want to be with you Nelisa, and if we get married; my parents can finally get off my back.

I shook my head, I don't know if I'm misinterpreting him or what.

Nelisa: Weren't you the one Mnqobi who told me that I should talk to my father and make him understand? Why don't you do the same?

Mnqobi: My parents would never listen to me Nelisa. Maybe yours are better.

He held my hands.

Mnqobi: I know we don't know each other that much but I promise you, I will treat you like a princess. I don't have any bad intentions. I just want to be with you.

I look at him not sure what to say, this is a big commitment.

.

.

.

THABANI

So I am finally in China, a 14 hour long flight and I am finally here. City of Shanghai. The place looks beautiful, though the people keep on looking at me weirdly. A cab took me to the hotel I will be staying at for the duration of the trip.

“We have meditation at 7pm. Don’t be late”, they told me. I nodded and took a shower.

This is going to be a long two months.

.  
.br/.

The following morning.

NELISA

I didn’t give Mngqobi a definite answer yesterday, I have to think through about this. I don’t know if I’m ready for it

Advertisement

first relationship and boom I’m getting married. Why can’t Mngqobi just talk to his parents? I’m sure they will understand. Maybe if we have dated for a year then we get married I would understand it, but no, we barely have gotten together for two weeks. Marriage isn’t all roses, we’ve had couples come for counselling at church because their marriage was falling apart.

If it's not cheating, it's the lies, and the secrets, and the fear of someone falling out of love with you. I don't think I'm ready for any that. I do feel something for Mngqobi, I don't know whether it's because it's my first relationship or what, but I like him too. Am I ready for marriage?

My phone beeps. It was a text message.

'Just know I'm not putting pressure on you, I will understand if you don't want to marry me. I guess I will allow my parents to choose my life for me. I love you.'-Mngqobi

.  
. .

BETHANY

My husband drove me to my parents' house.

Mkhwanazi:Are you sure you don't want me to go in with you?

Beth:No I will be fine, I will call you later on to fetch me.

Mkhwanazi:Okay I love you sthandwa sami..

Beth:I love you too.

I opened the car and got out. God give me strength. I went through the gate which still looked the same as I remember it. Even the house, it's still the same..

I knock on the door nervously. I haven't seen my mother for so many years, I was young when I ran away from home. I wasn't being physically abused or anything related to that, but I couldn't do it anymore. My mother was controlling me, she wanted me to do everything she wanted, she lived her life through me. When she found out that I got pregnant out of wedlock(with Nelisa), she was angry, she didn't talk to me for a month. Said I'm ruining things, as she had my life planned out. She even went as far as wanting me to pin the pregnancy on someone else because Mkhwanazi wasn't heavy on the pockets that time. I just couldn't take it, so one day at night, I packed all that belonged to me and left. I never returned. I never called. I turned my back. I'm here now to get over it, I want to move on. The very same thing my mother did to me, I have been doing to Nelisa. I haven't been a good mother to her, and I need to make amends with my mother so that I can be a good mother to my daughters; and not repeat the same mistakes my mom did.

.  
. .  
.

**MKHWANAZI**

I have received a message from Bethany, she says she's going to sleep over at her parents'. I guess the reunion went better

than I expected. I go to the girls' room to tell them. I start by Hlengiwe, I knock and she tells me to come in. I find her busy with her books. It makes me proud that she's focusing on her studies..

Hlengiwe:Hey dad.

Mkhwanazi:Hlengiwe, your mother isn't coming back today. She's at her parents.

Hlengiwe:Oh, I guess they welcomed her back then.

Mkhwanazi:Seems so..

She looked at me and I avoided her eyes.

Hlengiwe:Dad you wouldn't lie to your family right?

Mkhwanazi:No I wouldn't do that.

Hlengiwe:Mhhh okay, I trust you daddy.

She said carefree and focused her attention back to her books.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 10

BETHANY

I slept over yesterday, we didn't talk much with my mother. I just lost my words and I passed out on the couch. She woke me up with soft porridge. I remember when we were young and she made us this porridge, those were the days. My mother has aged, I last saw her when she was I think my age.

Mom:I will wash your bowl.

Beth:No I will do it.

I took the bowl from her and went to the kitchen to wash it. She came to the kitchen and dragged a chair sitting down. I sat opposite her..

Mom:Ngiyajabula ukukbona mntanami, besengithi ngiyoze ngife ngingakbonanga. (I am happy to see you my child, I thought I would die without seeing you).

I sighed and put my hands on the table.

Beth:You know why I ran away from home mom.

Mom:Angazi Bethany(I don't know Bethany).

I chuckled bitterly, she still doesn't see it does she?

Beth:You ruined me mom. You were controlling my life and were obsessed with me.

Mom:I was looking out for you. I wanted you to \_

Beth:No mom just stop it. You were living your life through me! You were obsessed with me doing everything that you wanted me to do. You were angry when I fell pregnant with Nelisa and you wanted me to pin the pregnancy on someone else.

Mom:You ruined your life Bethany, I had your life planned out for you. I was\_

Beth:See this is exactly what I mean, you had my life planned out. You didn't allow me to do anything! And I did the same thing to my children. I fail to give them the normal motherly love because I've never gotten it from my mother.

Mom:Are you blaming me for your bad parenting?

Bethany:I got it from you, I'm like this because of you. I became independent at the age of 22 and had to learn on my own how to take care of a baby, because I was running away from you. And clearly I didn't do a good job, my children hate me, because I have been a monster to them their whole lives.

I wiped the tears off of my face.

Mom:Bethany you have to understand, when we grew up, our mothers did us like that too. And we were grateful because we knew they were looking out for us. My mother found me the best husband and my life was on the right track. I thought I was

doing the same thing to you. Sorry if you didn't like it but I thought I was helping you.

.  
. .  
. . .

HLENGIWE

I can't shake off the feeling that my father is withholding the truth somehow, his eyes were everywhere yesterday. I've mastered the art of studying a human being, and I know when a person is lying. So what could my father be lying about?

Nkanyezi:I will come over today so that we can do the assignment.

Hlengiwe:Okay I will be waiting. How are your parents?

Nkanyezi:Behaving, I took your advice yesterday and told them how them fighting is affecting me, and they promised to stop.

Hlengiwe:I hope they will stop for real. Why are they even fighting?

Nkanyezi:I didn't ask them, but I overheard dad saying that mom is stealing money from him.

Hlengiwe:\*Laughing\* So all these fights about money?



Nkanyezi:I don't think it's that only. But I don't want to know, as long as they stop fighting, I'm good.

Hlengiwe:Okay, bye. Love you sweets.

Nkanyezi:Love you too Mahlengi.

I hugged her and went home. I found Nelisa staring into space. I snapped my fingers in front of her.

She jumped frightened.

Nelisa:What?

Hlengiwe:What are you thinking about?

Nelisa:Nothing.

Hlengiwe:Come on, I can see that you are stressed. Tell me.

Nelisa:You're a child Hlengiwe, you won't understand.

Hlengiwe:Is this about Mnqobi?

Nelisa:Yes.

Hlengiwe:Then tell me, I know more about relationships than you do.

She looked at me. What? I'm not lying.

Nelisa:Okay I'm only telling you because I know you won't give up.

Hlengiwe:You know me too well.

Nelisa:Mnqobi asked me to marry him.

Hlengiwe:What?

Nelisa:He says his parents want to find another woman for him to marry me, so he thinks it would get them off their back if we get married.

Hlengiwe:How do you feel about that?

Nelisa:I don't know, I like him, but I don't think I want to get married. I barely know him. I don't know anything about him actually.

Hlengiwe:Then say no, what's the big deal? How did he propose?

Nelisa:He didn't, he told me on his car.

Hlengiwe:Weee klibhi he's not even romantic. Look Sis Nels, you just got your freedom from mom and dad. Are you sure you want to get into another prison willingly? I've heard a lot about these bishop's sons. They break your soul until you are left with no emotion.

Nelisa:That's exactly what I'm afraid of. But this is the first guy who's ever been interested in me since forever. What if this is my only chance at love?

- .
- .
- .

## MKHWANAZI

Since Bethany was not going to be back for a while, he decided to run his errands. He saw a few people at church and checked if everything was still okay.

A couple visited him to ask for counseling with their marriage. He talked with them for an hour and they left. He sat on his office and relaxed a bit.

His phone rang. He answered it.

Mkhwanazi:Hello

okay I will be there.

He hung up and packed up his things, and went to his car. He drove to her, but he passed by the shops and got some food for her. When he arrived, he knocked and he heard a soft come in.

He entered and found her on the living room, with her swollen feet on the table. He kissed her cheek.

Mkhwanazi:Hey.

Philiswa:Hi daddy.

He rubbed her big stomach and laid his head on her softly.

Mkhwanazi:Has he kicked today?

Philiswa:Multiple times. I can't wait for him to come out yet, I'm tired.

Mkhwanazi:Only two months left. I brought you food.

She took it and opened the paper bag.

Philiswa:Thank you.

Mkhwanazi:I will get you something to drink.

He went to the kitchen and poured juice for her on a glass, he brought it to her and placed it on the table.

He sat next to her, and brought her feet to his thighs.

Mkhwanazi:Let me massage your feet, look how swollen they are.

Philiswa:I went outside today so I think that's why.

He smiled and massaged her feet while she was eating. She moaned closing her eyes. He felt guilty, he didn't know how he would even start to explain when his secret comes out.

Mkhwanazi:Are you moaning because of the food or my hands?

Philiswa:Both.

She laughs, showing off her dimple. She has the perfect smile. He hates that he put her through this, she's a nice young woman who doesn't deserve to be treated like this. He looked at her mouth and licked his lips. She gave the best kisses and blow jobs ever, her mouth was shaped perfectly.

Philiswa:Why are you looking at me like that pastor?

Mkhwanazi:Nothing, just thinking. Are you still okay with staying here?

Philiswa:Yes I'm fine, the helper you got for me is helpful a lot. I don't get bored.

He nodded.

Philiswa:So what's going to happen when I give birth?

Mkhwanazi:What do you mean?

Philiswa:Are we going to keep on sneaking around like this?

Mkhwanazi:We will see as time goes Phili.

Philiswa:Would it really hurt to tell your wife about us?

Mkhwanazi:We talked about this, my marriage is off limits. I don't want to ruin my house that has been standing strong for years.

Philiswa stuffed the wing on her mouth and nodded.

He sighed as he saw tears streaming down her face, with her pregnancy, she was a cry baby. He placed her feet down and pulled her to him, he made her lie on his chest.

Mkhwanazi:Please don't cry. I will never leave you.

Philiswa:\*Crying\* I don't want to be a home wrecker, but I'm tired of sneaking around with you.

Mkhwanazi:We will figure things out baby please don't cry. You are upsetting our son.

He kissed her and she kissed him back.

His hand moved to the stomach, he liked touching it.

Philiswa:I'm horny.

Mkhwanazi:Let's go to the bed.

.  
.br/.

NELISA

I have called Mngqobi for us to meet up, I have made my decision and I have thought clearly about it. It's the best for all of us. I am waiting for him at the park, I check the time and he should be here by now.

I see him approaching a while later, and I stand up to welcome him. He gives me a hug as soon as he gets to me.

Mnqobi:Hey, have you been waiting that long?

Nelisa:No.

We sat down on the bench. He looked nervous.

Mnqobi:You said you have an answer for me.

Nelisa:Yes, I have thought about your proposal.

Mnqobi:And?

Nelisa:No.

Mnqobi:No?

Nelisa:Yes.

Mnqobi:\*Confused\*So you will marry me?

Nelisa:No, I'm saying no. I can't marry you.

Mnqobi:Why? Don't you love me?

Nelisa:How will our marriage be Mnqobi if you can't even stand up to your parents? Will you be able to set boundaries?

Mnqobi:We will deal with that.

Nelisa:How? Because even now you are just rushing into this. We both know that we are not ready for marriage. I like you Mngqobi but what you are doing is turning me off.

He scoffed.

Mngqobi:So I'm a turn off?

I kept quiet.

Mngqobi:Says the 26 year old virgin who didn't even know how to kiss.

I blinked my eyes feeling hurt, that bruised my feelings.

Nelisa:\*Breaking voice\* Don't insult me Mngqobi.

Mngqobi:Okay I'm sorry babe, I'm just frustrated.

Nelisa:Just talk to your parents, and tell them that we are dating.

Mngqobi:They won't listen to me.

I raised my hands in surrender.

Nelisa:Ujahe umshado kodwa usahlulwa ukukhuluma nabazali bakho, ngeke phela nami Ngilokhu ngitshelana nendoda endala into eyodwa. Read my lips, Mina nawe asikezu kshada manje. (You are rushing marriage but you can't even stand up to your parents, I can't keep on telling an old man the same thing. Read my lips, we are not getting married anytime soon).



## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 11

NELISA

I went back home after the meet-up with Mngqobi, he better make up his mind fast or our relationship will not work. How will our “marriage” be like if he can’t stand up to his parents? He’s the man here, he should have the upper hand. He’s almost 30 acting like a little boy.

Hlengiwe:Hey sis.

Nelisa:Hi Hle, mom not back yet?

Hlengiwe:Nop, dad said he will fetch her.

Nelisa:Okay, I will be in my room.

I go to my room and sit on the bed. A message comes through from Mngqobi.

‘I will talk to my parents. I’m sorry for putting pressure on you, I’m just not outspoken, but I will talk to them. I really want to be with you Nelisa. I love you.’-Mngqobi.

I reply.

‘Thank you, let me know what they said. Remember, don’t be disrespectful, talk to them nicely but raise your point across’-  
Nelisa

‘I will❤️. Thank you once again.’-Mngqobi.

'No sweats. I love you too.'-Nelisa

I plugged my phone on the charger.

.

.

.

Bethany:I am leaving now, but I will come to visit again.

Mom:It was really nice to see you again Bethany, I'm really sorry that it was my actions that chased you away from home. I will do better, I promise.

Beth:It's okay, holding on to the past won't do me any good. I forgive you. I need to be a better person to my family and stop being bitter. Stay well, pass my regards to dad.

Mom:Okay I will. Goodbye.

She walks out with her mother accompanying her to the gate. She waves at her and Beth gets inside the car, Mkhwanazi was already waiting.

They share a brief hug.

Mkhwanazi:So how did it go?

Bethany:\*Sighs\* Better than I expected actually, we talked and I got to offload everything in my chest. It won't be easy to

rebuild our relationship but we will try. I'm just sad that I did this later, when it has already caused damage to my family.

Mkhwanazi:What matters now is to move forward, start spending time with the girls and we'll be closer to them.

Beth nods and frowns remembering something, she then laughs.

Mkhwanazi:What?

Beth:I'm just remembering how you called me ugly the other day.

Mkhwanazi:I didn't say you were ugly, you forming and dragging your mouth made you ugly.

They laugh..

Beth:Whatever.

He starts the car and drives.

Beth:What were you up to today?

He looks at her and back at the road.

Mkhwanazi:Just went to church and did the usual, then I came to fetch you.

Beth:Okay, tomorrow I have to check on my shop. I haven't been there in a month.

.

.

.

Two following days later, Philiswa is walking and pushing her big belly after a visit from the doctor's office. She's tired and hungry, and she doesn't think she can walk any longer. She should have taken a cab to drive her, but she chose to be a starrng and walk on her own. She sits down and takes out her phone calling Mkhwanazi, it rings unanswered and she sighs frustrated. She calls him again but he doesn't answer, she leaves a voice message,

"Why are you not answering your phone? I'm stranded in town, hungry and tired!! Just answer your damn phone!!"

She sends it and clicks her tongue. She sits for a moment waiting for him to call back but nothing.

Someone, a woman comes to her and takes off her glasses.

"Hey sweetheart, I noticed that you have been sitting here for a while. Are you waiting for someone?"

Philiswa:Yes I am, but they will be here soon.

"It's getting late and you are pregnant. Let me take you home."

Philiswa:No thank you, I will be fine.

She wasn't prepared to just trust a stranger. And this person had a scar on her face, definitely a thug, but she was dressed smartly.

"My name is Kukhanya, I'm not dangerous trust me. I just know how tiring pregnancy is, I will take you home only. You can put 10111 on speed dial if you don't trust me"

She reluctantly stood up and followed her. She led her to her car and helped her get inside.

Philiswa:\*In awe\* Your car is beautiful.

Kukhanya:Thank you, it was a gift. So where to?

She told her the address.

.

.

.

At Bishop's House.

After gathering strength, he has finally decided to talk with his parents. He found them on the kitchen chatting and greeted them.

Ma'Bishop:Oh Mngqobi

Advertisement

I'm glad you are here. Me and your father were just looking for potential women for you.

Mnqobi: Yeah I want to talk about that. Can we sit down?

They sit down.

Bishop: What is it son?

Mnqobi: It's about you guys wanting to find a wife for me.

Bishop: Mnqobi you a\_

Mnqobi: Please let me finish dad. I appreciate you raising me up and all, but I'm older now and turning 30 in the next month. I think I am more than capable at doing what will benefit me.

Ma'Bishop: What are you saying Mnqobi?

Mnqobi: That I am moving out soon, it's time to live my life mom. I have been under the shadow of being the Bishop's son for far too long. Me and Nelisa are pursuing a relationship, and we are in no rush. When we are ready, we will get married.

He held his breath after talking. His parents looked at each other and Ma'Bishop shed a tear and nodded.

Ma'Bishop: It's okay son, you really have grown. It's just that us parents we are used to being there for you, that we don't realize even when we are making our children unhappy.

Mnqobi listened in shock, he didn't think they would take this so well. Guess Nelisa was right, everything can be resolved if you communicate.

Mnqobi:Baba?

Bishop:I agree with your mother, you are getting to 30 and you are still staying with us. So I guess you are right. I wish you all the best. Do you have the place you will stay at?

Mnqobi:Yes, I do. Thank you once again for listening to me.

He left them and went to his room to start packing and update Nelisa.

Back at the kitchen.

Ma'Bishop:You know, I think he is right.

Bishop:Who?

Ma'Bishop:Mnqobi. We have been controlling him all these years and he has been doing everything we tell him to do. It's what Pastor Mkhwanazi said about his daughter being unhappy hence he called off the wedding. Now I see, we were wrong and it's a pity that we didn't see anything wrong with what were doing. I wish there was a school about parenting, because the black nation really fails at that department.

Bishop nodded.

Bishop:I have to go somewhere real quick, I'll be back later.

Ma'Bishop:Okay.

He takes his car keys and head towards his car, he receives a call from Mkhwanazi.

Bishop:Spheshu.

Mkhwanazi:Ndlela my problems are catching up with me.

Ndlela looks behind him to check if no one was nearby.

Ndlela:Is it about the girl?

Mkhwanazi:Yes, she's due anytime and I don't know how I will deal with it.

Ndlela:I would suggest that you tell your family the truth, before they find out by themselves.

Mkhwanazi:Where will I even start?

Ndlela:The truth will set you free Spheshu, I don't know how you will deal with your wife because she's crazy.

Mkhwanazi:I am in deep trouble yesses! Okay I will talk to you later...

He hung up laughing a little, he thinks Mkhwanazi should be honest soon. The truth has its way of coming out and it's always ugly.



He drives away.

.  
.br/>.

At Mkhwanazi's House.

He is having a talk with Nelisa about the Sunday service.

Mkhwanazi:I will be announcing that I'm stepping down..

Nelisa:Did Bishop Ndlela find someone for you?

Mkhwanazi:Yes he did, but I will have to see that person first and confirm if they are suitable.

Nelisa:I can't believe you are retiring, you have been a pastor ever since I can remember.

Mkhwanazi:And it has been wonderful sharing the word of God with the people, but it's time for me to rest now. I'm not getting any younger and I can die any time..

Nelisa:Dad don't talk like that. We still need you.

Mkhwanazi:Death cannot be avoided Nelisa, we are all going to die..

Nelisa:Can we not talk about death?

She asks horrified. There's nothing that scares her more in this world than death. It's just scary that you can be alive today and the next day you are gone, the world forgets about you. Like your chapter is closed!

"Daad your phone is ringing", Hlengiwe shouts hurrying with his phone.

By the time he takes it, it had already stopped.

Hlengiwe: Maybe they left a message.

Mkhwanazi almost played the voice message but remembered that it was from Philiswa.

Mkhwanazi: Uhh excuse me.

He walked out.

Hlengiwe looked at him suspiciously, dad always answers his phone in front of them. What is he hiding??

Outside, Mkhwanazi listens to the message from Philiswa and feels bad that she went alone to the doctor.

He calls her back worried.

Philiswa: What?

Mkhwanazi: I'm sorry, my phone wasn't near me. Are you still there?

Philiswa: No, someone gave me a ride back home. So I'm fine.

Mkhwanazi:I'm really sorry. Can I come now?

Philiswa:No, I have to remember that you are a family man. I knew you were married with children when I slept with you. So I will take it like a big girl.

He closed his eyes as he listened to her crying.

Mkhwanazi:I'm coming over there.

He hangs up and call Bishop telling him that his problems are catching up on him..

When he was done, he walked back inside to get his keys.

Hlengiwe kept on looking at him.

Hlengiwe:What's up with dad?

Nelisa:What's up?

Hlengiwe:Mhhh he's hiding something, you saw how shaky his hands was when I gave him his phone?

Nelisa looked at her confused.

Hlengiwe:I'm following him.

Nelisa:What? No!

Hlengiwe:I'm telling you he's hiding something. That day at the mall, he had red flowers and a purple gift bag, then he gave mom white flowers with a pink gift bag.

Nelisa:So what? Maybe he took them back..

Hlengiwe:Maybe but I don't trust him. I am following him. Are you coming or not!?

Nelisa stood up.

Nelisa:Just to prove you wrong, dad wouldn't lie to us about anything.

Hlengiwe:We will see.

They heard his car making noise outside .

Nelisa:How will we follow him?

Hlengiwe dragged her outside, and hid behind the wall with her. They tiptoed behind the car and bent down. Hlengiwe slowly opened the boot and threw Nelisa inside who winced and cried out a little. Hlengiwe pinched her to keep quiet. Mkhwanazi felt a noise and looked around, Hlengiwe bent down again and closed the boot. Mkhwanazi saw nothing and continued plugging his phone.

Hlengiwe opened the boot again, and got inside, closing it. They stayed quiet for a while, and they heard the car moving.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 12

The same day, hours later, Hlengiwe closes the door on Nelisa's room and throw herself on the bed. Nelisa folds her arms looking at her furiously.

Hlengiwe:Don't look at me like that.

Nelisa:You sent us on a wild goose chase.

Hlengiwe:I really thought he was hiding something..

Nelisa:You were wrong, I told you that dad isn't lying about anything, but as always, you don't want to be disagreed with..

Hlengiwe looks at her a bit confused. What does she mean by that?

Hlengiwe:What is that supposed to mean Sis Nels?

Nelisa:Everytime you do this, you don't want to be told. You want to do your own thing, even when a person tries to reason with you, you will overtake them with your loud mouth.

Hlengiwe gasps grasping what her sister is saying to her. This is the first time she's raising a voice at her.

Hlengiwe:What are you talking about?

Nelisa whimpers in annoyance.

Nelisa:Just forget it!

She walks out and bangs the door so hard on her way out.

.

.

.

Mkhwanazi enters their bedroom and checks if no one is nearby. Bethany was out so he was sure he's alone. He dialed her numbers.

Philiswa:Hello?

She answered sleepy.

Mkhwanazi:Hi, did I wake you up?

Philiswa:Yes, you said you are coming here.

Mkhwanazi:I was, but the girls were following me. They were hiding on the boat, so I had to pretend like I was going to the shops.

Philiswa:They know about me?

He sensed the fear in her voice.

Mkhwanazi:No they don't, I will have to lay low for a while. I will see you soon, okay?

Philiswa:Okay see you.

Mkhwanazi: Kiss my son for me, and stop crying. You are upsetting him.

She giggles.

Philiswa: I will try.

Mkhwanazi: That's it, have you eaten?

Philiswa: Yes, but I am feeling hungry.

Mkhwanazi: Okay please ask Mam'Sondo to make you something to eat. I will send you some money.

Philiswa: Thank you.

Mkhwanazi: Okay goodbye.

He hungs up and put his phone back on his pocket. He sits on the bed and his eyes catch a glimpse of his & Bethany's wedding picture. He stands up and picks it up. He sighs a deep, tired sighs. They looked so happy and so in love, their love was out of this world.

"What went wrong?", he asked himself. He looked at the young him, he was so full of love for his new wife. He looked at the young Bethany, who also was full of love for her new husband. He felt very guilty for what he is doing, if Bethany finds out that he broke their vows; she won't be happy, at all. But at the same time, Philiswa is also so innocent, and amazing. She was a virgin when they met and he took her virginity. People would label

him as a pervert if they were to find that out, his family would be disappointed in him. They just fixed things and rekindled their relationship. He can't afford to lose them, he will continue lying to them.

.

.

.

A week later.

MNQOBI

I have finally moved out completely from home, now I have my own space. It feels good to be independent. I can't believe it took me this long to just talk to my parents. I'm glad I listened to Nelisa and talked to them. Speaking of her, I invited her to dinner. Not here at my house, at a restaurant. Our first official date. I want to start afresh and court her. I really love her, maybe we'll get married soon.

.

.

.

NELISA



Mnqobi says he's inviting me to our first date. That's sweet, but I haven't been to a date before so I don't know what to wear. I take my phone and text him.

'What should I wear?' - Nelisa

'Formal wear. This is our official date 😊' - Mnqobi

'Okay' - Nelisa.

I browse through my closet and I don't see anything worthy to wear on a date. I mostly have clothes that I wear at church, long skirts, dresses and heels. And I can't rock up on a date looking like that. I need some pants, or some outfit. I would be asking Hlengiwe

Advertisement

but I think she's still mad at me for what I said that day.

Honestly, I don't know why I talked like that. It is true what I said, but I should have found a better way to say it.

I hear a knock on my door and I tell whomever it is to come in, I'm surprised to see it's my mother. She has been avoiding me ever since she came back.

Beth: Nelisa can we talk?

Nelisa: Sure.

I closed my closet and sat with her on the bed.

Beth:So I will start by apologizing, for everything I have ever done to you. I'm really sorry. What I did to you, my mother also did to me. I should have learnt from that but I didn't. Instead I made your life miserable, even when your father told me that you were not happy. I continued pushing my agenda because I wanted to live my life through you. I'm willing to change, I will be more than happy to have a relationship with you Nelisa. For us to bond as mother and daughter, go out more often, and have you crying to me about boys. I still want all that.

Wow, it is really heart warming to hear my mother speak like this. I have been waiting for her to say words like these. I nod and hug her tightly, she hugs me back and I hear her sniffing.

Nelisa:Don't cry mom, we all make mistakes, and I'm glad that you are willing to make things right.

We pull out of the hug and I wipe her tears.

Nelisa:Stop crying, you look ugly.

Beth:Shut up. So what are you doing with all the clothes here?

Nelisa:Looking for something to wear. Mngqobi is taking me out on a date.

Beth:Are the two of you dating?

Nelisa:Yes, he has moved out of his parents house.

Beth:I'm happy for you, but be careful. This is your first relationship, don't rush into doing anything you don't want to. Take things at your own pace.

Nelisa:Don't worry, I will be careful. And Mngqobi is a nice person.

Beth:If you say so, now let's go to the mall so we can get you a nice outfit.

I squealed in excitement.

.  
. .  
.

At Church, Philiswa talks with some girls for a few seconds and then goes to the pastor's office.

The girls remain behind shaking their heads and judging her.

Girl1:Who is the father of her baby?

Girl2:I don't know, but rumor has it that it's an old man.

Girl1:Philiswa really disappointed me! I never thought that her out of all people would fall pregnant.

Girl2:Me too friend, it's so unlike her. She's an orphan but already she's bringing children to this world. What about school?

Girl1:She dropped out.

They laugh.

Girl2:Her future is ruined, no one will Want to marry a woman who is used goods.

Girl1:Exactly, and I heard there's a new pastor coming here. Maybe we'll be lucky firend and he will choose one of us as his wife.

Girl2:I can already imagine being the pastor's wife! That would be a dream come true!

At Mkhwanazi's office.

He stand up and locks the door after she has entered.

He kisses her for a moment.

Mkhwanazi:No one saw you?

Philiswa:No, even if they did, they probably think I'm here about my problems. Phela everyone gossips about me here..

Mkhwanazi:Don't mind them. How are you feeling?

Philiswa:Better than yesterday, I think the baby is near.

Mkhwanazi smiles. He can't wait to see his son.

Mkhwanazi:I will be there when you give birth.

Philiswa:\*Smiling\* I know.

His phone rings and Philiswa gets scared a little.

He answers it.

Mkhwanazi:Hlengiwe.

Hlengiwe:Dad hi, I'm asking when are you coming back.

Mkhwanazi:I'm still at church but I will be there soon. What did you need?

Hlengiwe:Can you buy me some popcorn on your way back?  
Mom and Nelisa went shopping and left me alone.

Mkhwanazi laughs hearing her sulk.

Mkhwanazi:Okay I will do so my girl..

Hlengiwe:Thanks... Bye...

He hangs up and focused his attention back to Philiswa.

Philiswa:I'm scared of your daughter.

Mkhwanazi:Which one?

Philiswa:Hlengiwe, she looks like the type that mops the dirt with you.

Mkhwanazi:\*Laughing\* She has a loud mouth, but I have never seen her fight.

At the mall, Mother and daughter have been in and out of almost every clothing store.

Nelisa:I'm giving up.

Beth:Let's look one more time, we only need shoes now.

Nelisa:Are you okay?

Beth:Me? Yes.

Nelisa:I know you mom, we may not have been close before but I know when you are not okay.

Bethany sighs worried.

Beth:It's your father. I think he's cheating.

Nelisa:Whoaaa!! What makes you feel like that?

Beth:Mkhwanazi never hides his phone from me, and I don't know if it's a woman's instinct or what, but I can feel it. He is cheating!

Nelisa:Mom you are just exaggerating. Dad wouldn't do that to you. He loves you.

Beth keeps quiet for a while, could it be that really she's wrong?

Beth:Maybe you are right.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 13

At night, Nelisa is all dressed and ready to go.

Beth:Have fun.

Nelisa:Thank you.

Mnqobi hoots outside.

Mnqobi:He's here!

Beth looks at her proudly, her first date. She accompanies her outside. Mnqobi gets out of the car and open the door for her. They share a hug.

Mnqobi:Wow, you look beautiful.

He complimented her.

Nelisa:Thank you, you look handsome too.

Mnqobi:Shall we go?

Nelisa:Yes please.

They get inside the car.

Nelisa:So where are we going to?

He tells her the name of the restaurant. She silently prays that she doesn't embarrass herself.

.

.

.

PHILISWA

That lady I met the other day, gave me her numbers. She said I could call her anytime I need to talk to someone. I press call on her numbers and wait in anticipation for her to answer.

"Hello"

Philiswa:Hi, this is Philiswa.

Kukhanya:Philiswa?

Philiswa:Yes, you gave me a lift the other day.

Kukhanya:Oh now I remember you. How are you?

Philiswa:I'm fine, I was just calling.

Kukhanya:Do you need me to come there?

Philiswa:Uhh no, I was just calling.

Kukhanya:\*Laughing\* Okay, I will be there.

She hungs up before I could say anything. Honestly, I am lonely. I can't also call Mkhwanazi or I will get him in trouble with his wife. I just need someone to hang with. I go to my room to change into a more comfortable dress. The lady that I stay with, Mam'Sondo left to see her family.



I hear a car outside, and I think it's her. I go to the door and open for her.

Kukhanya:Hi.

Philiswa:Hi, please come in.

She comes in and her scent fills the room.

Kukhanya:Nice place, is it your house?

Philiswa:Something like that. Can I get you anything to drink?

Kukhanya:Water will be fine.

She sits on the couch. I go to get water for her.

Kukhanya:Thank you. So why did you call me exactly? I didn't think you'd call.

Philiswa:I'm just lonely, and I have no friends around here. Being alone gets to me sometimes.

Kukhanya:Understandable, and you look like you are giving birth soon, so you shouldn't be alone.

Philiswa:I have someone I stay with, but she's went home for the weekend.

Her phone beeps and she looks at it, I see a smile from her face.

Kukhanya:Sorry about that, that was my husband.

Philiswa:You are married?

She shows me the ring on her finger and I laugh at my stupidity.

Philiswa:Wow, for how long?

Kukhanya:6 years now.

Philiswa:I wish to get married too some day.

Kukhanya:Maybe you will, I'm sure your baby daddy is already thinking about it.

I chuckle sadly.

Kukhanya:What? Is he not in the picture?

Philiswa:He is, but our situation is kind of complicated. See he's kind of married...

Kukhanya:He's married?

Philiswa:Yes and his family doesn't know so our relationship is a secret. Please don't judge me, I already feel bad enough.

Kukhanya:I won't, how old is he?

I play with my fingers looking down.

Philiswa:He's in his 60s, 63 to be specific, and I'm 22.

Kukhanya:Haybo Philiswa!

Philiswa:I know, it's bad.

Kukhanya:How did the two of you meet?

Philiswa:He's a pastor at some church, I used to go to him for prayers because my life was really in shambles. I lost my parents when I was very young and I was in and out of orphanages. Last year when we met, I was at the edge of dropping out from varsity because I had huge debts. I went to him, as a pastor and a father figure, to ask for prayers and words of encouragement. He felt sorry for me and offered to take care of my studies and help me with rent. I agreed and let him, I didn't see anything wrong with it because he was a pastor and all. But then, we got more close to each other and I mean like really close. Then we mistakenly kissed one day, I chased him out because I didn't know what was happening now and I won't lie, I liked it. But I knew it was wrong. But he came back the following day, and told me that he can't resist. That's when we had sex, I was a virgin and he took my innocence. That's how I got pregnant. And I'm so scared, if his wife finds out, I'm dead.

.

.

.

At the restaurant, they have ordered their food and engaging in small conversations.

Nelisa:This place looks great..

Mnqobi:It's one of the best. Wait till you taste the food.

Nelisa:So how is it like staying alone?

Mnqobi:Best thing ever, more freedom.

Nelisa:I'm so happy for you. I will also be moving out soon, I have an interview next week.

Mnqobi:Really?

Nelisa:Yes.

Mnqobi:That's amazing. I wish you luck.

He holds her hand smiling and looks into her eyes.

Mnqobi:You are beautiful.

Nelisa:\*Blushing\* Thank you.

Mnqobi:I want us to start afresh, I'm Mnqobi Ndlela and you are?

Nelisa:Nelisa Mkhwanazi.

Mnqobi:Nice to meet you Nelisa.

They are disturbed by the waiter bringing their food.

.

.

.

Nkanyezi:Trials are starting soon, I can't wait to be finally over with school.

Hlengiwe:What difference does it make? Next year you are still going to be in school. For 3+ years.

Nkanyezi:But it's better when you are in tertiary, less pressure and no waking up at 5am to cover the 6h30am class.

Hlengiwe:We will see when we get there

Advertisement

have they replied to you?

Nkanyezi:I have gotten one acceptance, in Limpopo.

Hlengiwe:Limpopo?

Nkanyezi:Yeah, but I am still waiting for other ones. How about you?

Hlengiwe:I woke up with regret unsuccessful this morning, my June results were very bad, so I think they saw them.

She rubs her face frustrated.

Hlengiwe:I'm studying everyday, I have to pass the Trials. I really regret rebelling, it has cost me so much.

Nkanyezi:Don't worry, you still have a lot of options. I know you are going to do well on the Trials, and the finals.

Hlengiwe:I hope so, I really want to go to University next year.

Nkanyezi:You will, both of us will. Just imagine us driving our expensive cars in future.

They laugh.

Hlengiwe:Let's continue, so you said the answer for 3.4 was anabatic?

.  
.br/>.

Beth shakes her head looking at Mkhwanazi who looked like he was on a trance.

Beth:Jongindaba!

She calls her out and he jumps a little.

Mkhwanazi:Mhh what were you saying?

Beth:What are you thinking about?

Mkhwanazi:Uhh nothing...

He walks out. She stands up and notices his phone.

He picks it up nervously, she never thought she would be snooping around her husband's phone; but she needs to know. His password was still the same, she unlocked it and first went to the call history. There was a number of calls from a number saved as "P.S". Her suspicions grew wide, and she went to messages. She found messages from the same number.

"I will be seeing you tomorrow?"

"I'm fine, just little cramps"

"It's okay I understand"

She blinked her eyes as she read the messages. She went to the Gallery, she found lot of pictures of the church mostly. She scrolled through and didn't see any incriminating pictures. She went to WhatsApp and checked the number again, there was status updates that were viewed. She clicked on the status and it was just normal updates. She went to the chat history, and the conversation was really heated. Anyone could see that they are dating. Her tears fell on the phone screen, now she wishes to see this face. She copied the number to her phone, and put Mkhwanazi's phone back. She went to the bathroom and locked herself in there, crying. They have never had a case of cheating. Why now? After 25 years of marriage? What went wrong that he would cheat?

With her hands shaking, she dials the number and hears it ringing.

"Hello", she hears the voice. She quickly hangs up, that sounded like a child.

.

.

.

Outside, Mngqobi pulls Nelisa close to him and hugs her.

Mngqobi:I really had a great time tonight, thank you.

Nelisa:I had a great time too, thank you.

Mngqobi:I love you Nelisa, please be my girlfriend?

Nelisa:I love you too, I will be your girlfriend.

They share a kiss, sealing their relationship.

Mngqobi:Thank you. Do you want to go somewhere else? For games? And maybe get dessert.

Nelisa:I would love that.

Mngqobi:I know a place, they have all sorts of games. But I'm not a good player.

Nelisa:\*Laughing\* Don't worry I'm also not good.



•  
•  
•  
Two weeks later , At Philiswa's.

She is laying on the bed and facing up as he's on top of her.

Philiswa:Stop teasing me!

She cries out.

He laughs and continues rubbing his d\*ck on her entrance. She was wet and ready for him but he keeps on teasing her.

He finally pushes it in and she gasps, she will never get used to his size. It always stretches her.

He holds her waist carefully not to hurt her.

Mkhwanazi:I'm not hurting you?

She shakes her head.

He moves in and out closing his eyes.

"Ahhhh", she cries in pleasure.

"Mmm you're so good", he groans as he moves faster and faster. She always feel so good, he can't get enough.

"I love you", he blurts out while still lost in pleasure.

.

.

.

NELISA

I throw myself in bed smiling, is this what being in love feels like? This is the love they are always bragging about? If so, I want more and more. Mngqobi is amazing.

We spend hours on a phone call and we see each other almost every day. I hope it stays like this forever.

I charge my phone and walk out of my room.

Hlengiwe: Finally she remembers us.

Nelisa: Stop it!

Hlengiwe: You are forever on your phone.

Nelisa: You wouldn't understand.

Me and Hlengiwe made up yesterday, I apologized for the way I spoke to her.

Nelisa: Where is mom?

Hlengiwe: In her room.

Nelisa: Okay, let me go to her.

I go to the rents room and knock, I hear her saying come in. I open the door and find her on the bed.

I sat next to her.

Nelisa:Hi mom. Are you feeling better today?

Beth:Getting there.

She has a flu, and it has her so bad.

Nelisa:Do you need more soup?

Beth:No I will be fine. Where is your father?

Nelisa:He went out, since he retired from church he's hardly here.

Beth:I wonder.

.

.

.

She is wrapping her hands around him, and they are laying in bed.

Philiswa:You said you love me.

She decides to ask him.

Mkhwanazi:I did?

Philiswa:Yes, did you mean it or you were just lost in pleasure?

Mkhwanazi:I meant it.

Philiswa:Really?

Mkhwanazi:Yes, but you are young for me Philiswa. So young, a whole 41 year difference between us. People would call me a pervert if they could find out about us. I'm sorry baby but we'll have to keep on sneaking around like this.

Philiswa:I understand.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 14

### BETHANY

This was a really bad time to be held down by the flu, I think it's because of the change of the season. I'm going to the hospital today so they can give me some medicine or injection. I haven't confronted Jongi about the messages I saw in his phone, I also never called that number again. I'm scared, if Jongi really is cheating then I don't know what I will do. I have been with this man for so long! Why would he cheat now? Nelisa was the one accompanying me, Hlengiwe is at school and Jongi is at work. He's retiring next month.

Nelisa:We can go mom.

I follow her to the car and she helps me get in.

Nelisa and Hlengiwe don't know of the messages I found, it's not their business. This is between me and my husband, and I will find a way to get the truth out of him.

She drives.

Nelisa:I hope you be better, that flu is scaring me now.

Beth:I hope so too.

We arrive and get out of the car. We walk inside and pass by the receptionist first, confirming our appointment. She told me where to go.

Nelisa:I will wait for you here.

I nodded and went to the direction of the doctor's office, but I heard a familiar voice. I turned back and it was just a pregnant young girl. It can't be! I hid behind the wall and took my phone. I dialed the number and looked at her. Her phone rang and she frowned, she answered it and I quickly hung up.

I felt my tears falling down, this can't be happening. Jongi is cheating on me with such a young girl, she's even pregnant! How can he do this to me? I feel my heart throbbing so bad that I want to take it out. Where will I even start with confronting him? Why is he doing this? Does he not love me anymore?

.

.

.

At Mnqobi's.

He opens the door for his friend and he gets inside.

Sbani:When you said you moved out, I didn't believe you.

Mnqobi:Told you I finally did it.

Sbani:So who cooks for you?

Mnqobi:I know how to cook man, don't make me seem like a spoiled brat.

He disappears to the kitchen and get him a cold beer.

Sbani:Dankie. So where's your chick?

Mnqobi:At her home, she said she was taking her mother to the hospital.

Sbani:I still can't believe you cuffed a PK, wena! How will you manage her?

Mnqobi:What's that supposed to mean?

Sbani:Ay kabi sbari but you are too soft, that girl will walk all over you. I know Nelisa and I've seen her preaching. She will be wearing the pants in this relo.

Mnqobi:She's not like that, she's very humble and down to earth.

Sbani:You love her, don't you?

Mnqobi:With everything. I see a future with her.

Sbani:Then toughen up, we can't let these girls think they can control us.

.

.

.

Philiswa laughs with the other lady.

Philiswa:Ahh it's time for me to go now.

Her phone rings and it's the number that once called her, she answers but the person doesn't talk.

Philiswa:Mhh, this is the second time this number is calling me.

"You think it's a wrong number?"

Philiswa:Twice? I will look into it.

She calls the number but it doesn't ring this time.

Philiswa:I will see you later. Bye.

She goes out of the hospital, and Mkhwanazi was waiting for her on the car. She got in and he drove off.

Mkhwanazi:What took you so long?

Philiswa:I was speaking with others sorry.

Mkhwanazi:It's fine

Advertisement

let's go.

He arrived home and helped her get out. She was so huge and she didn't like it any more.

Mkhwanazi:Who's this person you are spending your time with these days?



Philiswa:She's just a friend, and nice. Her name is Kukhanya.

Mkhwanazi:I don't like people being all up in our business  
Philiswa, because I know you have told her about me.

Philiswa:She's a good person.

Mkhwanazi:You haven't known her for that long. I'm a pastor  
babe, I know I have retired, but my reputation is still out there.  
If people find out about us, they will cancel me. My reputation  
will be ruined.

Philiswa:I'm sorry for telling her.

Mkhwanazi:It was better when you had no friends, because you  
were safe. You don't know this person, maybe she doesn't have  
good intentions. Cut ties with her. If you need friends, I'm here.

Philiswa:Okay I will.

Mkhwanazi:Call her now and put her on loudspeaker.

She takes her phone and call Kukhanya.

Kukhanya:MaPhili.

Philiswa:Hi Kukhanya, I have to tell you something.

Kukhanya:Okay I'm listening.

She looks at Mkhwanazi and swallows her saliva.

Philiswa:Uhh, I'm asking that we stop being friends.

Kukhanya:What?

Philiswa:I'm pregnant and I shouldn't be close to everyone, sorry. Please don't call me again, I'm deleting your number now.

Kukhanya:\*Sighs\* Okay sisi I understand, I will respect your wishes.

Philiswa:Thank you.

She hangs up and looks at Mkhwanazi.

Mkhwanazi:Good girl. Come here.

He make her stands up and pull her to him.

Mkhwanazi:Friends are poison trust me. At the end of the day, they will betray you. I'm helping you here, okay?

She nods...

.  
. .  
.

Beth arrives home and hurries to her room. She calls her mother..

Mom:Bethany.

Beth:Mom how are you?

Mom:I'm good, thank you for the food you sent. Your father was so happy.

Beth:It's the least I could do. I'm glad you received it.

Mom:You don't sound okay, what is it?

Beth:It's my husband. He's cheating.

Mom:What!?

Beth:With a young girl, and she's pregnant.

Mom:How could he do this? Have you asked him?

Beth:No, I'm planning a surprise for him. He will truly regret messing me over.

Mom:Don't do anything drastic Bethany. Sit him down and ask him. The two of you are married, so talk to him.

Beth:I don't have time to talk mother, he has been hiding this from me! How dare he goes out to impregnate a girl young enough to be his granddaughter!? Ngizombonisa u Jongi yazi ma, ungiwayela kabi! (I will show Jongi ma, he's taking me for a ride).

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 15

NELISA

She's visiting Mngqobi and bought him cooked food.

Nelisa:/I know you don't cook. You order everyday.

Mngqobi:I'm lazy, and I knock off late at work sometimes. How was your interview?

Nelisa:I think it went well actually, they said they will call me after a week to let me know if I got the job or not.

Mngqobi:You will get it I'm sure.

Nelisa:Let's pray.

They hold hands.

Mngqobi:Father please bless this food and the hands that made them. Thank you for the wonderful day today, and may you continue blessing us. Amen.

Nelisa:Amen..

They start eating, and when they were done. They washed the dishes.

Mngqobi:Thank you. The food was amazing.

Nelisa:My pleasure. I had to teach myself how to cook because my mother was forever busy.

Mnqobi:You did a good job.

They finished up and went to the living room to watch a movie, carrying popcorn.

Mnqobi:What do you want to watch?

Nelisa:I heard there's this new movie called, "The Curse of Bridge Hollow". Let's watch it.

Mnqobi:I hope it's not scary.

Nelisa:\*Laughing\* Don't be a chicken.

The movie starts playing and Nelisa is laying on top of him.

Nelisa:Halloween seems like a cool holiday on the U. S.

Mnqobi:It does for real, but look at those decorations coming to live. If it was here on the South, people would be screaming witchcraft.

They laugh..

Nelisa:And they would.

.

.

.

Beth makes sure that he locks the bathroom door and sneaks into Jongi's phone.

She opens it and goes to WhatsApp, she types a message to P. S

'Are you free Friday night?'

'I'm always free' - P. S

'I want you to come over here'

'What about your wife?' - P. S

'Her and the girls are leaving for the weekend. So I will be alone.'

'Mhhh I'm not sure, you said we have to be careful.'-P. S

'So you don't want to see me?'

'Okay okay I will be there.'

'I will get someone to fetch you, so you will find me waiting. My wife likes touching my phone these days, so don't ask me about this again okay? I will see you Friday.'

'Okay daddy' - P. S

She rolls her eyes and almost want to vomit. She deletess the messages and put his phone back. She goes to unlock the bathroom door but doesn't open it.

"Beth please bring me a toilet paper", Jongi shouts from the bathroom.

Beth:It was there, check properly.

She shouts back.

Jongi:Ayikho(It is not here).

She stand near the door.

Beth:What do you mean it's not there?

Jongi:Beth please bring me a tissue, I need to wipe myself.

Beth:How can you do your business without checking if the tissue is there or not?

Jongi:I thought it was here.

Beth:Sorry my husband but there's no tissue even on the storage room. That one was the last one.

Jongi:What?

Beth:Use your shirt.

Jongi:Beth I can't use my shirt, bring me a paper at least!

Beth:There are also no papers baba. Use your shirt I'm telling you.

She hears him breathing heavily and want to laugh but she stops herself.

Beth:Or just get into the shower and wash it away.

Jongi:Okay, I will try that.

Beth:But you will clean it up.

She walks away laughing.

"Azokomela eynqeni amasimba", she says laughing.

Hlengiwe walks in the bathroom and does her business, she finishes and washes her hands. She steps out but someone bumps into her.

"Sorry", The person apologized and walked away. Hlengiwe looked at the person as she/he disappeared and decided to follow. She saw that it was a man, but he was wearing a disguise. Why? She saw him taking off the wig and remaining in his natural hair.

"No ways!", she gasped in shock.

She watched as he further wore something on his ears like an earpiece, she has seen that in movies. They call it "comms".

"No fuckin ways! A whole spy!!", she shouted a bit and the man looked in her direction but she hid with the wall with her heart pounding. A spy in South Africa? With the justice system weak like this, there are secret agents!?

She peeps again and see him walking away, she tiptoes behind and follows him to what look like an a movie theater. She gets inside and he disappears. She looks for him but can't find him anymore. She lowers her shoulders disappointed. She feels



someone grabbing her roughly and picking her up like she weighs 2kg.

She looks back and see that it was the person she was following. She opens her mouth with the intention to talk but he covers her mouth.

He puts his finger on his mouth, as a gesture that she should keep quiet. She nods and he removes his hand on her mouth.

They hear some footsteps and he looks down. He takes out a rope from his bag and tightens it around a pole.

"Stay here", he commands to Hlengiwe. She nods, she was starting to get scared now. Those guys looked like criminals. She watches as the secret agent goes down the rope like a pro. When he reaches down, he starts fighting the men and take them all out. She sees one coming from the back to attack him, she takes the hammer that was near her and throws it to him. He falls down and the secret agent looks up to her and raise a thumbs up.

"Get down here", he says to him.

She goes down, using the stairs.

"So what are you doing here? And why did you follow me?", he asks while still searching the men who were unconscious.

Hlengiwe:I was just curious, I saw that you were wearing a disguise. And I've only seen that in soy movies.

"Really?"

Hlengiwe:Yes. So are you seriously a spy? Like K. C or Carmen and Juni Cortez?

She asked feeling excited.

"You sure do ask a lot of questions. Let me see, 18 year old, doing Grade 12. Mmmhh, likes to act tough, but is a softy on the inside. Protective, and smart."

Hlengiwe:What was that?

"I was profiling you. Did I pass?"

Hlengiwe:Yeah... So who are these guys?

" They stole some important information from the President's office and it's not here. I bet they have already sold it. Damn it!"

Hlengiwe:What kind of information?

" Everything about our country, and I mean everything. You look smart, so what do you think can happen if information like that ends up on the wrong hands?"

Hlengiwe:They will want to take over the country, blackmail, and rein terror. So what are you going to do with them?

" An extraction team is going to come and get them. Let's go".

Hlengiwe:You didn't tell me your name.

"Just call me Agent."

Hlengiwe:Wait, if spies exist, then why do you guys not interfere with the world's problems? There are many criminals and rapists and murderers walking free out there.

"Our jurisdiction doesn't allow us. The men in blue deal with stuff like that, we do once in a while get cases like that and the perpetrators are always brought to justice."

Hlengiwe smiles.

Hlengiwe:I can't believe I'm talking to a spy, this is so cool!!

Her smile slowly disappears..

Hlengiwe:Please don't wipe my memory.

" What?"

Hlengiwe:I know that no one is supposed to know about you guys, I've seen this in movies. You always wipe the public's memory so that they won't remember having an encounter with you. I don't want to forget about this.

"You're so cute"

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 16

HLENGIWE

He laughs.

"Who said I will wipe your memory?"

Hlengiwe:I just know.

"Let's leave"

Hlengiwe:What is your name?

"Thabani, Ncobela"

Hlengiwe:I'm Hlengiwe.

Thabani:I won't wipe your memory. Get in.

He opens the door for her and he drives.

Hlengiwe:Where are we going to?

Thabani:You will see.

He drives for a while and stops at some building, that had no name outside. He got out and opened the door for her.

She got out.

Hlengiwe:What is this place?

Thabani:The Developers Headquarters, where we do all the work. Want to come inside?

Hlengiwe: Won't they shoot me the moment they see me?

Thabani laughs once again.

Thabani: Told you you were cute. Follow me.

She follows behind him, he gets in first and shows his badge to the security.

Thabani: She's with me.

The security nods and they walk inside. Hlengiwe's jaw was hanging as they walked inside, she saw people wearing all black, others behind the computers. There were rooms with gadgets and people training. There was a big sign on the floor written, "T.D HQ" with the coat of arms.

She felt so inferior, surely everyone was badass here.

"Agent, who is she?"

Thabani: She's with me.

He pulled Hlengiwe to his office.

Hlengiwe: Wow. I thought along the way you will tell me that I'm wrong, but no it's really the truth. Let me sit down!

Thabani brings her water.

Hlengiwe: Thank you.

Thabani:So Hlengiwe... I thought you would be freaked out by all of this.

Hlengiwe:I'm not, in this world I've learnt that there are a lot of things we don't know. And besides, I am not a person who gets scared easily.

Thabani smiles looking at her, she surely had a vibe.

Hlengiwe:So tell me about you before you wipe my memory.

Thabani:\*Laughing\* I'm not going to wipe your memory. But I'm Thabani Ncobela, 33 years, have been a secret agent for 10 years now. There's really nothing much about my life, I'm always here working and putting the bad guys away. I was in China for a month, but came back yesterday.

Hlengiwe:You were in China? Were you in a mission?

Thabani:No, I just had to deal with a loss but I'm fine now.

Hlengiwe:Oh I'm sorry.

Thabani:Nah it's okay. I have finally gotten the closure I needed, I'm ready to pick up my life now. What about you?

Hlengiwe:What about me?

Thabani:Who is Hlengiwe?

Hlengiwe:Why don't you tell me?

Thabani:I need to hear if from you.

.

.

.

Back at Mkhwanazi's House.

He has washed away his poop in the shower. He feels so embarrassed to even look at Beth in the eye. How could the tissue get finished like that? He is scrubbing shower floor.

Beth:/Let me help you.

Mkhwanazi:No it's fine, I will do it.

Beth:Let me help you Jongi.

Mkhwanazi:Ngithe ngizozenzela Hawu! (I said I will do it!)

He shouts at her.

Beth:No need to shout.

She walks away to the kitchen to get started on dinner. She looked at the time and Hlengiwe wasn't back yet, she was worried. She called her but she didn't answer. She called her again.

Hlengiwe:Mama?

Beth:Hlengiwe akubuywa yini? (Why are you not coming back?)

Hlengiwe:Sorry, me and Nkanyezi passed by the mall. I'll be there soon.

Beth:Okay hurry up.

She hungs up and continues taking out the stuff she's going to use. She had to learn how to cook more fast and get ready for Friday night. She browsed through her phone while waiting for the rice to boil.

Hlengiwe:I need to go home, that was my mom.

Thabani:Okay I will take you.

Hlengiwe:Thank you. It was really nice seeing you.

He raise his eyebrow at her.

Hlengiwe:Uhh I don't mean it like that I mean it was good to know that there are secret agents.

Thabani:Can I get your number?

Hlengiwe:Why do you need my number?

Thabani:You know I can get it either way right?

She spells it for him and he punches it on his phone.

Thabani:Thank you, let's go.

They walk out, meeting Agent Zulu outside.

Thabani:Will see you when I get back.



They walk outside to his car.

Hlengiwe:Was that your boss?

He nods.

Thabani:So where are we going?

She tells him the place. He starts driving.

Hlengiwe:Aren't you scared that I will tell people about you and your organization?

Thabani:Nop. I know you won't.

Hlengiwe:What makes you so sure?

Thabani:You have been holding your phone ever since we arrived here, you could have taken pictures of the place if you wanted to. You could have recorded me but you didn't. So I know you won't.

Hlengiwe:Damn you're good!

He arrives at Hlengiwe's home.

Thabani:See you soon Hlengiwe.

He winks at her. She blushes and gets out of the car, hurrying inside.

She rushes to her room and changes her uniform. She went to Nelisa's room and she wasn't there. She was probably with Mngqobi, she is head over heels in love with him.

Her phone beeps with a message. She sits down reading it.

'I will be seeing you again Ms Mkhwanazi. Have a good night.

Your secret Agent'

She smiles and saves his number as "Mr Agent".

She calls Nkanyezi.

Nkanyezi:Hello.

Hlengiwe:Can you come here, I need to tell you something.

Nkanyezi:Okay I will be there.

She hungs up and shakes her head. She still felt like she was dreaming. This wasn't real, right? South Africa was really known for a bad justice system. How could there be secret agents?

She stands by the door and shouts, "Moom, I'm back"

"Okay dear", Beth shouts back.

Nkanyezi knocks on her window and she opens for her.

Nkanyezi:What did you want to tell me?

She close the window and the door.

Hlengiwe:You won't believe what I saw today!

She was still star struck.

Nkanyezi:What did you see?

Hlengiwe:You remember the movie we watched, Spy kids?

Nkanyezi:The one we binged over the weekend. Yeah I remember.

Hlengiwe:Today I saw a spy!

Nkanyezi:\*Shocked\* What?

Hlengiwe:What?

Nkanyezi:What you just said.

Hlengiwe:I was at the mall, then went to the bathroom. When I got out, someone bumped into me and they apologized but I noticed that they were wearing a disguise. I followed that person and I saw him taking off a wig, and putting on comms on his ears. I followed him again as he entered a movie theater. But I lost him and I felt him lifting me up again, and he told me to be quiet. I obeyed, and some guys entered the building. I'm telling you moon, he started going down using a thin rope and took them all out. He was like Bruce Lee. I even took a hammer and hit one person with it who wanted to sneak up on him.

Nkanyezi:You could have gotten hurt.

Hlengiwe:You should know me by now, I live for the danger. Anyway he confirmed that he is a secret agent. He even took me to his workplace and I saw his colleagues. I still don't believe it, I think I'm going to faint.

Nkanyezi:I don't believe it either. Spies? In South Africa? With a joke of the law like this?

Hlengiwe:Yep.

Nkanyezi:How old is he?

Hlengiwe:He said 33.

Nkanyezi started screaming and Hlengiwe joined in and they jumped up and down holding hands.

Nkanyezi:I can't believe you met a secret agent!

Hlengiwe:I can't believe I met a secret agent!!!

They continue screaming.

"Aybo Aybo owani umsindo!?! (What's with the noise!?!)", Beth shouts.

Hlengiwe:Sorry.

They giggle and whisper.

Back at the kitchen, Beth stirs the stew and taste it.

Beth:Okay 20 minutes. That was better.

She closes the pot, Mkhwanazi comes to the kitchen. He was still embarrassed by what happened.

Beth:Oh hey baba, food will be ready just now.

He looks at her and she looks different, she looked happy and excited. Like she just got some good news.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 17

Unedited

NELISA

Hlengiwe was acting weird today. What's with her?

Nelisa:Hlengiwe.

Hlengiwe:Hey Sis Nels, you are back.

Nelisa:Yeah, what's up with you?

Hlengiwe:Nothing, I'm just excited. Tomorrow is the last day of school and it's the holidays.

Nelisa:It's only one week.

Hlengiwe:I know, but at least I'll do a lot of things with that one week. Mom spoke of a big dinner tomorrow. Are we not going to the Friday night prayer?

Nelisa:I don't know, but I will ask her. Is the flu finally better?

Hlengiwe:Yeah, she is fine now. She's in her room.

Nelisa:Okay. Let me see her.

I go to their room and it was open. She told me to close it. I did.

Nelisa:Hle says you are getting better.

Beth: Yeah the injection they gave me at the hospital helped.

Nelisa: What's the big dinner I'm hearing about tomorrow?

Beth: Oh, it's just dinner. Nothing much.

Nelisa: What are you up to mom?

Beth: Nothing.

I know my mother, she's up to something. She is not one to cook big dinners unless it's a holiday.

Beth: Seriously, I'm up to nothing. It's our anniversary tomorrow for me and your father so I'm trying to do something nice for him.

Nelisa: Ohhh, why didn't you say so then?

Beth: I wanted it to be a surprise.

Nelisa: I'm sure he has forgotten. Ubaba uyaguga manje (He's getting old).

She laughs a little.

Beth: Him being old doesn't stop him from doing things.

Nelisa: Ewww! Please I Don't want to hear about your sex life!

Beth: What do you know Virgin Mary?

Nelisa: I'm waiting for marriage then I will have sex.

Beth:Do you think that boy will marry you?

Nelisa:I don't know, but we are not rushing anywhere.

Beth:Men! Those species can't live without sex, they will look for it everywhere.

Nelisa:Mnqobi isn't like that, he promised that he will wait for me.

Beth:I'm sure he will.

Nelisa:I will see you later. Let me know if you need help with your big dinner. Are we invited?

Beth:Everyone is invited. Invite Mnqobi and his parents.

She said smiling.

Nelisa:I need to dress smartly for this..

I went to my room, my parents have been married for long. 25 years! A whole 25 years! It must be nice.

My phone rings and I smile looking at the caller ID.

Nelisa:Babe?

Mnqobi:Sthandwa sami.

Nelisa:How are you?

Mnqobi:I'm fine, I just miss you.



Nelisa:I miss you too... Hey my mom is inviting you and your family for dinner tomorrow. They are celebrating their anniversary with my dad.

Mnqobi:Okay I will let them know. How long have your parents been married?

Nelisa:They are celebrating 25 years. I don't know how they've held it down till now. They are an inspiration..

Mnqobi:Wow 25 years really is a long time! I will surely be there.

Nelisa:Thank you. I love you.

Mnqobi:I love you too.

I hung up smiling.

"Sis Nels, someone is looking for you", that was Hlengiwe. Mmh I wonder who it is. No one ever visits me.

I go to the door and it looked like a delivery man.

"I'm looking for Nelisa Mkhwanazi"

Nelisa:It's me.

"I have a delivery for you. Please sign here"

I took the clipboard and signed.

He brought the box inside and placed it on the middle of the living room.

He said goodbye and left.

Hlengiwe:What is it? Open it.

Nelisa:What if it's poison? Who would send such a big box?

Hlengiwe:You won't know until you open it.

Nelisa:Okay let's open it.

We unwrapped the plastic and opened the box. Hlengiwe was the one to scream first. Why is she screaming because she hasn't seen anything?

Nelisa:Shhh.

I opened the box and I was met by a big teddy bear first, okay. It was fluffy, and brown. I hugged it for a bit. This will surely keep me warm at night.

Hlengiwe:Ncooah!

I looked at her and she was recording me.

Nelisa:Why are you recording me?

Hlengiwe:This will grow my TikTok account, continue Sis Nels..

I ignored her and placed the teddy on the side. There was also a note, I took it and read it.

'To:My Beautiful Nelisa.

I know we haven't known each other for that long, but I love you so much. I want to be with you always, I want to spend the rest of my life with you. Please continue looking through the box'

I placed the note on the side and looked through the box again, there was a small toy car. It was a Maserati.

I laughed, did Mngqobi just buy me a toy car? But this is sweet. There was another note.

'Please go outside'

Nelisa:It says I must go outside.

Hlengiwe:Well go.. Wait...

She puts her hand inside the box and comes back with car keys.

Hlengiwe:Oh my God he bought you a car!?

Nelisa:What!? No. It's probably just for the toy.

Hlengiwe:This looks real to me..

She gives them to me and they seemed real indeed. I was overwhelmed by different emotions, I didn't know what was happening anymore. Hlengiwe pushed me outside still recording. There he was! Outside the gate, with a car next to

him. He was kneeling down, there were roses next to him and the car was plastered with a banner written, "Will you marry me?"

Hlengiwe screamed in my ear, and I walked towards him. Now everyone was here and watching as everything unfold.

Nelisa:What are you doing?

I whispered.

Mnqobi:Please marry me, I love you Nelisa.

I looked around and nodded.

Nelisa:Okay, okay I will marry you.

He slipped the ring on my finger and I breathed heavily.

He stood up and kissed me.

Mnqobi:This is your car.

Nelisa:What..?

Mnqobi:It's your present.

Mnqobi is sneaky, I just talked to him now and he didn't say anything about any of this.

Nelisa:Thank you... I can't believe you did this Mnqobi, thank you...

Mnqobi:All the best for you.

# Narrated

The following day

Advertisement

Nelisa is staring at her engagement ring.

Hlengiwe:I told you your video would grow my account, it is trending.

Nelisa:Let me see..

She took the phone from her and the video had a lot of views and shares.

Hlengiwe:Now that was romantic, I want a man like him.

Nelisa:Your father would kill you.

Hlengiwe:He won't know.

Nelisa:Let's go help mom, she's already started preparing for her big dinner.

They go to the kitchen and start helping out.

Beth:Nelisa I am so happy for you my daughter, what that boy did for you yesterday was beautiful to watch. I hope he won't break your heart.

Nelisa:I hope he won't too.

Hlengiwe:Dad doesn't know about this?

Beth:No. It's a surprise, I told him to go out and only come back later.

They do everything, and Beth checks the time. It was 17h30.

Nelisa:The Bishop's family is here. I will help them settle on the table.

Beth:Okay let me tell your father to come back.

She disappears to her room and calls Mkhwanazi, telling him to come back. After that, she calls her driver and tells him to fetch their guest of honor. She changes into a dress that she bought the previous day. It was showing all her curves and hugging her appropriately, she took off the doek and let her hair out. She combed it and styled it nicely. She applied some red lipstick and looked at herself in the mirror and complimented herself. She was wearing her favorite high heels.

Beth:How can he cheat on me when I look this good!? His loss.

She walks out of the room and goes back to the kitchen.

Nelisa and Hlengiwe smile looking at how beautiful she was. This was a first time seeing their mother dressed nicely like this.

Nelisa:Woww!!

Beth>Please go and get dressed. I will finish up here.

They go and she does final touches on the dinner. She smiles.

Beth:30 minutes..

She says and clicks her heels going to the dining room.

She greets the Ndlelas.

Ma'Bishop:You look so beautiful Bethany.

Beth:Thank you.

They heard the door opening and Mkhwanazi entered, he was surprised seeing Beth looking this beautiful.

Mkhwanazi:Uhh, what's going on?

Beth:Look at him, pretending like he doesn't know. It's our anniversary dummy.

He blinks his eyes, he completely forgot about that..

He laughs nervously and goes to hug her.

Mkhwanazi:Of course.

Beth:Please sit. Food will be ready in a few.

Nelisa and Hlengiwe also come to the room all dressed up. They share a look with Mnqobi and smile at each other..

Beth goes to the kitchen to get food.

Nelisa:Mom do you need help?

Beth:No don't worry sweetheart, I can manage.

She goes in and out bringing everything.

Beth:We are just waiting for our guest.

They heard a car parking outside, and a while later there was a knock on the door. Beth went to open, and Philiswa stood there shocked. She wanted to turn back but Beth had already seen her.

Beth:Come in dear.

She pulled her inside. Mkhwanazi almost peed in his seat. What was happening?

Beth:Please sit. Everyone this is Philiswa Shange..

She opens the chair for her. She sits down.

Beth:Let us pray.

They close their eyes and Beth leads the prayer.

"Heavenly Father, please bless this food as we are about to eat. And thank you for always looking out for your children, even when the demons want to attack through our family, you are always there looking out for us. Which is why we trust in you and put our faith in you! Continue blessing us Oh Mighty God and remove any type of demons that may want to infect us. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen."



They open their eyes and she opens the food, she dishes up for everyone.

" Thank you", Bishop thanks her.

She dishes up a small amount for herself and sit down.

Philiswa looks at Mkhwanazi and he shrugs his shoulders.

Beth:Enjoy.

She pours wine for herself and start sipping it slowly.

Beth:I thank everyone for showing up today, as me and my husband are celebrating 25 years of marriage. We have made it this far, through love and communication and honesty. I'm forever grateful to God for giving me a husband like him. The Bible warns about Adultery, and I think everyone in here is aware of that.

Philiswa starts sweating as she is taking slow bites. Hlengiwe looks at her and she is unsettled.

Ma'Bishop:But Mkhwanazi has been faithful to you Bethany, so I'm sure you didn't have to worry about that.

Beth:Have you been faithful baba?

She asks Mkhwanazi. He clears his throat.

Mkhwanazi:Yes, I have.

She nods and takes another sip.

Beth:We shall see.

She looks at the time on her watch and it was almost time.  
Philiswa start coughing and hit her chest repeatedly.

Nelisa:Are you okay?

Philiswa:I don't know but I...

She doesn't finish her sentence as she coughs again, this time she coughs blood. Everyone stands up alarmed, except Bethany who was chilled on her seat.

Mkhwanazi falls down and starts coughing blood too.

Nelisa:My God what's happening!?

She asks going to her father.

Hlengiwe helps Philiswa stands up and wipe the blood on her face.

Philiswa:Ahhhhh.

She screams out loud..

Hlengiwe:What's wrong?

Philiswa:I think the baby is coming. I think he's coming.

Mkhwanazi:Philiswa...

He calls out for her..

Nelisa: Save your strength baba.

Hlengiwe notices blood running down Philiswa's legs and she screams.

Hlengiwe: Uyazala lo muntu! (This person is giving birth)

Nelisa: Baba!!!

She calls out shaking her father who was suddenly not moving.

Hlengiwe: Ma uyazala lo muntu! (Mom this person is giving birth!)

Nelisa: Call the ambulance. Dad isn't breathing.

Bethany takes her phone and calls the ambulance.

Ma'Bishop also helps with getting Philiswa to sit down, but she was bleeding and crying.

Ma'Bishop: What is going on here!?

Bethany: The ambulance is on its way.

She kneels to Mkhwanazi and feels his pulse.

Bethany: That's what you get for cheating on me with a 22 year old!

Nelisa looks at her shocked.

Nelisa: What!?

Bethany:Your father is cheating with her!

She points at Philiswa.

Philiswa:I'm sorry, I'm sorry... But please take me to the hospital.. I don't.. I do...

She passes out in Hlengiwe's arms.

They hear the ambulance ringing its sirens outside and the room get filled with Paramedics immediately.

They help Philiswa get into the stretcher and wheel her away.

Bethany follows the ambulance and gets inside with Philiswa at the back.

Bethany:You and me are going to have fun.

Inside, Nelisa is still holding her father.

Nelisa:Why are you not taking him to the hospital too? He needs help.

The paramedic feel Mkhwanazi's pulse and shake his head.

They get him on the stretcher too and go away with him.

Nelisa screams and cries, Mngqobi comforts her..

Mngqobi:I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 18

At the hospital, Bethany is standing outside and waiting as they are performing a surgery on Philiswa. Her phone rings and she answers

Beth:Hello?

"We have him here."

Beth:He's still alive right?

"Yes, we drained the poison."

Beth:Okay, I will come soon. I'm still on the girl's ward. She's giving birth.

"When are you giving me the rest of my money? I've done my job"

Beth:I'm transferring it now. Good job!

She hangs up and sends him the rest of his money.

She waits for two more hours and calls Nelisa.

Nelisa:Mom where are you? They took dad and we are here at the hospital, he wasn't breathing.

Beth:I will be there soon, I'm still held up somewhere.

Nelisa:Okay please hurry, because I don't know what's happening.

Beth:I will be there sweetheart.

She hangs up and sees the doctor approaching her.

Beth:How is she?

"She's fine, she gave birth to a healthy boy. The blood was a false alarm, I don't know why, we thought she was poisoned"

She looked away.

Beth:Can I see her? Or the baby?

"Yes"

She goes inside the ward room and Philiswa was asleep. She touched her arm and shook her head.

"You look so young, why would you involve yourself with an old man like Jongindaba? The two of you hurt me so much!", she says to the sleeping Philiswa.

She moves to the baby and he looked so pink. She got him out and placed him on her arms, she remembers how it was like when she first held Nelisa on her arms.

Beth:Look at what they have dragged you into.

She wraps him with the sheet and head out with him. She wasn't thinking straight anymore and all that mattered was to make Mkhwanazi and Philiswa feel the pain she was feeling.

She walked out with the baby and gave it to someone when she was outside the hospital.

.  
. .

The Ndlelas went back to their home and Ma' Bishop can't stop clapping her hands. She goes to the church group chat and type a long paragraph telling everyone what just happened. People reply shocked that the Pastor would do something like that.

Mnqobi:Nelisa says her father is okay, but I'm not sure about the girl.

Ma'Bishop:I can't believe Mkhwanazi would sleep with a young girl like that!!

Bishop keeps looking aside, if they can find out that he also knew, all hell would break loose.

Bishop:I can't believe him too.

Ma'Bishop goes to all the groups involving the church and tells everyone that Mkhwanazi is having an affair with a young girl.

.  
. .

She went back inside to check on Jongi.

Nelisa was the first one to hug her.

Nelisa:I'm so glad you are here. What is going on mom?

Beth:How is your father?

Nelisa:They say he's fine, we just saw him.

She nods and walks inside. She finds the doctors with him and he was wide awake. When he saw Beth, he looked down ashamed.

Beth:I'm his wife. How is he?

"He looks fine, we have Checked everything and there's nothing wrong with him"

Beth:Thank you, can I have a moment with him?

The doctor nods and heads out. Beth close the door and sits on the chair. Jongi looks down, he is so apologetic and wishes he can turn back time and do the right thing.

Jongi:Mkami.. (MY wife).. I know you are upset

Advertisement

but please let us talk...

Beth chuckles bitterly and pulls out strands of her hair.



Beth: You see how crazy you are turning me!? Why did you do it Jongi? Why!?

Jongi: I was selfish and wicked Mkami, please forgive me. I'm sorry.

Beth: I'm sorry too. Let me tell you a story. My instincts picked up that you were hiding something, and you were hiding your phone from me and not taking calls in front of me. You went out some day and I paged through it, that's when I saw messages from your sidechick. My suspicions grew wide and I called the number with my phone, a girl answered. I then hung up. I didn't confront you because I wanted to make sure that you were cheating. But then, you also came back smelling of a woman's scent and your shirt had stains. Again, I became more suspicious. When I went to the hospital to get my flu shot, I recognized the voice and it was a pregnant young girl. My heart started to beat so fast, I called the number and I saw her answering, I hung up. I was so sure that you were cheating on me, not only cheating, but you were cheating with a young girl, young enough to be your granddaughter. And the nerve to even make her fall pregnant!!!! I started to call the right people and investigated this P. S. That's when I found out that you have been paying her fees and your affair has been going on for almost a year. I started planning for the dinner, I asked Nelisa to invite Mngqobi and his parents. I know the Bishop's wife has a

loud mouth, by now almost the whole church knows about your disgusting act! And the Bishop hates cheaters, so I know that you will never be allowed inside the church to Preach ever again! You are back to a normal person. So no I wasn't mistaken by inviting them. I wanted your children to see with their own eyes that their father has been lying to them! I spiked your food with poison, but they quickly drained it so you are not dying. And your mistress, it was just something to induce labor. So congratulations Jongi, you are a father to a baby boy.

She stood up and walked out. Hlengiwe called her but she continued walking.

She went to the car and told the person to drive.

Beth:Go to the bridge.

She tells the person driving. She's holding the baby on her hands and her anger just won't die down, the more she looks at the boy the more angry she gets. They arrive at the bridge and she gets out with the baby.

She blinks her tears repeatedly, she wants to do this and get it over and done with!

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 19

The following day,

At the hospital, Jongi is told that he can go home since there is nothing wrong with him. He needed to see Beth and apologize to her, he didn't know what he would say that would convince her that he's really sorry.

The girls left yesterday and they couldn't even look at him in the eye. He is too embarrassed, his family is broken now. He went to see Philiswa last night and they were told the baby was at the NICU, he packs his things and goes to her ward room again, but he hears noise. He hurries inside and finds Philiswa screaming and crying.

Mkhwanazi:What's going on here?

Philiswa:My baby is gone Jongi...

Mkhwanazi:Gone? Gone where?

Philiswa:They lost him, I didn't even get to see him and they are telling me that he is lost.

He looked at the nurse hoping she will tell him something different.

"We don't know what happened, last night he was here and one nurse took him to the NICU, but when we went to check this morning he wasn't there anymore"

Jongi:How can a child get lost in a hospital!?

"We are sorry Sir, we will find your grandson"

The nurse rushed out. Jongi comforted Philiswa who was crying uncontrollably.

Jongi:We will find him, I promise. I'm sorry.

Philiswa:I want my son Jongi, I want him!!

Jongi:We will find him, we will find him and he will come back home to us.

.  
. .  
.

At Mkhwanazi's

Now that she has slept and woken up, it has finally dawned on to her what she did. Her senses were coming back, and she didn't know what to do with herself. She let her anger lead her to causing so much damage. She rolled out of bed and went to the kitchen to get some water. She heard Hlengiwe and Nelisa speaking on the living room and tiptoed to eavesdrop.

Nelisa:I still can't believe dad cheated, with a young girl nakhona!

Hlengiwe:I can't believe it too, as old as he is. What was he preaching at church !? I'm disappointed in him I won't lie.

She entered the room and they looked at her in pity.

Hlengiwe turned on the volume of the TV as she saw breaking news.

"Breaking news, a new born baby boy was found this morning by the Willy wills Bridge. There was no note left behind, the child died before he could receive medical attention, and the police are asking that anyone who might know any information about the parents to come forward"

Hlengiwe:Everyday we hear horrifying stories, I hope this child wasn't abandoned by his mother. May he rest in peace.

Beth swallows the lump down her throat and goes back to the bedroom to cry herself to sleep.

"What have I done?", she whispered to herself as tears kept falling.

.

.

.

Back at the hospital, Jongi was still comforting Philiswa when the doctor entered with two police officers. She stood up with some hope that they will say they found her baby.

"I'm Detective Khumalo, and we are here about the case of your missing son".

Philiswa:Did you find him?

"We are not sure, but we found a baby that was dropped from the bridge today and he is gone. We have sent him to the morgue and they are working on getting the DNA test, if you will allow it"

Jongi:Of course we will allow it, but I doubt it's our son.

"Your son? I thought the baby was hers.."

Philiswa:He's the father.

The detective looked at Mkhwanazi and silently judged.

"Okay, then. You can go to the Lab and get the tests done. But in the meantime we will keep on looking. Do you think you can identify him?"

Philiswa:No, I didn't see him yesterday.

.

.

.

Nelisa:I still don't believe it Yooo.

Mnqobi:I don't even know what to say.

Nelisa:But what kind of feelings did dad have to sleep with a child? She's even younger than me! It's disgusting to even think about. Mom is so hurt, she has been locking herself on her room all day.

Mnqobi:What about your father? Is he back from the hospital?

Nelisa:Nop, he hasn't come back. I don't know where he is, probably with his mistress rejoicing over his new born. Babe I will call you later... We haven't even had time to celebrate our engagement.

Mnqobi:We still have time, don't worry. I love you.

Nelisa:I love you too.

She hangs up and goes back to the living room and is surprised to find the church's elders, they didn't look too happy. She greeted them and looked at her mother hoping for clarity.

Elder1:We are not going to be long, we have heard of what Mkhwanazi did. We are very disappointed in him, he was a church leader. He still is, everyone in the church looked up to him. Husbands came to him asking for prayers, wives came to him asking for prayers. What he did ruined the church's

reputation, already the sponsors for next month's revival have pulled out. As you all know

Advertisement

this house belongs to the church. Since he's not a pastor anymore, we need him out. He was going to have the house even when he was not a pastor anymore, but because of what he has done, we want nothing of him. You have until the end tomorrow to move out, the new pastor will be moving in with his family.

They stood up and left without even touching the water Beth had offered them. Nelisa looked at her mother defeated.

Nelisa:Where will we go now?

Beth bit her inner mouth, regretting everything. She didn't think it would get this far. Now she has cost her children a home.

.

.

.

At the laboratory.

They take Philiswa's blood sample and Mkhwanazi's.

Mkhwanazi:How long till we get the results?



"Two or three weeks, we will call and let you know", The lab technician answered him.

He nodded and went outside with Philiswa.

She sat down on the benches, feeling so sad and bitter. She wanted her son, a part of her could feel that the baby in the morgue is hers. But she doesn't want to believe it. How could she lose a son she hasn't even touched nor seen? Could her life be full of bad lucks to that extent? Mkhwanazi tries to touch her but she moves away from him. She kind of blamed him for all of this, but she mostly blamed herself. What was she thinking sleeping with a married man!? And older one at that! She was never going to be happy, she ruined someone's marriage. Maybe this was her punishment for what she did. She saw the hurt in Bethany's eyes yesterday and it will forever torment her.

Mkhwanazi:Let me take you home.

.  
. .  
.

At Nkanyezi's home.

Hlengiwe is texting back and forth with Thabani, he is a nice person. A great distraction to the mess that's happening to her family right now.

Nkanyezi snatches the phone from her.

Nkanyezi:Are you dating this person now?

Hlengiwe:What? No! We are just friends.

Nkanyezi:Just friends you say.

Hlengiwe:Yeah, can't people just be friends without everyone sexualizing the friendship!? Has the world gone mad!?

Nkanyezi:Don't say that, because I can see that you have a crush on him.

Hlengiwe:I don't have a crush on him, even if I did. He has already friendzoned me, he said I remind him of the sister he never had.

Nkanyezi laughs.

Nkanyezi:Rejection hurts. But it's for the better, he's older than you.

Hlengiwe:Leave me alone Nkanyezi. You also dated someone younger than you.

Nkanyezi:Come on, I was 17 and he was 16. It's much better than your secret agent.

Hlengiwe pinches her.

Hlengiwe: You want the whole neighborhood to hear you!? Do you want to be shipped off to space!?

Nkanyezi: Sorry.

Hlengiwe: I'm serious, don't tell anyone. It's not our secret to tell.

Nkanyezi: I won't, I promise.

Hlengiwe: I need to go home now. Accompany me.

.  
.br/>.

Mkhwanazi enters his house with his heart pounding.

He stops on his tracks when he sees them packing and moving everything.

Mkhwanazi: What's going on?

Nelisa: We have been chased out, the church is taking the house.

Mkhwanazi: What!?

Nelisa: Isn't this what you wanted?

Mkhwanazi:Nelisa my daughter, I'm really sorry about all of this.

Nelisa:Saying sorry won't help us dad, we are homeless now. Where will we go?

She wipes her tears and leaves him. Mkhwanazi moves his feet and goes to the bedroom, he finds Bethany sobbing painfully on the bed. She was already packed.

He moved towards her.

Mkhwanazi:I'm really sorry about everything MaZulu, I don't know what got into me. I'm still your husband, and I love you. Please forgive me my wife.

Beth:They chased us out Jongi, I don't care about your stupid sorries right now. My children have no place to stay because of you.

Mkhwanazi:There is a place, we will go there. I will try to talk to the elders and get our house back. For now, pack everything and load it to the van.

She nods.

An hour later, they were packed and ready to go. Hlengiwe was still sad that she's leaving, meaning she will see less of her best friend.

Mkhwanazi:Nelisa you will drive behind me, and follow okay?

She nods. They all get into their respective cars, and Mkhwanazi drives to the house he's taking them to.

Upon arrival, he gets out of the van and unlocks the gate. Nelisa drives inside with her car, he also gets back to the van and drive inside the yard.

They get out of the car, wondering who's house was this, because it was on the suburbs.

Mkhwanazi:We are here.

Beth:Who's house is this?

Mkhwanazi:It's mine, but there's someone in here. I'm asking that you don't panic.

Beth looks at him in confusion. They all move to the door and he knocks with his hands sweating.

The door opens and they are met by Philiswa. Beth clicks her tongue and gets angry all over again.

Beth:So you brought us to your mistress' house!?

Nelisa:What is she doing here baba!?

Mkhwanazi:Can we all get inside and talk like adults!?

.

.

Three weeks later...

At the Laboratory.

The lab technician looked at Philiswa and Mkhwanazi as she got ready to deliver the results.

"The results came back and the baby... His DNA matched with the scheme of two of y'all's DNA. I'm really sorry", he told them.

Philiswa just passed out on Jongi's arms.

.

.

We will have the marathon tomorrow after 12h00pm.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 20

He helps her get into bed. He walks out and finds Beth already waiting for him by the door.

Beth:When is this girl leaving here?

Jongi:She's not in a right space, we just found out that our son is gone.

Beth:I don't care Jongi, I need her out of my house.

Jongi:\*Sigh\* The house is written in her name, so she's actually doing us a favor by letting us stay here.

Beth:Wow, as if things couldn't get any worse.

Jongi:I talked to the elders yesterday and they said no, they banished us from ever stepping foot inside the church.

Beth:You see what your cheating has led us to!?

Jongi:If only you didn't call the Bishop's family, we wouldn't be in this mess right now. I don't know what you were thinking Bethany, you could have confronted me only. Now everyone is suffering because of you.

Beth:You're not going to blame this on me , you lied to us for the whole year. You bought your skank this lavish house while we remained on the township. I was hurt and angry Jongi! I wasn't thinking. I just wanted to make you feel pain.

Jongi:Well look where that got us. I just found out that I lost my son, please just give me a break.

Beth:You better fix this Jongi!

He sighed frustrated, nothing was making sense anymore.

.

.

.

At Thabani's house.

He brings her juice and she sips on it..

Thabani:You don't look hyper today.

Hlengiwe:My family is kind of experiencing some rough patch, and it's stressing me out a bit.

Thabani:I'm sorry... How's school?

Hlengiwe:It's fine, it's the holidays. Next week we are going back.

He nodded and looked at her, she looked down. She wasn't the same as the girl he met that day, who was excited and active.

Hlengiwe:Your house is nice. You stay alone?

Thabani:Yep..



Hlengiwe:Don't you have family?

Thabani:I do, but they are at another province. Two brothers, parents still alive. But I can't visit them Everytime, maybe twice a year.

Hlengiwe:Your job sounds stressful.

Thabani:It is, but it's fun. I love every bit of it.

Hlengiwe:Who are they?

She asked holding a photo of a man, with a woman.

Thabani took the picture and looked at it, he was working when Hlengiwe arrived.

Thabani:You're not supposed to be seeing this.

Hlengiwe:I already know everything, you even took me to HQ.

Thabani:\*Chuckles\* You have a loud mouth... Anyway, this is Sthembiso Cele and his wife Xolelwa Cele.

Hlengiwe:Bad guys or good guys?

Thabani:Bad guys, we have been trying to get them for so many years but they always slip away.

Hlengiwe looked at the woman, and smiled.

Hlengiwe:She's beautiful.

Thabani:And a criminal, she's worse than her husband. they cover their tracks so well. You can't even show up with a surprise warrant because they are always ready ! Now they've gotten their children in their business! It's gonna be a while until they are caught.

Hlengiwe:I'm sure you will catch them. Your job is cool.

Thabani's phone beeped and he read the message on his phone.

Thabani:Mhh duty calls, I need to go.

Hlengiwe:Can I go with you?

Thabani:Go with me where?

Hlengiwe:Where you are going, please I need some adrenaline rush to get me off thinking about my family.

Thabani:I'm not too sure, we could be compromised there.

Hlengiwe:I won't get in your way I promise, I will follow your lead.

Thabani:Okay fine, stay behind me.

Hlengiwe:Clapping her hands\* Yees!!

.

.

.

At Philiswa's room..

She sits up straight and rubs her eyes. The nap she had didn't help at all, her son is still gone. Gone forever, within just a day of him being born. She never even saw him nor touched him, yet he's gone. Her heart is painful, and she also has to endure the Mkhwanazi's occupying her space. Why don't they find another place? She sniffs the clothes she had bought for her baby and her tears came crashing in. She has never felt pain like this, even losing her parents wasn't as painful as this. She hears the door opening and she looks up, it was Mkhwanazi.

Jongi:Hey... How are you doing?

Philiswa:I lost my baby

Advertisement

how do you think I'm doing?

Jongi:I'm sorry, that was a stupid question to ask. I'm also hurting. The police will find the person who took him from the hospital.

Philiswa:I wouldn't be surprised if it was your wife, she hates me and killing my son would be a bonus to hurt me.

Jongi:Bethany would never do that.

He said convincing himself, he was feeling a bit suspicious of him. Bethany was angry that day and who knew the length she went to hurt him? He sighed and sat on the bed next to her. He tried to take her hands but she shook her head.

Philiswa:I don't know how you think, your whole family is out there yet you are busy holding hands with me. We are in this mess because of what we did. Please don't give them more reason to hate me.

Jongi:We need to prepare for the funeral.

Philiswa:I don't have anything.

Jongi:I will take care of it, don't worry. I promised that I would take care of you, I'm not leaving you baby.

Philiswa sighed fighting the tears, she just needed to mourn for her son. Her relationship with Jongi was something that she did not want to think about at the moment.

Philiswa:We need to go and get his body, he looked so tiny.

He pat her shoulder and comforted her. He was hurting too, he was happy that he would have another child, a son at that.

.

.

.

Thabani:We are just here to watch, not anything other than that.

Hlengiwe:What if we fall Thabani? This is the highest point of the building.

Thabani:\*Chuckles\* Don't tell me that you are scared. I thought you said you live for the danger.

Hlengiwe:Yeah, but this is a bit scary.

He shakes his head laughing and gave her the binoculars.

She took them and both of them looked through the opposite building and watched.

Hlengiwe:I don't see anything.

Thabani:Me too.

Hlengiwe:Wait\_

She doesn't finish her sentence as they see two guys coming towards them.

"Shit!", he cursed under his breath.

He grabbed Hlengiwe and jumped with her. Hlengiwe screamed in shock and fear as they were falling fast and hard.

Thabani:I won't drop you.

He threw the rope arrow at where they were standing and held on to it, Hlengiwe clinged on to him, when they reached the ground, they landed safely and Hlengiwe gasped holding her heart. That was more than an adrenaline rush.

Hlengiwe:Oh God! I thought you will drop me.

Thabani:I wouldn't have. Let's leave.

Hlengiwe:Did they see us?

Thabani:No, we escaped in time.

Hlengiwe:How did you think that fast?

Thabani:First thing we are taught at the academy, is to use anything near you as an escape. And besides, a spy never goes anywhere without his toys. Let me take you home.

.  
.br/>.

Nelisa enters the building, and clutches on to her handbag tightly. This was her first day at work, as a business admin assistant. She was introduced to the workplace and told her job description. It didn't sound too complicated, she was still an assistant so she didn't have a huge workload. By lunch time, she wanted to knock off already. It's no secret that she doesn't like

the job she's doing, her dreams and passion still lie with fashion. She was up all night yesterday looking for fashion schools that she could enroll at for next year. She wasn't prepared to live the rest of her life working a job that she hates, she's working for now because she actually needs the money. And with their family's current situation, it was really tough.

She receives a message from Mngqobi telling her that he loves her. She found herself smiling, he was the only one who knew how to make her happy lately. She can now say that she trusts him, and she is ready to take their relationship to the next level.

Their wedding is on pause for now, until the dust settles down.

.

.

At Philiswa's Lavish house.

Beth goes outside and answers her mother's phone.

Beth:Hello.

Mom:Beth I have been trying to call you.

Beth:Sorry Mah, things are hectic around here.

Mom:You last said that the church chased you out of the house.

Beth:Yeah we are living at another house that Jongi bought for his mistress.

Mom:He brought you to his sidechick's house?

Beth:Can you believe it? He says the house is written in her name. So I'm the one who has no home now.

Mom:Why didn't you come here? This is still your home.

Beth:I'm not going to let this girl think she can snatch my husband right in front of me. It wasn't enough that she had to give him a son, now he bought her a house. I will find a way to reclaim this house as mine and my children.

Mom:Bethany don't forget that you are still a child of God. When was the last time you even prayed?

Beth:I will pray later. I have already sinned too much mama. I might as well finish off my sinning list.

Mom:Beth!!

Beth:I will call you later...

She hung up and went back inside. She found Philiswa sneaking to the kitchen and she wanted to strangle her right there and



then. She cleared her throat and Philiswa jumped in fear, she thought she will be in and out.

Philiswa:Just making something to eat, I will be out of your way.

She hurriedly made her food and was about to exit the kitchen when Beth snatched her food and threw it on the floor.

Beth:Who do you think you are you little girl!?

She asked poking her roughly on her forehead. Philiswa ignored her and tried to pick up the mess but Beth grabbed her by the dress she was wearing and pinned her against the fridge. Beth saw the fear on Philiswa's eyes and smiled.

Beth:If you know what's good for you, you will leave this house as soon as you bury your brat! Do you hear me!?

She nods.

Beth:Good girl.

She let her go and Philiswa runs off to her room.

Beth turns back and is met by Hlengiwe who looked at her with a disapproving look.

Beth:Ungibhekeni!? (Why are you looking at me!?)

Hlengiwe:Was that necessary? You scared the poor girl.

Beth: This is an adult issue Hlengiwe, it doesn't concern you. You don't know anything, you are a child. Don't poke your nose in issues that don't involve you.

Hlengiwe: No need to bite my head off.

She raised her hands in surrender and left her.

Beth clicked her tongue and went to the living room. She definitely needed to get rid of Philiswa. She wasn't prepared to let a young girl ruin her marriage of so many years. She'd rather die than allow that.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 21

A week later, they were laying baby Jongi to rest. They named him Vuyo. Beth did not attend the funeral, she said she does not have time for nonsense, but guilt was eating her up every night. This was a secret she was prepared to take to the grave.

Hlengiwe:Sorry sisi, I don't know the pain of losing a child but I know it must be tough for you. God won't leave you, pray to him for strength.

She comforted Philiswa, she was feeling bad and sorry for her.

Philiswa nodded, she has cried until her tears dried out. There wasn't any left. Though, she expected Hlengiwe to hate her but she has been kind to her, she's the only one who has been kind. Nelisa and her mother were making it quite clear that they don't like her. Not that she blames them anyway.

Philiswa:Thank you Hle. I appreciate it.

Hlengiwe:Now let's get you some food. You must be hungry.

They walked back into the house. She gave her the food that was cooked today.

Philiswa:Who cooked?

Hlengiwe:Nelisa..

Philiswa:\*Hesitating\* Uhh I'm not hungry anymore.

Hlengiwe:Why? Do you think they will poison you?

Philiswa:No, I didn't say that.

Hlengiwe:Don't worry, I don't trust them too.

She laughed a little, Hlengiwe was a breath of fresh air.

Hlengiwe:I will make something for you.

She moved around the kitchen making something for her. Jongi peeped his head inside and asked to talk to Philiswa. She stood up and followed him to her room. He locked and took her in his arms.

Jongi:How are you feeling?

Philiswa:For some reason, laying him to rest gave me a bit of peace. The pain is still there, but I believe it will get better. How are you feeling?

Jongi:Taking it one step at a time, I was excited for him. But God had other plans.

Philiswa:Do you think he's punishing us?

Jongi:Who?

Philiswa:God, we committed adultery. I slept with you, knowing very well that you were married. And no one forced me nor pointed a gun to my head, I did it willingly. Maybe this is our punishment.

Jongi: Maybe you are right I don't know, but all I know is, someone murdered our child and the police will find him or her.

Philiswa: I need a break Jongi.

Jongi: A break from what?

Philiswa: From you and your family, I don't think our relationship should carry on. We are still continuing to disrespect your wife by holding hands here.

Jongi: Please don't tell me you are dumping me.

He said fear struck.

Philiswa: We can't continue. She's your wife..

Jongi: Look baby, I can divorce her. I don't love her anymore. I only want you. Please don't break up with me.

Philiswa: I don't have time for all this drama. You can't tell me that you now don't love her, because before I asked you to tell her about us; and you said your marriage was off limits. I may be young but I am definitely not stupid..

Jongi: I am not fooling you. I seriously don't love her anymore, I long had the divorce papers but I was scared to give them to her. And being a pastor and a man of God forbid me from doing a lot of things. But not anymore, I'm tired of hiding and living my life under the mask. I want you Philiswa and I am serious. I

know I am way older than you but we will make it work, I promise you. Just don't leave me.

.

.

Outside, Nelisa shakes her head listening to her father confessing his love to a child. She goes to her mother and drags her outside.

Beth:What is it?

Nelisa:You won't believe this! I just heard dad confessing his love to that girl, he said he wants to divorce you so that they can live happily.

Beth opened her eyes hurt. Jongi wanted to divorce her? Why? Does he not love her anymore? She's the one who got cheated on, she's the one who's supposed to be suggesting divorce. Why is everyone acting like a victim when she was the one who got hurt!? Why is everyone not caring about how much being cheated on by your husband of 25 years hurt!?

Beth:Thank you for telling me my girl. I will deal with it don't worry.

Nelisa:Please do

Advertisement

I don't trust that girl. She looks like a gold digger. Already she had dad buy her this lavish house while we were living in the dumps. She seriously needs to go. She is still young, she can still pick up her life. Ngeke akahambe!(No she needs to leave).

Beth:Don't worry, I will take care of it. Go back inside, I need to make a call.

Nelisa nodded and went back inside.

Beth took her phone and called someone.

"Hello"

Beth:Hi, this is Bethany. I need someone who can lend me a gun.

.

.

.

Back to Philiswa's room.

She sits down grasping the new information Jongi is telling her. She didn't think he loves her that much. Does she love him? She wasn't too sure anymore.

Philiswa:Please just go to your wife Jongi. And don't say this again, someone could hear you and I will get into more trouble.

Jongi: Fine, but I'm not playing. I'm serious, I will give her the papers tomorrow.

Philiswa: Just go!

She shouted a bit. He unlocked the door and went out.

Philiswa sighed frustrated, she felt suffocated in this house and she needed to be gone. It's time like these where she wishes her parents were still alive, or if she knew her extended family. She doesn't have anything, the money Jongi used to send her is not enough to start a new life elsewhere. It's not enough to even get a place to sleep for one night. It's hard being an orphan, she needs her mother's hugs, she doesn't have anyone to cry to. She's older now, she can't go back to the orphanage. So it forces her cling on to Mkhwanazi, he pays the bill and takes care of her. The age difference doesn't bother her at all, she knows people are judging them since the whole church knows. But they are also not saints, they sleep with blessers for R500s, others sleep with young boys because their husbands can no longer get it up. So they don't have the right to judge her, no one is perfect..

.

.

.



Beth takes the gun with her hands shaking, this was the first time holding a gun in her hand.

"Mamfundisi what are you doing with a gun? You Christians are a joke. You are going to shoot the congregation during church time?"

Beth:I have my reasons for it. How much do I owe you?

"R7K"

She gasps.

Beth:So much money?

"I can just take my gun and turn back"

Beth:No it's fine I will transfer your money right now.

She takes her phone and sends him the money.

"Wabanjwa, ayazani sisi(If you get caught with it, we don't know each other)."

She nods and shoves the gun in her bag. She turns and walks back to her car. She gets in and close the windows. She stays for a few seconds. She opens the bag and looks at the gun. She was so scared, and terrified. But she needed to do this. People like getting on top of your head, because they think that you won't do anything.

.

.

.

At Nkanyezi's home.

Nkanyezi gives the food to her mother.

Mom: Thank you my star.

Nkanyezi laughs a bit.

Mom: Why are you laughing?

Nkanyezi: I'm just thinking about Hlengiwe, she likes translating my name to moon, she says it makes more sense that way..

Mom: \*Laughing\* That one is crazy vele. You miss her?

Nkanyezi: So much, she's so far away from me now. I only get to see her at school.

Mom: You two have been best friends since you were young, I'm sure a little distance is nothing.

Nkanyezi: Yeah you're right.

She continues doing her school work while her mother eats.

The door gets opened by force and her father enters. She sighs thinking, "there we go again". She picks up her books and rush off to her room. Minutes later, they were fighting and shouting at the top of their voices.

She wrapped herself with her blanket on the bed and tried to block their voices out, but they were getting louder.. She heard something breaking and she knew that they were fighting now. Her tears fell and she rocked herself. Why do they always fight? Can't they just stay happy? They promised that they would never fight in front of her again. They promised!

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 22

At Nelisa's workplace.

She drops the papers to her desk and sighs. This job was boring her terribly, but she had to hold on.

"Girl why do you look so miserable?", Yolanda her colleague asks her.

Nelisa:Uhh nothing, I just have to get this to HR.

Yolanda sits next to her and shows her the drawings she found.

Yolanda:I know these are yours.

Nelisa:I thought I got rid of these.

Yolanda:I didn't know you were an artist. This dress is amazing.

Nelisa:\*Smiling\*I love fashion, but I was forced into this career so I couldn't pursue it.

Yolanda:It's not too late, you are still young.

Nelisa:I know, I have been looking for schools to register to next year.

Yolanda:Did you find any?

Nelisa:Yes I did, but I have to go over there and enquire more information.

Yolanda:I really hope you follow your heart. Don't get stuck into a job you don't like..

Nelisa:I won't, thank you.

Yolanda:Hey there is a friend of mine who is getting married soon, and she wants a dress that has never been worn by anyone. Can I show her these and you two can get together?

Nelisa:A wedding dress? I don't know, I've never really done it for anyone.

Yolanda:Well there's a first time for everything. I will give her your numbers and she will contact you soon.

Nelisa:Eish okay, I hope I don't disappoint.

Yolanda:Don't worry, I'm sure you will do an amazing job.

.

.

.

Nkanyezi:They fought again yesterday, mom is at the hospital .  
Dad stabbed her.

Hlengiwe hugged her and wiped her tears.

Hlengiwe:I'm sorry moon.

Nkanyezi:I'm just tired of my parents, they get along for two seconds and then they are fighting like cats and dogs. A neighbor had to intervene yesterday, dad would have killed her. He would have killed her, he didn't stop even when he saw her bleeding.

Hlengiwe:Do you want us to go and see her?

Nkanyezi:I would love to, but the hospital is too far. I don't have any transportation.

Hlengiwe:I know someone who can take us.

Nkanyezi:Who?

Hlengiwe:Our spy.

Nkanyezi:Isn't he busy saving the world?

Hlengiwe:This is too important. Let me call him.

She takes her phone and call him, asking him to take them to the hospital. He agrees and tells her he'll be there soon.

Hlengiwe:He'll be here.

They wait for an hour and then see his car approaching. He stops and unlock the doors for them, they get in at the back. They exchange greetings and tell him the hospital they are going to. They drive silently.

Thabani:We are here..

Hlengiwe:Thank you.

Thabani:Do you want me to wait?

Hlengiwe:Please.

Thabani:Okay.

They head inside and pass by the reception, they are guided to the ward she's at. They arrived there and they were other patients at the ward. Nkanyezi closed her eyes as she looked at her mother.

Mom:Nkanyezi..

Hlengiwe excuses herself to give them space..

Nkanyezi pulls the curtain for privacy.

Nkanyezi:How are you feeling?

Mom:I'm fine, they said the knife didn't go in too deep.

Nkanyezi:I was so worried about you... When I saw that much blood I thought he had killed you...

She hugs her legs and her mother pats her back.

Mom:We are sorry Nkanyezi.

Nkanyezi:Mom why don't you leave him? He's always starting the fights.

Mom:You wouldn't understand Nkanyezi, things are too complicated.

Nkanyezi:One day the two of you will kill each other. You promised that you won't fight in front of me again, yet you did it again. I wish it was next year already, I can't wait to be far away from the two of you.

.  
. .  
.

In the evening

Beth closes the pot smiling and humming softly. She was becoming a fast cooker day by day. Jongi came to the kitchen and asked to talk to her.

Beth:What do you want to talk about?

Jongi:Let's just have a sit.

Beth:Food will be ready soon, call Philiswa to come and help me set the table.

Jongi:Beth..

Beth:You want guava juice or orange juice?

Jongi:\*Snapping\* Beth just stop this! Stop pretending like everything is normal.



Beth:But isn't everything okay? I mean my husband is with me, and my children. What could I complain about?

Jongi:That's what I want to talk about. I have to Tell you something, it's about our marriage.

Beth made noise with the cupboards and the spoons, blocking Jongi's speech.

Beth:I'm sorry what was that?

Jongi:I'm saying we need to talk about our m\_

She broke a plate.

Beth:I'm sorry Jongi, I'm really busy. Please call Philiswa to come and help me. The kids will be back soon and they will be hungry.

He sighed and walked away.

Beth breathed relieved, and picked up the broken pieces on the floor throwing them on the bin. They just need to be a happy family

Advertisement

she's ready to forget about Jongi cheating, her marriage can't just be over now. After so long! What has changed!?

She set up the table by herself and waited for everyone to come and eat. She asked to be excused and went to the room

they were using with Jongi. She locked the door and went to the wardrobe, she took her suitcase and took out the gun. She traced her fingers around it and swallowed hard. She didn't know what she was even going to do with it. What was wrong with her!? What is happening? Is she really that desperate to get her marriage back that she's willing to take another life!? She was a child of God, and she prayed everyday. What has changed? She doesn't even remember the day she went down on her knee and prayed. The demons she was always talking of, were now getting into her. It had to be the demons, she nodded agreeing with her mind. She wouldn't do this on her sane mind, it was the demons controlling her.

She took the gun and put it back.

.  
.br/>.

At Nkanyezi's home..

She gets in and looks around. The house was still a mess. She went to her room and took off her uniform, she started cleaning. She didn't know where her father was and she wished she does not return. She bent down over the table looking at the bloody knife. She took a plastic and picked it up, she threw it on a separate plastic and went to put it on her room. She

wanted to go to the police station and get her father arrested, maybe they'll finally have peace.

She went back to cleaning. She heard noise, and singing. It was her father, for sure. She ignored him and continued cleaning, she was hungry and she would cook when she was done cleaning.

The door opened and her father got in, he was drunk. Probably not caring that his wife is lying on a hospital bed because of him.

"Siphi isfebe esiwunyoko? (Where's that whoring mother of yours!?)", he asked balancing with the chairs.

She felt her anger building up and she stood up going to him.

Nkanyezi: My mother is at the hospital because of you, you stabbed her and you have the nerve to insult her like this!!!! You are such an excuse of a father!!

He gave her a slap that made her see stars immediately. She held on to her cheek and he threw another one on another cheek.

Nkanyezi: \*Crying\* Baba ungishayelani? (Dad why are you hitting me?)

"Nina ninonyoko ningijwayela kabi, engathi engafa nalapho ekhona! (You and your mother are taking me for a ride, I wish she dies wherever she is!)", he shouted at her.

Nkanyezi blinked her tears looking at the monster standing in front of her. He started unzipping his pants and Nkanyezi opened her eyes wide. This was not happening. He lowered his pants to his ankle and grabbed her roughly, Nkanyezi kicked him and tried to get out of his grip but he was strong. How could he be so strong yet he's drunk?

"Ezabazali ziwela eynganeni(Sins of the parents fall on to the child)", he said pinning her to the ground.

He ripped off the short she was wearing, and exposed her underwear. He touched her fresh thighs, Nkanyezi moved trying to get away from him. He tried to get his finger inside her forbidden fruit and that's when she lost it. No man has ever touched her, and she wasn't going to let her father add her to the statistics of children getting r\*ped by their parents. She kicked his balls with so much force, and bit him on his chest, leaving her mouth tasting bitter. Her father groaned getting away from her. She stood up and pushed him away, she ran to her room and locked it.. Minutes later she heard him banging the door roughly, and he was going to break it down. She quickly wore a skirt that was near her and took the knife that was in the plastic.. She opened the window.

"Nkanyezi come back here!!", he shouted and he finally broke down the door. She didn't think twice and jumped out of the window, with her phone in her hands. She ran out of the yard, heading to the police station. She ran and ran like he was chasing her. When she arrived, she was almost out of breath. She went to the lady behind the desk..

Nkanyezi:I'm here to open a case of attempted murder and attempted rape...

She threw the knife on the desk.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 23

At the police station.

Nkanyezi was taken to the private room and they went to get a female detective that would talk to her. She waited in fear and anger. She couldn't believe till now that her own father wanted to rape her. Maybe he's not her real father. The door opened and a beautiful woman who looked like she was in her early 30s entered smiling. She closed the door and sat opposite her.

"Hi, I'm Detective Nkambule, but you can call me NK. What's your name?"

Nkanyezi:My name is Nkanyezi.

NK:Okay Nkanyezi, please tell me what brings you here. We are trying to help you okay?

She nods.

Nkanyezi:My parents are people who are always fighting and it always get physical, neighbors are always intervening and separating them. Yesterday, I was with my mom and she was eating while I was doing homework. Dad wasn't home yet, when he arrived I just knew that he would cause a scene. I took my bags and went to my room, minutes later I heard them fighting and things breaking. As always, neighbors came to separate them, I peeped to the room and saw my mother laying on the ground, bleeding, he didn't stop, he kept on hitting her.

The neighbors called the ambulance and dad ran away, I don't know where he went to. So today, I went to see her at the hospital and asked her to leave dad because he's always staring fights, and she said things are complicated. I went back home and dad was still not back, the house was still a mess. I started cleaning and I saw the knife, it still had blood. I took it using a plastic and put it on a separate plastic with the trash, I hid it in my room. I wanted to come to the police station and report him, but I wasn't sure y'all were going to believe me. I went back to the living room to continue cleaning and I heard him singing from outside, he was drunk. He entered and started insulting my mother asking where she is, I got angry and told him that it's his fault that mom is at the hospital. He slapped me, while I was still digesting that, he slapped me again and told me that sins of the parents fall on to the children. He unzipped his pants and I knew what was coming. He grabbed me roughly and pinned me to the ground, he ripped off my shorts and tried to insert his finger inside my vagina. I lost it and kicked him on his testicle and bit him, he backed away grunting in pain. That's when I went to my room and locked myself in there, he broke down the door and I jumped out of the window, that's when I arrived here..

The detective nodded as she wrote down..

Nkanyezi:Do you believe me? Please tell me you believe me.

NK:Relax dear.

Nkanyezi:You need to arrest him, if I didn't escape he would have raped me. Please tell me you believe me.

NK:I believe you, I will send some officers to go and get him. We will send the knife to the laboratory and have them analyze it. We will help you, don't worry. For now, there is someone out there waiting for you.

Nkanyezi:Who?

NK:Someone who will check if he didn't touch you.

Nkanyezi:Okay

thank you for believing me. I was skeptical about coming here, no offense but the justice system always favors the rich not us who are poor.

NK:I understand, but our hands are tied sometimes.

Nkanyezi:I'm sure you are.

.

.

.

The following day, Nelisa is meeting up with the woman Yolanda told her about. She called yesterday and asked to meet so they can talk in person.



Thabile:Sorry for being late, traffic.

Nelisa:It's okay.

Thabile:So I wanted us to meet in person because Yolanda recommended you. Will you be able to do this job?

Nelisa:I don't know, like I said on the phone, I've never done it for anyone...

Thabile:Well you will experiment on me, girl I have tried all fashion designer but no one did anything to impress me. The pictures Yolanda sent me were amazing.

Nelisa:Okay tell you what, why don't you tell me the details of the dress you want and I will work on it, if you are happy then we will go ahead..

Thabile:Okay so I want it to be..

She described the dress to Nelisa and she took notes nodding.

Nelisa:Give me at least a week..

Thabile:Thank you, you're my last hope.

.

.

.

Hlengiwe comes rushing to the police station looking for Nkanyezi.

"Whoa hold up Missy, who are you looking for?", one police officer ask her..

Hlengiwe:I'm looking for my friend, she said she's here.

"What's her name?"

Hlengiwe:Nkanyezi Skhosana.

"Okay I see her. Follow me."

She led her to the room Nkanyezi was in.

Hlengiwe opened the door and rushed to hug Nkanyezi who immediately cried when she saw her friend..

Hlengiwe:Oh sweetheart I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Nkanyezi:He almost violated me, if I didn't escape, it would be a different issue now..

Hlengiwe:It's okay baby, have they arrested him?

Nkanyezi:Yes, he's still drunk and doesn't remember a thing..

Hlengiwe:I hope they give him life nxa!

\*

\*

\*

Philiswa takes her phone looking for people she can ask a favor from and realize that she has no one. She sighed remembering Kukhanya, too bad she deleted her numbers. Maybe she would have helped her out with a place to crash. She wanted to be out of this house, she is planning to go to school next year. She will have to start afresh, since she has missed so many classes and exams.

At the door, Jongi opens the door and is surprised to see two police officers standing by his door.

Jongi: Can I help you officers?

"Singamuthola u Bethany Mkhwanazi? (Can we find Bethany Mkhwanazi?)"

Jongi: Beth is my wife. Is everything okay?

"We need you two to come to the police station."

Jongi: In relation to what?

"You can either come willingly or we will drag you down to the station. We have a few questions we want to ask. It's about your son"

Jongi:Can't you ask them here? Why do we need to go to the police station? Are we being arrested?

"Sir just come down to the station, no one said anything about getting anyone arrested, unless you are hiding something."

Jongi:I'm not hiding anything, we will follow behind you.

At the police station.

Beth keeps on looking at the door looking for a way to escape. This detective keeps on staring into her soul, it's like she can see that she is hiding something.

" So where were you the day the baby got stolen?"

Beth:I was at the hospital I have already told you. I left with the ambulance and waited for her to give birth, when the doctors told me that she was okay, I then went to check on my husband. I don't know anything about stealing a baby.

" So you never entered Philiswa's ward room?"

Beth:No.

"We have footage of you coming in her ward and leaving with the baby. You still don't know anything about that?"

She breathed heavily as all walls closed in on her. She can't go to jail, she's too old to go to jail.

Beth: Okay look, I can pay you handsome money if you delete that footage. I only took the baby and gave him to someone else, I didn't kill him I swear. Just don't say anything, and I will pay you money you've never seen before. I know you detectives earn peanuts, you will finally have a taste of what real money is.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 24.

"Are you blackmailing a detective? A woman of the law? Do you know that this could add on to your charges?"

Beth:Don't act like you are not tempted, just do this for me. You are a woman too, so surely you must know the pain of being cheated on. My husband cheated with that girl and made her pregnant, I was angry and wasn't thinking that day. Just delete the footage.

The detective looked at her and considered to take this bribe. She needed the extra money, her children were going on a school trip on another province and with her husband losing his job, it was tough on the finances. She knows exactly the pain of being cheated on, it makes you question yourself, you ask yourself if there's something wrong with you. If this girl cheated with an old man like that, then she surely deserves this. They like sleeping with other people's husbands and then rush to play victims.

"Okay I will do it. But I want R6500 a month".

Beth:Don't worry, I will give it to you. Just let me know when you have deleted the footage.

Her money was running out with all the sneaking around she's doing..

"By tonight I will do it, they were planning on moving the evidence."

Beth:Don't disappoint me, I will pay you when the job is done.

"Okay, now go. Your husband is outside. We had already questioned him"

She nodded and they exchanged numbers.

Beth went out and found Jongi waiting for her outside.

Jongi:What did they say?

Beth:They were asking about your son. I never stole your baby Jongi, even if I wanted to hurt you I wouldn't have involved a child in our drama. He was innocent in all of this.

She pushed a few tears, Jongi felt bad that he was even thinking that she might have done it.

Beth:Do not tell the girls about this, I don't want them to hate you more than they do.

Jongi:I won't, let's go home.

.

.

.

Nelisa:I'm so tired baby.

Mnqobi:This will help ease you up.

He was massaging her feet..

Nelisa:How have you been? It's been long since we talked.

Mnqobi:Just hanging in there. I missed you.

Nelisa:I missed you too. Do you think now is the right time to talk to our parents about moving along with the negotiations?

Mnqobi:My family is ready, I don't know about yours.

Nelisa:Things are tense at home babe, we are living at dad's side chick's house. But I will talk to them, I can't put my life on hold because of their problems. I just want to be your wife already.

Mnqobi:\*Smiling\* I can't wait..

Nelisa:So I was thinking, why don't we relocate when we are married..

Mnqobi:Relocate to where?

Nelisa:To another province, KZN is too much for me and I need a break..

Mnqobi:Everyone we know is here babe.

Nelisa:I know that, but I found a fashion school in Joburg, and the course is three years duration. So we can move there while I study.



Mnqobi:\*Sigh\* Okay, if that's what you want we will move there. I'm glad you are finally going to study something you love. Do you have funding?

Nelisa:Yes

my father did trust funds for us years ago. I will study using that money.

Mnqobi:Okay come here then...

He pulled her to his lap.

Mnqobi:I missed your lips.

He reached for them and kissed her. She responded and wrapped her hands around her neck. She felt his boner and he stopped kissing her.

Mnqobi:I need the bathroom.

She moved from him and he rushed to the bathroom, he was so horny, it wasn't even a joke anymore. He unzipped his pants and let out his d\*ck. It was so hard that he felt like it would burst. He hand serviced himself but it didn't go down. He sighed and went back to the living room, with it in the open like that.

Nelisa gasped seeing him walking around with his member out like that.

He stood in front of her.

Mnqobi:It won't go down..

Nelisa:Isn't there anything you can do?

She asked clueless.

Mnqobi:I need to have sex.

Nelisa:But i\_

Mnqobi:I know I know. I'm not asking you to have sex with me now, we will wait until we are married. But for now, you can help me.

Nelisa:How?

Mnqobi:Kneel.

She reluctantly kneeled and faced it, she gulped down her fear. This was the first time seeing a penis.

Mnqobi pushed her head,

Mnqobi:Open your mouth.

She opened her mouth and Mnqobi took his d\*ck and put it inside her mouth.

Mnqobi:Mmmhh.

He grabbed her head and moved his dick in and out of her mouth. Nelisa, enjoying what was happening, took charge and held it with her hands and sucked on it.

Mnqobi groaned in pleasure, holding her head.

Mnqobi:Fuck.. That's it...

He ordered her to go faster and she obeyed, he almost screamed like a girl feeling the pleasure. No one has ever done him this good. She sucked on him for a while and he felt himself coming, he exploded in her mouth.

She stood up running to the bathroom to spit it out. She washed her mouth and found Mnqobi standing by the door. He pulled him to the bed and took off her clothes.

Nelisa:Mnqobi I....

Mnqobi:Shhh I'm not going to penetrate okay...

He was still hard, it's been long without some action.

He opened her legs and salivated at the sight that stared at him. He pulled her close and got his tongue to her p\*ssy.

Nelisa:\*Shaking\* What are you doing?

Mnqobi:Shhh...

He attacked her with his tongue on her p\*ssy and she gasped feeling some kind of way, this was a different thing she has never felt before. What was it? She found herself pushing his head deep within her as she screamed and spoke gibberish.

.

.

.

At Nkanyezi's home.

Hlengiwe locks the door and sits on the couch.

Nkanyezi:You should go back home.

Hlengiwe:I will stay here and protect you. I don't trust those police, they will release that man.

Nkanyezi:I called my aunt, he said she will arrive tomorrow.

Hlengiwe:Good, I like your aunt. She doesn't take any nonsense.

Nkanyezi:Are you hungry?

Hlengiwe:Very.

Nkanyezi:Come let's cook.

Hlengiwe:On second thoughts, I'm not hungry anymore.

Nkanyezi:Stop being lazy, let's go and cook.

She dragged her from the couch and laughed.

Hlengiwe:Okay fine...

.

.

At night, Beth is looking at her phone, waiting for the message of confirmation from the detective. She better not let her down. Her phone pings with a message.

'Done. Send my money.'

There was evidence attached that indeed she destroyed the footage. Beth relaxed a bit and got relieved.

'I don't have any in my bank account, I have cash. I will give it to you tomorrow. Can we meet at the Franklin's alley' - Beth

She replied.

'Why do we need to meet at such a dodgy place?'

'Do you want people to see us? Come alone and don't tell anyone where you are going' - Beth.

'Okay, I will be there'

'Thanks, I will bring your money' - Beth.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 25

Unedited.

Nkanyezi's mom, Precious was released from the hospital and she has been made aware of what her husband did to their daughter. And she is angry. She can't even imagine the trauma Nkanyezi is going through. She arrives home and finds someone hanging clothes by the line, she looks closer and notices that it was her sister. She licked her dry lips and moved towards her..

Precious:Sisi, I didn't know you were here.

Judy:Sawubona Precious, I arrived this morning. Nkanyezi called me crying yesterday.

She looked away.

Judy:How many times did I warn you about this hooligan of yours!? I have told you countless times that you should leave him but nothing. You want him to end up killing you. He almost assaulted your daughter, her father wouldn't have allowed that.

Precious:Don't be loud. You want Nkanyezi to hear you?

Judy:It will be better if she hears you, I don't know why you keep on lying to her. She needs to know the truth.

Precious:She can't know. It's too complicated because she has seen the person . How long will you be staying here?

Judy:Until this mess is done, I'm here for my Nkanyezi not you. You better not think about dropping the charges, Nkanyezi told me your hooligan is arrested.

Precious:I won't, I also want him to be arrested.

Judy:Go inside, how is your wound?

Precious:Healing. I will go to the police station, I want to talk to him.

Judy:Okay.

Judy is the older sister, she has two grown children who are now working. Her husband unfortunately died years ago, leaving her to raise their children alone. She hasn't moved on, her heart will always lie with her husband.

Precious goes inside and is amazed by how clean the house is, Judy is not a lazy person. She is a hard worker . She goes to her room and reaches for her phone, she sighs and calls his number. She barely speaks to him for the past 18 years, he only sends money for Nkanyezi and that it's. He knows very well that they have a child together.

She waits for him to answer,

"Hello", she hears his voice. She hasn't heard his voice for so long.

Precious:Hi.. This is Precious...

"Precious, why are you calling me?"

Precious:I need to see you and talk to you about something.

"Is my daughter okay?"

Precious:That's what we need to talk about.

"Okay send me the details of where you want us to meet"

Precious:Okay I will.

She hung up and changed, preparing to see Dumi.

She told her sister that she was now leaving and she took a taxi to the station, to get there faster.

She was shown to the holding cell that Dumi is at, and she stood outside watching him.

Precious:Look at me and tell me you didn't do it.

He looked away from her eyes, the alcohol had left his system and he remembered what he had tried to do the other night.

Dumi:I'm sorry.

Precious:Stabbing me wasn't enough, you had to try to harm my daughter. Why did you do it?



Dumi:I'm sorry Precious, I was drunk and wasn't thinking. Don't pretend like you are innocent in all of this. You lied to me for 18 years and made me believe Nkanyezi was mine when you knew that she wasn't.

Precious:Still that gave you no right to do what you did.

Dumi stood up and held on to the bars of the cell.

Dumi:Look Precious, please drop the charges. We can say that Nkanyezi misunderstood what happened. Please I can't go to jail. This is your fault, so just do me this one favor and I will forgive you, I promise you.

Precious clicked her tongue and her chest rose. Was this man crazy!?

Precious:You wanted to harm my daughter and you have the nerve to vomit that shit to me! Don't make me your fool Dumi. I am sorry that I lied to you about Nkanyezi but I was young, I was 18 and my mom convinced me to pin the pregnancy to you.

Dumi:Why couldn't you tell her father!?

Precious:He was older than me, and my mother said I will be embarrassing her to the community if people found out that an old man made me pregnant. Which is why I pinned it on you. I'm sorry.

Dumi:Your sorry doesn't help me. You lied to me Precious! You lied for years! And when I showed my anger I'm suddenly the bad guy. You are not innocent in all this too so don't victimize yourself.

.

.

.

At Franklin's Alley.

Beth taps on her bag waiting anxiously for the detective. What was taking this long? It was already dark outside and she didn't see anything. She hears some footsteps approaching and she hoped it was her. Finally she arrived.

Beth:What took so long? I have been waiting here for an hour.

"Sorry, I had to make sure that no one was following me. Do you have my money?"

Beth looks around to see if no one was nearby, she reached for her bag and touched her gun. She was scared but she had to do this and get rid of any evidence. The problem with people blackmailing you for money, is that they will always want more, and more until you are left with no cent.

She takes out the gun and point it at the detective, she cocks it and without any warning, she starts firing at the detective, she fell down holding her chest. Beth moves closer to her and fires another shots at her. She puts the gun on safe mode and put it back on her bag.

Beth:I'm sorry, I wasn't always like this. Pain changed me. May you rest in peace.

She closed the detective's eyes and walked away quickly.

\*

\*

Hours later, still at the alley. The detective shoots her eyes open and sits on her bums. She looks at her chest and takes off the bullet proof vest she was wearing underneath her shirt. She collects her breath, she was right to trust her gut and wear it. She was never supposed to trust Beth in the first place, she broke her job's ethics. And with the footage of Beth getting inside Philiswa's ward destroyed, she didn't know what to do. Her superiors will start investigating the matter.

.

.

.

The following day, Precious browse through the menu looking for something to order while she's waiting for him. She called the waiter and ordered salad, it was the cheapest thing. She saw him coming to the table she was seated in.

"Hi"

She nods and watches as he sits down. She remembered the 18 year old Precious who went to the Pastor's office wearing her skirt, to ask about the youth event. She remembered how he stood up and locked the door as he complimented her. He promised her the moon and the sun, naive and young her trusted the man. The guy was a pastor, a man of God, surely what they were doing was right. She didn't see anything wrong with it, how he casually brought her gifts and sent her sweet messages, she didn't see any fault. He took her to an expensive and over the top hotel and that's where it happened, he took her virginity, still her mind didn't register that what he was doing was wrong. He kept on climbing her and having sex with her, sometimes he would invite her to his house when his wife and daughter were not there and they would have sex everywhere in the house. Few months down the line, her mother saw that she was pregnant and asked her who made her pregnant. She couldn't tell her mother that she was impregnated by the pastor, her boyfriend was also not an option because they were not sexually active. Her mother

cooked her with questions until she gave in and told her that it was the pastor. Her mother was shocked, that her 18 year old daughter was impregnated by the whole pastor, the man who was respected by the community and the church. She went to his office burning with rage and confronted him, but he denied, and said he didn't do anything she didn't want, even went as far as threatening that no one would believe them. He was right, everyone respected the man. Her mother then convinced her to initiate sex with Dumi and say the pregnancy was his. That's how Nkanyezi was born, knowing that Dumi was her father but he isn't.

Precious:How are you Pastor Mkhwanazi?

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 26

Jongi:How are you?

Precious:I am fine.

They kept quiet for a while, just staring at each other. She had a lot of questions for him, but the one question that she always wanted to ask him; does he ever regret it? Does he feel bad for taking advantage of her when she was 18 and knew nothing about the cruel world?

Jongi:You said we need to talk about Nkanyezi.

Precious:Yes... It has been 18 years, I think it's time to tell her the truth, before she can find out from someone else. We owe her the truth.

Jongi sweated a little, he was already at fire with cheating, now there's a whole issue of a grown teenage girl he has been keeping a secret for 18 years.

Jongi:What has changed now?

Precious:Something happened... Dumi, my husband found out that Nkanyezi was not his daughter and we have been fighting, sometimes in front of Nkanyezi. The other day the fight got heated to an extent that he stabbed me and ran away, the following day he tried to rape Nkanyezi.

Jongi:He did what!?

He banged his fist on the table..

Precious: Luckily, she ran away before he could do anything, and went to the police station. He is arrested as we speak.

Jongi: Your husband tried to rape my daughter!!

Precious: I know, I'm not going to defend him because I'm also angry that he would try something like that.

Jongi: Damn it Precious! You were supposed to be careful around him!

Precious: I was at the hospital.

Jongi: Where is Nkanyezi right now?

Precious: At school, she's fine. Hlengiwe slept with her last night.

Jongi: Hlengiwe?

Precious: Yeah, didn't you know your daughter's whereabouts?

Jongi: Things are bit of a mess right now Precious. I was just found cheating and the church took the house, if my wife finds out about Nkanyezi she'll be more than angry.

Precious: How old is she?

Jongi: Who?

Precious: The woman you cheated with.

He looked down avoiding the question.

Precious:Do you regret it? What you did to me. Do you feel any remorse? That you took advantage of me when I was young? And left me to look after a child alone?

Jongi:Precious..

Precious took a deep breath.

Precious:I will be telling Nkanyezi tonight that you are her father. It's up to you whether you want to show up for your daughter or not.

She took her bag and stood up as she left. Jongi remained in his seat, he felt like the world has abandoned him. Problems on top of problems! How will he deal with this one!? Beth will surely leave him after this. But that would be great right? He loved Philiswa, or he thinks he loves her. It's all confusing.

The waiter comes with the salad that Precious had ordered.

Jongi:Oh sorry, the woman who ordered that has left. But I will pay for it.

The waiter sighed relieved.

.

.

.



Beth goes inside her parents' house and heads straight to the living room to find her mother.

Mom: Beth I didn't know you would visit again so soon.

Beth: I am troubled mother, and you are the only person I can talk to. It's like I'm invisible to everyone.

Mom: Come to mama my girl.

She opens space for her near the couch. Beth snuggles near her mother and lay on her lap.

Mom: Now what is going on?

Beth: I told you about Jongi cheating right?

Mom: Yes

Beth: Well I was angry mama and I did some drastic things, I poisoned the both of them. The girl gave birth and I stole the baby, I threw him off the bridge. They know that their child is gone but they don't know that I had a hand in it. Now days ago, there were police questioning us, they said they have video footage of me going inside the girl's ward. I blackmailed the detective into deleting the footage, she agreed and she destroyed it. We met at some alley, she thought I was there to give her her money, but I killed her. I had purchased a gun beforehand. I fired endless shots and didn't even look at her.

At home, I don't know if I can even still call it home. But where we are staying, Jongi is always cooping himself in his room with that girl, with me in the house. It's like he doesn't even feel sorry that he ruined our marriage. 25 years of marriage! I even heard that he wants to divorce me and live happily with his sidechick. No one in that house understands my pain, they all look at me like I'm crazy. Nelisa is also busy with her boyfriend and new job, Hlengiwe, i

I don't even know what she's up to. Jongi and Philiswa are continuing with their affair, right in front of me. Yesterday I found them kissing, but I didn't show them that I saw. Does he disregard me that much? Was I supposed to smile when I found out that my husband was cheating on me? I know what I did was wrong, it's more than wrong, because I don't know what was going on in my mind. But I am hurt mama, my heart is broken. Very soon he will be giving me divorce papers and I don't know what I will do. I love Jongi, even after he has hurt me like this.

She wiped her tears with the back of her hand, her mother pat her back softly.

Mom:I have been absent from your life for 26 years Bethany, I don't know half the things you've gone through. But I will tell you one thing, never blame yourself for your partner's cheating. He knows he's married, he should respect his marriage. I will

not talk about the girl because I do not know her, but your husband is the one who wronged you. What you did is wrong, beyond measures. Taking lives is never the solution my daughter, you should have calmed down and thought deeply about what you want to do next. Because, making decisions while you are angry is never a good thing. It always has some terrible consequences

in this case two lives have been lost. I think you just need a breath of fresh air, away from him. Come home Bethany, this will always be your home, you and my grandkids are welcome. Staying with that man and his sidechick will drive you crazy and you will lose your sanity. It's up to you if you stay in that marriage, but for now, come home. And just take time to cry and vent about everything that has been happening, they say home is the happiest place you could be at.

.

.

.

At Mnqobi's house.

Nelisa:I have to finish this babe, I am meeting with Thabile tomorrow..

Mnqobi:It looks amazing even though you are not done, so if she gives you the job. Are you going to sew the dress?

Nelisa:Yes.. She said I will experiment on her. If I'm lucky, I can make all the dresses. I hope I don't screw this up.

Mnqobi:You won't.

Nelisa:Have you told your parents about us moving to Joburg next year?

Mnqobi:Yes I told them, they supported us surprisingly.

Nelisa:I'm glad they've come around. I'll tell my parents tonight. I hope they don't throw a tantrum.

She smiled and continues drawing. She wished they were married already, what Mnqobi did to her the other day left her wanting for more. Oral sex, any kind of sex before marriage is a sin, so she has already broken the rule. But she is badly craving for the big cobra right now. She stops drawing and her eyes move to his dick print, and swallowed hard. It looked too big, and she wondered how it would be like when it finally entered her sacred heaven. Mnqobi chuckled when he noticed what she was looking at.

Mnqobi:Wanna suck it?

He asked with a mischievous smile.

Nelisa:We have already sinned. I will go to church tomorrow and ask for forgiveness from God..

Mnqobi's smile dropped.

Mnqobi:I'm sorry, I didn't mean to make you sin.

Nelisa:It's okay, we will go. The both of us.

He slowly nodded.

.

.

.

Nkanyezi eats fastly enjoying the food, her aunt is a very good cook. Better than her mother.

Judy:You want more?

Nkanyezi:Please.

Judy:Your friend left?

Nkanyezi:Yes, she said she's sure that I'm safe now that you are here.

Judy:\*Smiling\* She cares about you.

Nkanyezi:A lot, sometimes I think we are sisters the way we are so close. Every time I'm in trouble, she's the first person to come through for me.

Precious stood by the door listening, their bond was so strong. She wasn't sure whether to tell her anymore about her father.

She would be broken, and feel betrayed. She went back to her room and took her phone as she sent a text to Jongi.

'I'm not going to tell her now. I'm not sure what to do anymore.'

.

.

.

Philiswa looks at the scans and drops one tear. She badly misses her son, just to touch him and hold him close to her chest. She took her phone and called the detective who was handling the case.

"Hello"

Philiswa:Hi, I want to ask regarding the case. How far are you?

"We are still gathering evidence and questioning the hospital staff. We will find the person who did this"

Mkhwanazi entered the room.

Philiswa:Okay please let me know if you need any help from me.

"I will, thank you"

She hung up and took a deep breath.

Philiswa:That was the detective, there's no progress with finding our son's killer. The person who did this is roaming around freely.

Jongi:I don't know who could have done this.

She was still suspecting Beth, but she couldn't tell him that. She was depending on this man, and if he were to drop her now she will be left with nothing. She will only have the house and nothing else. It will be better when she's went back to school.

Philiswa:So I was thinking, next year I want to go back to school.

Jongi:Are you sure?

Philiswa:Yes, and I want to transfer to another university.

Jongi:Where?

She blinked twice.

Philiswa:I was thinking University of Free State.

Jongi opened his eyes wide.

Jongi:Free state? Why so far away from me!?

She seriously needed to be away from him, as long as he pays for her fees.

Philiswa:I just need a fresh start somewhere else.

Jongi: I am stressed Philiswa and you are adding on to my stress, now you want to be far away from me where you will give those young boys what belongs to me!!

He shouted at her. Philiswa frowned, this was the first time he's raising his voice at her.

Jongi:You better not give my pussy to anyone to that Free State of yours or I swear you won't like what I will do to you!!!

This was a different side she was seeing, he was acting possessive and she didn't like it. Now she wants to leave more than ever.

Philiswa:You can't expect me to be single. Go to your wife  
Jongi!

Jongi hit the door frustrated and paced up and down. He was frustrated and angry, mostly stressed. So much was going on and he doesn't even have the time to sit and catch a break.

Jongi:Uyangidakelwa Philiswa! Awuyi kwalapho. You will continue your studies here in KZN! (You are shitting on me Philiswa! You're not going there).

Philiswa:But...

Jongi:Shhh just listen to me baby... Free State isn't safe. You know I'm your protector, people will bully you because they see



that you are new. It's better when you stay here with me, you know how I took care of those girls who were picking on you. I am your savior Philiswa. You can't leave me.

.  
. .  
.

At Beth's home.

Beth:I hear you mom, and you are right. I never took time to sit down and allow myself to feel the pain. I focused on my anger and wanting to avenge myself. I will come home tomorrow with my daughters. I can't give up my life because of a man.

Mom:Now you are talking. Things will be alright dear, don't worry.

They hugged and she got in the car. She waved and drove away. She arrived home and was met by Hlengiwe who was just getting off the taxi from school. She got out of the car.

Hlengiwe:Sawubona Mah.

Beth:Hi Hlengiwe. How was school?

Hlengiwe:It was fine. How was your day?

Beth:Also fine, let's go inside. I need to talk to you all.

They held hands and walked inside, but were met by Mkhwanazi and Philiswa having sex on the couch and screaming each other's names softly . Hlengiwe screamed and closed her eyes as she ran out, she was not supposed to see her father like that. Beth just sighed heavily, feeling all strength leaving her body. She ignored them and retired to the bedroom, where she started packing her clothes. Jongi entered the room feeling remorseful.

Beth:Are you even supposed to be having sex with her? It hasn't been three months since she gave birth. What about her stitches?

Jongi:Beth...

Beth:But what do I know? I'm the old Bethany who is at the blink of being divorced. From now on Jongi, it is over between us. You can continue with your granddaughter, give me the divorce papers and I will gladly sign them. I am going to my mother's house and taking my daughters with me.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 27

A month later.....

At Bethany's Shop.

She walked around browsing the clothes, they were almost out of stock. She made a mental note to order more, business was doing well. She had fully invested her time to her business. She went back to her office and continued working, she got disturbed by her phone and it was Mkhwanazi. She sighed and ignored it, she had no time for him. She has completely moved on from him, he can continue with his sidechick. She has been waiting for the divorce papers but he refuses to give them to her. She doesn't understand what's wrong with him, wasn't this what he wanted? To divorce her? So why is he acting immature now!?

A knock comes through her office and she tells whoever it was to come in. Winnie peeps her head and Beth welcomes her with a smile.

Winnie gets in and sits on the chair. She brought her food.

Winnie:I know you haven't eaten.

Beth:As if you read my mind. Thank you.

Winnie:So how are you holding up really? With everything that's been going on.

Beth:I'm at my calmest peace Winnie my friend, breaking things off with Jongi was the greatest thing I ever did. It released that anger and bitterness that was starting to cloud my judgment. I loved that man, we had been together for 26 years, it really hurt me when he betrayed our vows like that. But I had to let him go. Cheating is never a mistake, it's a whole long process for it to be determined as a mistake. He lied for a year and continuously made me a fool, while he knew he was fooling with a woman younger than my daughter. He knew exactly what he was doing.

Winnie:I could never get people who cheat, they sneak around and then act all remorseful when they are caught. I also left my first husband when I found out that he was cheating, I didn't even look back. He relaxed thinking that I would return but I didn't.

Beth:I wish I had left earlier before I did some things.

Winnie held her hand.

Winnie:What did you do?

Beth looked at her and moved her hands, this was the secret she was prepared to take to the grave. No matter how much Winnie has been a good friend to her, you can't fully trust a person. People will disappoint you and betray you when you least expect it.

Beth:Let's stop talking about Mkhwanazi.

She forced a smile.

Beth:How are your children?

.

.

.

At Thabile's house.

Nelisa folds her lips as she is taking Teekay's measurements.

Teekay:Will you do it the way Thabile wants? How long will it take? I heard it takes up to 6 months.

Nelisa laughs slightly at the endless questions he's asking.

Nelisa:I already sent her the designs and she loved them. She said I should take my time and not rush.

Teekay:She's right, when you rush you might not do it right.

Nelisa:Exactly, don't worry I won't disappoint. This is my first gig so I have to do an outstanding job.

She finishes and he wears his shirt. Nelisa looks at his upper body and blinks her eyes. Teekaay was the type that looked like they work out 24 hours a day, he took good care of his body that's why he looked so fit and muscular attractive. She scans

him and throws her eyes all over his perfect body. He notices that she's starrng and clears his throat.

Teekay:Is your husband not fucking you good?

She snaps out of it and looks at him frowning.

Nelisa:What!?

Teekaay:Your eyes are starrng at my dick print. You have a ring on your finger, so I'm asking if your husband is not fucking you good?

Nelisa:\*Stuttering\* Uhh I'm sorry, I didn't mean to stare. I must have zoned out.

He chuckles not believing her.

Teekay:Okay, I believe we are done here.

Nelisa:Yes, I will be back tomorrow again. Bye.

She packs her things.

Teekay:Do you need a lift?

Nelisa:Thank you, but I brought my car.

.

.

.

@The Developers.

Hlengiwe plays with the disguise costumes and tries them out. She snaps a few pictures and sends them to Nkanyezi. She replies with laughing emojis.

'The Developers is your second home' - Nkanyezi

'This place gives me peace. And besides, they treat me like their intern here.'-Hlengiwe

'I hope they don't take you to one of their missions' - Nkanyezi

'Thabani would never allow that. He doesn't want me to even play or see the weapons' - Hlengiwe

'He's a nice guy' - Nkanyezi

'Don't crush on my man wena👀👀' - Hlengiwe

'They friend zoned you sisi👀' - Nkanyezi

'Don't worry, he's still blinded over his late girlfriend. I'm exactly what he needs to get over her' - Hlengiwe

'Don't seduce Mr agent' - Nkanyezi

'I won't. I'm scared of him sometimes, he can get very strict' - Hlengiwe

She hears voices outside and people moving fast.

'Chat later sthandwa sami❤️' - Hlengiwe

She puts her clothes back and gets out of the room she was in. She sees the agents moving up and down gathering heavy weapons. She spots Thabani at a distance and marches to him, he was with Zulu.

Hlengiwe: Hey what's going on?

Zulu: Let me leave you, Hlengiwe nice to see you again..

She smiles and nods as he walks away.

Thabani: We finally caught the man.

Hlengiwe: Who?

Thabani: Sthembiso Cele and his family, they are going to be brought in just now.

Hlengiwe: Wow! Can't believe y'all caught him. Can I go with?

He laughs and pinches her ears.

Thabani: You're not going anywhere, I'm never going to take you anywhere with me on a mission Hle. You are young.

Hlengiwe: But I \_

Thabani: But nothing. Let me take you home. I'm sure they are probably wondering where you are.

Hlengiwe: Okay fine.



She pouts her lips angrily and he laughs at her pulling her outside.

Thabani: You're really beautiful when you do that. I can just kiss you.

.

.

.

At Mngqobi's House.

He tries Nelisa's phone for the fifth time and it was still sending him to voice mail. He sighed and sat on the couch feeling out of options. He doesn't know Thabile's house nor has her number. He's getting really worried, her coming back home late is something that has been happening a lot lately. But he understands, she's pursuing her dreams and he wouldn't want to stand in her way. He just wishes she didn't have to work this late.

He stands on his feet when he hears her car parking outside. He goes to open the door and wait for her.

Nelisa gets her bags from the car and locks it, she moves towards the door and hands the bags to Mngqobi.

He laughs.

Nelisa: Isn't that why you were waiting for me here?

Mnqobi: I was worried about you.

Nelisa: But I told you that I was working late baby.

Mnqobi: I have been calling.

She ignores him and heads towards the house going to their bedroom, she takes her phone from her pockets and fiddles with it.

Mnqobi: Answering your phone wouldn't hurt babe, or even a text message to let me know that you are still busy. The world isn't safe nowadays, so I get really worried about you.

Nelisa mentally rolls her eyes, Mnqobi was clingy and it was a turn off to her. She doesn't mind him showering her with love but it's the clinginess that annoys her. He calls every now and then asking if she's still okay. If it's not that, it's him wanting them to take pictures every now and then, and upload them on their social media accounts. She's a private person, and she only wants to advertise her businesses on her social media.

Nelisa: I'm hungry, did you cook?

Mnqobi: No I didn't.

Nelisa: Let's order then, I'm also too tired to cook.

Mnqobi: Fast food again?

Nelisa:What do you want me to do Mngqobi? You are on a leave from work and you are always here. Cooking wouldn't hurt you, I come back very tired, I can't also stand over the stove for another two hours.

Mngqobi:Kanti who is the wife here Nelisa if I have to cook every day?

Nelisa:Wow, I didn't know that getting married would be like getting a new born baby. Izandla zakho zinqamukile yini? (Are your hands amputated!?).

Mngqobi staggers back, this was the first time hearing her speak like this. She was changing and he didn't like it, he wants his old Nelisa back. The laid down and humble Nelisa.

Mngqobi:Is that the way to speak to your husband!?

Nelisa:Mngqobi if you think I'm going to be like one of those "Yebo baba" wives then you are mistaken. This is not ancient times where a woman has to burn herself in the kitchen. Next thing you will be cheating and telling me that it's because you are a man. I know you men, you act all lovey dovey meanwhile you have a girlfriend on the side.

Mngqobi:How did things escalate this fast!? I have never given you any reason that I would cheat on you. Why would I do that?

Her phone vibrates with a text. She reads it and smiles. Mngqobi looks at her and swallows a painful lump, he decides to leave the room before he could say things he will regret the following day.

.

.

.

At Philiswa's.

She's on the phone with Kukhanya and she has apologized for dropping her like a hot potato. She was lucky to get her numbers from her Facebook account.

Philiswa:Honestly, I don't want to be here anymore Khanyo, I am starting to be scared of Jongi. He's very aggressive and possessive lately.

Kukhanya:Move out, you two shouldn't even be together anymore.

Philiswa:I don't want him anymore, I tried telling him that, but he didn't want to hear it. And I have nowhere to go, even if I wanted to move out.

Kukhanya:I can help you out.

Philiswa:Really?

Kukhanya:Yes, my old apartment is empty. You can stay there for a while and get your life back on track. Truthfully, you are still young Philiswa and you can still further your studies. Jongi will keep on threatening you because he knows he's doing everything for you. But there are a lot of bursary opportunities out here, some don't even need you to pass with mad flying colors. There's even NSFAS. Please reclaim your life and stop depending on that dirty man, because he'll use it against you in the future. I don't even know how he sleeps at night knowing what he's doing is wrong.

Philiswa:I hear you, and you're right. I will start packing my clothes. Can I move tomorrow? I don't want to be here anymore..

Kukhanya:I will even fetch you myself, I'm coming that side anyway.

Philiswa:Thank you, you are too kind. How is your family?

Kukhanya:They are okay, I just think I'm pregnant again.

Philiswa laughs and her smiles turns into a frown when she remembers her son.

Kukhanya:I'm sorry Maphili, I didn't mean to open up old wounds.

Philiswa:No it's okay, my son will always have a special place in my heart. But I have to accept that he's gone, so that he can rest in peace.

.  
. .

At Nkanyezi's home.

Nkanyezi:I'm really glad you have changed mama.

Precious:What do you mean?

Nkanyezi:Home is now warm and I always look forward to coming back. Maybe dad going away was the right thing. I hope he doesn't come back. And I thank you for taking my side and believing that he wanted to rape me.

Precious sighed sadly, the fact that rape victims have to assure people that they were really violated hurt her a lot. She is glad Nkanyezi didn't get that trauma, and she's proud of her for fighting.

Precious:I will always choose you over anyone my star. I had you when I was 18, when I didn't know anything about being a mother. I taught myself everything, ngawa ngivuka nawe, finding ways to take care of you. Dumi will rot in jail, we don't have to worry about him anymore.

Nkanyezi wipes her tears and hugs her mother, those were beautiful words.

Nkanyezi:I love you mama.

Precious:I love you too mama.

She hugged her back tightly, her heart was not fully at ease. There was a still a big secret she was hiding from her daughter, and she had no idea how she would tell her.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 28

The following day

Philiswa finishes packing her clothes, she closes the suitcase and drags it to the living room, where she found Jongi watching TV. He stood on his feet when he saw her with her bags.

Jongi:What's going on? What are the bags for?

Philiswa:I am leaving.

Jongi:Going where?

He asked going towards her, Philiswa stepped back a little.

Philiswa:I have found a new place to live at, I'm sorry but I can't do this anymore. We cannot sit here and pretend like this is normal. What was happening between us is over.

Jongi touched his forehead and laughed a little.

Jongi:You are leaving? And where will you go my darling?  
Because you have nothing.

Philiswa:This is exactly why I'm leaving. I want to find myself, and do things independently. I'm tired of being dependent on you.

Jongi:\*Chuckling\* After I have spent so much money on you!? I even brought you this fancy house!



Philiswa:I did not point a gun to your head. You did that willingly, and I appreciate everything you have done for me. But it is time I stand on my feet now and figure out this life thing.

Jongi:You're shitting on me Philiswa. You are not leaving me! Not after you have destroyed my family like this!! I lost my wife, my daughters can't even look at me! And you are telling me that you are leaving! You're not going anywhere. If it means I must keep you prisoner here then I will do so.

Philiswa took a deep breath, and looked at him straight in his eyes.

Philiswa:I knew what I was getting myself into when I agreed to be in a relationship with you. Even though I still don't understand whether it's because I had daddy issues or what, but nonetheless; my eyes are open now. I want out of whatever this was, I have already helped you wreck your family. I knew you were married and I still climbed in bed with you. The age difference just makes things worse, you are old enough to be my grandfather. Getting pregnant with your child was one of the many mistakes I have made, may our child rest in peace. I can't keep on doing this, I can't. Already you are showing signs of aggressiveness and possessiveness , you used to be such a sweet man. I don't know much about God or how the church things work, but I think you need to go back to the shadow of

God. You know you love your wife, go to her and fix things. But me and you are over and I mean it!

Jongi kneels in front of her and holds her hand.

Jongi:Philiswa please don't leave me. I really love you, I don't care about Beth. I want you only. We are getting divorced soon and I will be free to marry you baby. Please don't leave me. I will fix myself, I know I have issues.

She removes her hands from his grip and sighs,Jongi was wasting her time.

Philiswa:This back and forth is draining me, it has gone on for too long. Goodbye Jongi.

He sniffs a few tears and shakes his head, as she walks out the door.

Jongi:Please don't go.

Philiswa shakes her head and continues walking, she spots Kukhanya's car parked outside and goes towards her.

They share a brief hug.

Kukhanya:What did he say? Did he hit you?

Philiswa:No, he is crying.

She says laughing and Kukhanya joins in. She helps her get her things on the boot.

Kukhanya:Let's leave ke sisi.

Philiswa looks at the house and smiles faintly. She wasn't going to ever come back, her paths with Jongi should never ever cross. That chapter of her life was closed forever, and it was time to create new events and memories.

.

.

.

At Mnqobi's

He brings the plate full of meat to his friend.

Sbani:Dankie sbari.

Mnqobi:I braiied it last night.

Sbani:\*Laughing\* Why would you braii meat at night?

Mnqobi:I thought I would feel better, but I didn't.

Sbani:What has the PK done now?

Mnqobi sighs sadly as he remembers how Nelisa is changing up on him everyday. He plays with his ring.

Mnqobi:I love her you know, sure at first I wasn't keen to the idea of us getting together because it was orchestrated by our parents. But when I spent time with her, and got to know the kind of person she was. I fell in love, I knew I wanted to be with her. I proposed early because I wanted her by my side everytime, but I think I did that too soon. Both of us are not ready for marriage, she hasn't had a taste of the outside world, she's seeing some new things for the first time, and some will overwhelm her. We got nothing in common, she's into fashion and I'm more into the business sector. Everything about us clashes

Advertisement

her allergies are my favorites, her dislikes are my likes.

From when we were young, and attending church together. Nelisa was known as being respectful and humble, every church member complimented her on that. That was one of the most things that attracted me to her more. But now, I don't know anymore brah. She has changed, she talks to me anyhow. This is supposed to be our honeymoon stage, we should be happy and be love birds but we are always fighting. I have tried talking to her but she always dismisses me, and tells me that she will not allow me to play her.

Sbani licks his fingers.

Sbani:Ehh sbari ngathini ngale PK ungtshela ukuthi ufuna ukulishada? (What did I say to you the time you told me that you want to marry her?)

Mnqobi:This is not the time for "I told you so".

Sbani:I told you to toughen up, this soft boy romantic nton nton you have will burn you. Nelisa will rule this house, and you will be washing her undies. As a man, you should know how to bring your woman to submission. You do not hit her sbari, you punish her in bed. The two of you are having sex right?

Mnqobi shakes his head.

Mnqobi:We are abstaining.

Sbani laughs.

Sbani:Ayy baba, abstaining from what? Isn't she still sealed?

Mnqobi:We had oral sex a month ago, so now we are abstaining from any sexual intimacy, to show remorse that we broke the "no sex before marriage" rule.

Sbani:I could never get your church things, I don't even want to understand it. No wonder the two of you are facing such problems, you are both sexually frustrated. Sex hunger does that. Be careful, she might find it somewhere else. Abstaining from sex? I would die and collapse!

Mnqobi hits him with the pillow and he dodges.

.

.

.

At Thabile's house.

Nelisa packs up her things, she was now ready to start the real work and she prayed that she does an amazing job. Thabile trusted in her and she can't afford to disappoint her.

Thabile:When you need anything else, please let me know.

She nods and bids farewell. She goes out to her car and throw her stuff on the backseat.

She gets on the driver's side and drives home, a part of her didn't want to go home but she had no choice. Her phone rang on the way and it was her father, she ignored it and continued driving. She hasn't talked to him, and she's not planning to. She was still disgusted and disappointed in him. She arrives home and gathers strength to go inside, she hears voices and recognizes Sbani's voice. She follows the voices and finds them feasting on meat.

Nelisa:Good evening.

Sbani:Hi Nelz.

Nelisa:Nice to see you. Babe, I will be in our room.

She goes to their bedroom and throws herself on the bed. She takes her phone and calls her mother.

Beth:Neli.

Nelisa:Hi mom, how are you?

Beth:I'm getting fine by the day my dear, how are you?

Nelisa:I'm also trying.

Beth:Why don't you sound okay?

She sighs and looks at the door.

Nelisa:It's nothing.

Beth:Aybo Nelisa, talk to me. What is it?

Nelisa:It's just... My marriage is boring me. There's nothing exciting nje. Everyday it's the same thing, I come from work and find Mnqobi. We ask each other about our day and force a two minute conversation and then that's it! There's no fun nje in this marriage! I really thought he was the guy I needed but I'm not sure anymore.

Beth:Nelisa what are you saying to me?

Nelisa:I think we rushed getting married, I am just so numb mom. I don't even feel like I belong here, I feel like there's a

part of me missing. I am not fully content, I don't know how to describe this.

Beth:Nelisa...

Nelisa:The lady I'm working with, her husband is a very attractive person. I took some time and looked at him the other day and I felt nothing. I even stared at his penis area but I still didn't feel anything. I don't know what's wrong with me mom. I have tried praying to God but nothing.

Beth:We should meet tomorrow and talk more, I don't like to hear you this sad. How long have you been feeling like this?

Nelisa:It started now that I have been meeting new people. I don't know how to describe this, I know I love Mnqobi but I just can't bring myself to commit to our marriage... It's hard.

She sniffs her tears as she continues pouring her feelings to her mother over the phone.



## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 29

At a restaurant.

Beth sips the juice and smiles.

Beth:I love it, it has a different taste than the one you make for yourself at home.

Nelisa:\*Laughing\* For reals, I don't know how they do it.

Beth:Let me order for us.

She browsed through the menu and called the waiter and she placed their orders. Nelisa looked at her mother proudly and smiled. She looked so different and she liked that for her. She's glad she chose herself and left her father.

Nelisa:You look so happy.

Beth:I am. I am just overwhelmed with peace lately.

Nelisa:I love that for you.

Beth:Thank you. Now let's talk about you. I am very concerned about our conversation yesterday.

Nelisa sighs and looks up.

Nelisa:I was just venting.

Beth:Let's talk about this issue of not feeling anything. Please explain to me.

Nelisa:Please don't go full therapist on me.

She says laughing. Beth was studying towards being a therapist, but had to drop out in her third year when she fell pregnant with Nelisa.

Nelisa:As I was saying, I feel very different and out of place. Like I don't belong anywhere.

Beth:Elaborate.

Nelisa:When I'm with Mngqobi, I just feel like I am an entirely different person. The woman in me it's like it disappears, and when I'm with Thabile, the lady I'm working for, it's like a different part comes out, I don't know. Then there's this issue of our marriage, you know me and Mngqobi got married in church and it was a small thing, but there's nothing interesting about our relationship. We barely know each other, I think we rushed marriage. The things I like, he doesn't like them. We fight like a lot, and I am just so damn tired.

Beth looks at her and puts her hands on the table.

Beth:I think you have gender identity issues. Have you ever heard of "non-binary"?

Nelisa:Gender identity? What is that?

Beth:Why did you choose to wear this today?

Nelisa looks at herself and frowns. She was wearing manly cargo pants with a baggy shirt, and closed shoes.

Nelisa:I don't know, I just felt like it.

.

.

.

Outside the school gate. Hlengiwe tears the question paper and laughs.

Hlengiwe:And we are done.

Nkanyezi:I can't believe we are really done with school! God!

Hlengiwe:The feeling is unbelievable! We are really done!

They share a hug.

Nkanyezi:Now we are going to to the real world.

Hlengiwe:Eix and I heard it is tough.

Nkanyezi:But as long as we go to school next year, I hope we get accepted to the same university.

Hlengiwe:That will be by luck. And besides, you are already accepted at UL.

Nkanyezi:I will only go when my other applications are approved. I don't want to be far away from you.

Hlengiwe:Me too, I don't want us to be separated.

Nkanyezi:Best friends forever?

Hlengiwe:Forever.

Thabani's car parks next to them.

Nkanyezi:I guess I will see you later.

She giggles. The door opens and Hlengiwe hops in.

Hlengiwe:So where are we off to?

Thabani:Not even a hello.

Hlengiwe:\*Rolls eyes\* Hi.

He laughs and starts driving to his house.

Thabani:So how does it feel to know that you are done with high school?

Hlengiwe:I feel great, and ready to conquer the world.

Thabani:Don't forget that there's still tertiary.

Hlengiwe:Another thing stressing me, I haven't been accepted anywhere. I don't want to stay at home next year.

Thabani:I'm sure when results are released, they'll start approving y'all.

He parks outside the garage and they both get out of the car, and head inside.

Hlengiwe:Wow...

She compliments the nice set up she was seeing on the living room.

Hlengiwe:When did you do all this?

Thabani:Before I came to fetch you... Come....

He leads her to the floor, and they sit on the fluffy carpet.

Thabani:I just wanted to congratulate you on finishing your final exams.

.  
.br/.

Philiswa walks around the apartment smiling.

Philiswa:Yesterday I didn't look clearly at the place because I was tired. But wow, it is beautiful and spacious.

Kukhanya:It's also a peaceful environment around here. So no worrying about thieves breaking in. I brought you this...

She gave her the bunch of brochures she had with her.

Kukhanya:Those are different bursary opportunities. Read through them and apply ke sisi...

Philiswa:Thank you, I will.. Thank you for everything you have done for me Kukhanya. God bless you.

Kukhanya:\*Smiling\* It's a pleasure. You just remind me so much of my mother.

Philiswa laughs a little confused.

Philiswa:How so?

Kukhanya:She was also taken advantage of when she was young, younger than you; by the person she trusted the most. And there was no one to help her. She ended up going to jail for 15 years for defending herself. She's....

She Breathes loudly as she remembers how happy her mother was that she had just gotten married, only to get into a car accident and die.

Kukhanya:It's been 7 years since she died, but I still miss her. I can't forget her, we had so little time with each other. I miss her so much.

Philiswa embraces her, she knows exactly the pain of losing a parent. The wound doesn't heal.

Kukhanya:My little sister

she was only 2 months when Siya, mom's husband got them both killed. He wanted to follow her. He loved my mother so much, he didn't allow anything to come between them. She waited for him for a year, and they had just gotten married when it happened. They didn't even have time to raise their daughter. It's just painful..

She sobs more painfully than before. Philiswa pats her back softly.

.  
. .  
.

Back at the restaurant.

Beth points at the lady who was on a phone call, just a few centimeters from them.

Beth:How do you feel about her? Look at her closely..

Nelisa looks at the woman but feels nothing. She was a beautiful woman, but that's just it.

Nelisa:She's fine..

Beth:Does she make your heart skip or revoke any reaction from you?

Nelisa looks at the woman again and shakes her head.

Nelisa:Nothing.

Beth:We need to run a test, to find out what's going on. When you get home, please do research on "non-binary", and I don't know how this will happen, but can you try kissing a female and see if you will feel something.

Nelisa:Mmhh I don't have that many friends, but I will try.

Beth:I need to go home. Hlengiwe must be back. I will call later okay..

Nelisa:Okay, greet Gogo for me.

Beth nods and walks out. Nelisa pays for their lunch and also leaves. She had many thoughts running through her mind, she wasn't understanding anything her mother just said. She parked her car inside the yard and took her phone to run a quick Google search.

She typed "non-binary", one result caught her attention.

"People who identify as being a gender that's not male or female. Someone who is non-binary might feel like a mix of genders, or like they have no gender at all."

She read out loud and shook her head, typing another question.



"Why do I feel less sexually attracted to my partner?", she pressed search and several results popped up. Most were saying asexual, she just got off Google and went inside. She wasn't going to crack her brain over this.

Mnqobi:Hey you are back.

He tries kissing her but she backs away.

Nelisa:Yeah I'm back.

Mnqobi:How was lunch with your mother?

Nelisa:It went well.

She looked at him, he was perfect and he loved her. So why was she failing so much to give out the same energy? She moved her eyes all over his body and sighed as nothing moved inside her.

"Maybe I am a freak. Where is this all feeling nothing coming from?", she asked herself internally.

Mnqobi:So babe I was thinking... We have been abstaining for weeks and I'm sure our sins are forgiven. So maybe we can try getting intimate. It's been long.

She nods, maybe this will get her back on track.

Nelisa:Okay.

Mnqobi:Really?

Nelisa:Yeah. Let's do it.

She drops her bag on the floor and push him against the wall as she kisses him. She closes her eyes, forcing herself to enjoy the moment. With the kiss getting heated, Mngqobi led her to their bedroom and placed her gently on the bed and got on top of her. He removed all her clothes and she remained naked. He took off his shoes and remained naked too. Nelisa gulped her saliva down staring at his dick. This was really happening, she was losing her virginity. Mngqobi inserts a finger inside her as he continues kissing her. She blinks her eyes and fakes a small moan. Mngqobi felt himself growing, and he rubbed himself on her pussy. He was so going to enjoy, and he was glad that he became patient with her. He wanted to make her first time feel good.. He groaned softly as he rubbed himself faster on her. Nelisa put her hands under her head and opened her legs wide.

Mngqobi:I'm sliding it in okay...

Nelisa:Okay...

He put in the head and allowed it to adjust properly on her baby's fruit. Nelisa winced a little, Mngqobi pushed it all in and she screamed feeling it almost reaching her abdomen.. Mngqobi held her waist and started to move, giving her sweet love.

Nelisa:Mngqobi I think you put it in my ribs...

She said with a low voice. He chuckled at her innocence.

Mnqobi:It's in the right place baby... Just relax okay.. I love you..

He continued moving on top of her, enjoying himself and he closed his eyes allowing the pleasure to kick in fully.

Nelisa sighed and pushed him off of her.

Mnqobi:What's wrong?

He asked worried.

Nelisa:I'm not feeling anything.

Mnqobi:Whaaat..?

He asked, his ego was bruised. Did he not do her right? Where did he go wrong? Did he not push all of it in? Is his dick small? Maybe it was his strokes, were they not full of passion and love!? What does she mean she does not feel anything?

Embarrassed, he picked up his clothes and walked out without saying anything.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 30

At Thabani's House.

She leans to him, she captures his lips into hers and he backs away clearing his throat.

Thabani:We can't.

Hlengiwe:Why not? I have been throwing hints for weeks that I'm interested in you.

Thabani:You're still young.

Hlengiwe:I know, but I want you.

He holds her hands.

Thabani:I will wait for you until you are done with school and old enough. I can't take advantage of you like this.

Hlengiwe:You are not taking advantage of me. Age doesn't matter to me, I don't care about it. I just know that I want you.

Thabani:We can't... Please understand... I won't lie, I feel something for you but I have to stop myself. I will wait.

Hlengiwe unbottons her shirt and take it off. Thabani shakes his head and stands up.

Thabani:Let me take you home.

She stands up and pin herself on him.

Hlengiwe:Please.... Can you break my virginity? I trust you...

Thabani:I can't do that sweetheart. Please put on your shirt and let me take you home.

Frustrated, she put back her shirt. She really thought this would work, but clearly he's not over his girlfriend...

Hlengiwe:But don't expect me to wait for you!

She stormed out of the room angrily.

.  
. .  
. .

NELISA

I wear my clothes and run after Mngqobi, I need to explain to him that came out wrong. I saw his facial expression, his ego must have been bruised. I found him on the backyard smoking. Since when does he smoke?

I clear my throat and his eyes lands to mine.

Nelisa:Can we talk? About what I said, I didn't mean that you did something wrong. I just didn't phrase it right. Mngqobi you

are a good guy and I love you so much. I just don't know what's going on with me..

He continued with his smoking and ignored me. I moved closer to him and tried to touch him and I saw him sighing annoyed.

Nelisa:Please talk to me..

Mnqobi:Imagine I want to give my wife the best first time ever, and then she pushes me and tells me that she doesn't feel anything. What does that sound like to you?

Nelisa:I know the way I said it was wrong, but please hear me out. Let's go inside and talk..

I begged him, he followed me and we led each other to the living room. We sat down and I held his hand.

Nelisa:I don't know how to say this so I'm just going to get straight to the point. For the past few weeks, I have been feeling different. The feeling has always been there my whole life, but I didn't dwell on it because I believed that prayer will fix everything.

Mnqobi:Feeling different how?

Nelisa:Like I don't belong anywhere, that there are two parts within me that comes out in different times. I'm sure you must have noticed my wardrobe change, I sometimes feel

comfortable when I'm wearing manly clothes. And sometimes I feel comfortable wearing women clothes..

Mnqobi:Nelisa what are you saying?

Nelisa:I don't want to identify with any gender, I'm uncomfortable..

Mnqobi:What!?

He asked confused, I was confused too..

Mnqobi:How are you only realizing this now?

Nelisa:Like I said, the feeling has always been there. But you know my family history Mnqobi, my parents were on my neck, I barely had time to figure myself out.

Mnqobi:This is my first time hearing that a person doesn't identify with any gender. So what are you going to be called if you don't have any gender?

Nelisa:I don't know... But that's not all...

I cleared my throat, it's best to tell him everything now.

Nelisa:I do not feel sexually attracted to you, or anyone else.

.

.

.

At Holy Word Church.

Jongi respectfully bows his head and takes off his hat.

Elder: You asked for a meeting. What do you want?

Jongi: My elders, first I want to apologize for my actions. Not only did they ruin my reputation, but they also tainted the church's integrity. I'm very sorry for what I did, and I assure you that I have broken things off with that woman. She's the one who came to me my elders, and I got tempted. But my eyes are opened now. It's the devil that wanted to disturb God's mission, you know me. I have been serving the church for years, don't allow this storm to take me away from the presence of the Lord.

Elder: We hear you Mkhwanazi, we were very disappointed when we learnt what you were up to. We need to pray for you, and bring you back to being the man of God. But I don't know if the congregation still trusts you.

.

.

.

Back at Mnqobi's House.

Mnqobi opens and closes his eyes twice.



Mnqobi:You don't what!?

Nelisa:I don't feel sexually attracted to anyone.

He laughs in disbelief.

Mnqobi:This is a joke, right? Nelisa what the fuck is wrong with you today!?

He shouts getting angry.

Mnqobi:\*Still shouting\* YOU WANT TO BREAK UP WITH ME, DON'T YOU!? THAT IS WHY YOU ARE MAKING UP STUPID STORIES!!! YOU ARE NOT SEXUALLY ATTRACTED MY FOOT!!! YOU WEREN'T SAYING THAT WHEN I WAS DEEP INSIDE YOUR P\*SSY WITH MY TONGUE!!

Nelisa:I don't know Mnqobi, I'm also confused because I don't understand what's going on with me. That was my first time being intimate with someone.

Mnqobi:When you know what you want, come back and talk to me ; because right now I don't understand shit you are saying.

He stood up and grabbed his keys. Nelisa stood up and followed him but he slammed the door to his car on his face and drove away.

.

.

.

At Capitec Bank.

"Next"

Advertisement

he moves towards the line and the lady offers a smile.

"How may we help you?"

Jongi: I have a problem with my online banking, I have been unable to do transactions.

"Okay, may I have your account number?"

He gives her his card and she punches the computer, assisting him. He waits, while the lady is doing her job.

"I don't know Ziningi, I have been trying to get money but nothing. I'm here at Capitec to withdraw the R50 mama sent me. I had to beg her for this R50, she did not even want to talk to me."

.....

"Okay sisi, I am coming back home. I will try to find us something to eat for today with this R50. I'll have to walk home since I don't have money . I'll go to look for another job tomorrow."

.....

"Ayyy Impilo inzima sisi, and ngathi I worse kuthina esingenalutho. Impilo umlabalaba(Life is hard sisi, and it's like it's worse for us who are poor. Life is hard)"

He looks back to the voice speaking, and it was a young woman speaking over the phone. Her voice sounded troubled. He watched as she withdrew her R50.

Jongi:Are you done?

He asks the lady that was assisting him.

" Yes, please give me the verification code."

He gives her the code and take his card. He thanks her and walks away, he looks for the young lady but she had disappeared from his sight. He sighed disappointed and walked to the parking lot.

.

.

.

At a club.

Mnqobi takes another shot and Sbani gives him another one.

Mnqobi:She says she's not sexually attracted to anyone! She does not want to be identified with any gender! What nonsense is that bafo!?

He shrugs his shoulders and laughs, until he cries...

Mnqobi:Brah I love that girl, but right now she's hurting me. My ego is bruised, she said she does not feel anything just when I was preparing to fuck her good!

Sbani:Eish hade brah!

He pats him and comfort him.

Mnqobi:Relationships are fucked up! You date a person and they wake up someday telling you that they are not feeling anything!

Sbani keeps quiet and pats his back. He did not know what to say to make him feel better.

.

.

.

PHILISWA

She locks the door and continues with her cooking. The mini freedom she had was satisfying, it was about time she put herself first above everything. She finishes cooking and dishes

up for herself. Her mind takes her to when her mother used to force her to eat, when she was alive. As a child, she didn't want to eat all the time. But you know parents, they can feed you the whole day, that's one of the things she liked about her mother. She always showed her love, in all aspects. She wishes they were still alive, maybe her life wouldn't be like this. They must be disappointed in her, wherever they are. That she slept with a married man. They didn't teach her that. But now, she will make sure they look down proudly at her.

.

.

.

At Beth's mom house.

Nkanyezi closes the door to the room Hlengiwe is using.

Nkanyezi:So he rejected you?

Hlengiwe:Yes. Can you believe it? He says I'm young.

Nkanyezi:But you are.

Hlengiwe:I know that moon.

Nkanyezi:Look Hle, maybe it's a good thing that it didn't happen. If the two of you are meant to be, then you will reunite when you are older. Being friends with him is no problem, but

being in a relationship is another thing. This guy is 33 years old, he has seen everything in life. You haven't went out to the world, you still need to explore, make mistakes, learn from them. If the two of you date, he will expect you to be matured like a 30 year old when you are just 18. So just relax babes, you will get your agent when you are older.

Hlengiwe:I just want to be with him.

Nkanyezi:\*Hugging her\* I know sthandwa sami... Now stop being sad like this. You look ugly.

She laughs.

Hlengiwe:Please, even Beyonce is no match to this flaming beauty of mine.

Nkanyezi laughs and hugs her tighter.

Nkanyezi:I love you stupid.

Hlengiwe:Love you too my moon.

.

.

.

Nelisa tries Mngqobi's number and it sends her to voice mail again. She throws the phone on the couch angrily. She just needs him to come back home so that they can talk.

Meanwhile at the club, Mnqobi is so sloshed by the VIP area and can barely even see. Sbani has went to the bathroom. He comes back and sees some girl kissing him, he chase her away and lifts up Mnqobi.

Sbani:I'm taking you home.

He blabbles and fall back to the couch..

Mnqobi:No.. Home...

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 31

The following day.

Beth:I need at least two deliveries. Business is doing great here.

"Yes mam".

She hangs up and ticks on her "to do" list.

She grabs the papers and stands up with her bag.

Beth:Fannie, I'm going to run a few errands. I'll be back soon.

Fannie:Okay Sis Beth..

She smiles and heads out, driving to Jongi's house. She arrives and gets out of the car, with the papers. She knocks on the door and wait for a few seconds. She hears footsteps dragging and the door opens. Jongi yawns and rubs his eyes , he was wearing his gown. He looked shocked yet happy at the same time to see Bethany. Maybe she had finally chosen to forgive him.

Beth:Hi, I'm not going to be long. I came to drop off these..

She throws the papers to him. He reads the first page and his smile disappears.

Jongi:What is this?



Beth: Since you don't want with the divorce papers, I took it upon myself to bring you mine. I just want a clean separation, you can keep your money and assets. I just want to remove any kind of association I have with you. Goodbye.

She walks away before he could even answer.

He gets inside with the papers and sit on the couch reading through them. His heart was filled with sadness, was his marriage really ending? He grabbed a pen that was by the table and his hand shivered as he signed the papers. It was really over.

.  
. .

At Nkanyezi's Home.

Precious: I know that you will pass my baby. You are so smart.

Nkanyezi: I hope so. I can't wait for January.

Precious: Then you will go to University.

Nkanyezi: By God's grace I hope so.

They smile at each other for a while. Precious looks at how happy she is. Telling her about Jongi is not a good idea. Some

secrets are just meant to never get out, and this was one of them.

.

.

.

Thabile:I didn't know I would find a friend in you. I have been so stressed with finding the perfect dress for my wedding, but I know you will do an amazing job.

Nelisa:I hope so, I have gathered all the materials and planning to start this weekend.

She looks at her and remembers what her mother said.

Nelisa:Can I ask you something?

Thabile:Sure...

Nelisa:Do you have any problem with the LGBTQ people?

Thabile:No, I just believe that people should be what they want to be, and not live their lives trying to meet society's expectations.

Nelisa:Share the same sentiments. Do you know anything about non-binary and asexuality?

Thabile:Who are you asking this for?

Nelisa:Just want to know.

Thabile:I do know a bit of it, I know that non-binary people prefer to not be labeled by the male or female gender. Others use the pronouns "They/Them", you can be straight and still be non-binary. Being non-binary doesn't mean you have to do things differently to prove you're non-binary. You can still dress like a woman or a man, it's not as complicated as people claim it to be. It's not like you are coming out or anything, you are just not identifying as the male or female gender. The world is evolving and people should catch up.

Nelisa:What about being asexual? I read that it means you are not sexually attracted to anyone.

Thabile:I don't have enough knowledge on that.

.  
. .

Philiswa drops off her application and heads out the building to get something to eat. She hopes and prays they reply to her, she's still going ahead with transferring to the University of Free State. She spots a friend she used to go to high school with, and wants to hide. But Ziningi had already seen her, she waves at her and comes to her.

Ziningi:Phili, I just knew it was you... It's been so long since I saw you. You're so beautiful.

Meeting old school mates is somehow awkward, everyone would have achieved so much and she hasn't done anything positive with her life.

Philiswa:Thank you.. You also look beautiful. What are you doing here?

Ziningi:Oh I was just job hunting, but have been unsuccessful.

Philiswa:I'm sorry, I'm sure something will come up.

Ziningi:What about you? How is life treating you?

Philiswa:Not so good either, but I was studying. Had to drop out because of finances, I was just putting my bursary applications today.

Ziningi:You have always been smart, they will approve you. I just wish I was at least smart, maybe I wouldn't be this much of a burden to my sister. You can see in her eyes that she's tired, but trying to be strong for my sake.

Philiswa:\*Smiling\* Let's get something to eat so we can catch up.

.

.

.

Mnqobi enters his house touching his head. It was pounding terribly, he doesn't know how many shots he had yesterday. He just kept on drinking and drinking. He charges his phone and opens it. He is met by a numerous missed calls from Nelisa. He calls her back.

Nelisa:Thank God. I was worried.

Mnqobi:I'm sorry for worrying you, I just wanted fresh air from what you told me yesterday.

Nelisa:I understand it's too much to handle, I'm also still confused because I don't understand. But can we talk when I come back home?

Mnqobi:Yeah, I will be waiting.

A moment of silence passes and he hangs up. He takes off his clothes and heads to the bathroom to take a shower..

.

.

.

Back at Thabile's house.

Nelisa put her phone down and sighs.

Nelisa:I don't know where this marriage is headed, I have no means of getting intimate with him or anyone. At first, when he used his tongue, the feeling was foreign and I kind of liked it. I even wanted the real thing, but we were not married back then so we had to control ourselves. But as time went by, I realized ukuthi no man, something is off. Even when he touched me, and romanced me, I used to stop him because I did not want it to go any further. I'm just turned off by every sexual step he tries, it's like my feelings turn off. Yesterday, I agreed for us to have sex because I thought this feeling would go away but boy I was wrong! I did feel some pain feeling the real thing getting inside me, but pleasure? I don't think so.

.

.

.

Later, in the evening.

Hlengiwe blocks and deletes Thabani's number. Minutes later, she receives a call from an unsaved number. She answers it.

Hlengiwe:Hello?

"Why are you blocking my number?"

Hlengiwe:How did you know? You know what? Don't even answer me.

Thabani:I thought we were cool, so why are you blocking me?

Hlengiwe:Because I don't want to hurt myself. You made it clear that you will not try anything with me, so I will get your number back when I'm 25 years old.

Thabani:Is that necessary?

Hlengiwe:Yes

Advertisement

you said you will wait. So I'm expecting you to wait. By 25 I will be more matured and I would have experienced the cruelty and fun of the world. But I'm not going to wait, you are the one waiting. And don't keep tabs on me.

Thabani:Hlengiwe...

Hlengiwe:Do not date Thabani, I don't know how you will do it but do not date. I want to find you fresh and single in 7 years to come.

Thabani:I will be 40.

Hlengiwe:Exactly, you are the one not wanting us to be in a relationship. So you have to wait Mr.

Thabani:Okay fine, I will wait. You found me single anyway so I don't mind.

Hlengiwe:Thank you. I love you...

Thabani:Hleh..

Hlengiwe:You don't have to say it back... See you in seven years....

She hangs up and close her eyes. Crazy how deeply in love she was with him, it wasn't even funny anymore. She sends a message to Nkanyezi.

'I told him to not date. I will see him in seven years. That's my future husband'

'Happy for you, he better not date or we will burn him.'- Nkanyezi.

'Said the number one coward' - Hlengiwe.

.

.

.

Nelisa has arrived home and they are seated on the couch with Mnqobi.

Nelisa:Again, I'm sorry about yesterday.

Mnqobi:I'm the sorry one, I shouldnt have walked out on you. But it was my first time hearing someone say they are not sexually attracted to anyone, and you hurt my feelings when



you said you didn't feel anything. So how will this work? We will be in a sex less marriage? And what do I call you?

Nelisa:One thing at a time, I'm still very much confused about all of this. Getting out of my parents' claws just made me realize that I did not know entirely who I was, because I spent 98% of my time tending to their demands. This is very new, and strange. I would like find some answers, and figure out who I am.

Mnqobi:You are breaking up with me, aren't you?

Nelisa:It's not a break up, I'm just asking for some time to figure myself out. I don't want to string you along, and end up lashing on you. I'm sure you noticed that our marriage hasn't been bubbly lately, we are always fighting and we rarely spend time as married couples.

Mnqobi:\*Nodding\* I hear you. I wish to support you in this journey but if you want me to step away, I will do so.

Nelisa:Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 32

SEVEN YEARS LATER.....

At the Airport, Hlengiwe waits anxiously, with her hands sweating. What if he doesn't show? What if he actually moved on? He promised her that he wouldn't, he wouldn't break his promise right? Her eyes wander everywhere and she watches as everyone meets with their loved ones. She feels someone patting her on her back and she turns back. She jumps screaming when she sees him. He hugs her and she can't help but shed tears.

Hlengiwe:I thought you weren't coming.

Thabani:I waited seven years for this moment, wouldn't miss it for the world.

She breaks from the hug and brings out his hand. She inspects his ring finger and smiles.

Hlengiwe:You didn't move on?

Thabani:I waited. Did you?

Hlengiwe:I couldn't bring myself to do it. I waited too.

Thabani:Let's go home.

She helps him with his bags and they walk to where she parked her car.

Thabani:\*Whistling\* Yessss! Look at what my baby is driving!!

Hlengiwe:\*Laughing\*Drama!!

She puts his bags on the boot and she hops on the passenger side, letting him drive.

Hlengiwe:So how was China?

Thabani:Very good, I was even starting to look like a Chinese.

Hlengiwe:I can even tell by your accent, did you learn the language?

Thabani:A few words.

.  
. .  
. . .

At Beth's house.

She walks outside with the juice, she hands it to her husband.

"Thank you my wife", he thanks her.

She smiles and join him on the bench. Getting remarried again at her old age was something that surprised her too, but she loves her husband. She also deserves to be happy, regardless of her age.

Blessing:When are my daughters visiting?

Beth:Hlengiwe is going to see her boyfriend, and Nelisa is probably at their house.

Blessing:How is Nelisa doing?

Beth:I'm proud of them, they are prospering in life. They opened another branch of their design company on the other side of Durban. They are going far.

Blessing:They love fashion, their work is amazing. The dress they made for you for our wedding day was out of this world. It's really amazing.

Beth:And they outdid themselves, I felt like royalty of some sort when I wore that dress.

Blessing:I'm really glad I found you, I can die in peace knowing that I had a taste of true love.

Beth:Don't talk like this. We are going to grow more old together.

.

.

.

Mnqobi gives the bowl of cereal to his daughter.

Isiphile:Thanks daddy.

She grabs the spoon and starts eating her cereal..

Isiphile:When is mommy coming back? I miss them.

Mnqobi:They will be back, the conference took longer than they expected.

A knock erupted from the door. He went to open and it was Sbani.

Mnqobi:Ta!

He entered.

Isiphile ran to him and hugged his leg.

Isiphile:Hi uncle Sbani..

He picked her up and played with her for a bit. He put her back down.

Mnqobi:Let's go to the living room.

They followed each other.

Sbani:The princess is growing up.

Mnqobi:You can say that again.

Sbani shakes his head and sits on the couch sighing.

Mnqobi:I know you, when you sigh like that. You want to say something.

Sbani:I'm just still confused about how the two of you had a baby. Didn't she..

Mnqobi looks at him with a reprimanding look.

Sbani:I'm sorry, I meant didn't they say they are asexual?

Mnqobi:We only had sex because they wanted a child. Asexual people do have sex for many reasons , and they are different.

Sbani:So you're willingly staying in a marriage without sex? I don't know how you do it.

Mnqobi:I love them.

Sbani:Until when? For seven years sbali, where even is she right now?

Mnqobi:Their pronouns are "They/Them".

Sbani:Ayy you know mina ukuthi I don't understand this binary what what.

Mnqobi:It's because you don't want to understand it.

Sbani:Maybe, I just think it's stupid. This is not it Mnqobi! You're the wife here, I don't know why you can't see it. Nelisa is never here, always attending conferences. She has turned the president of the LGBT community. Does she even still love you?

Mnqobi:They love me.

Sbani:They will find love on those never ending conferences.

He says sarcastically. Mngobi blinked his eyes, he was right. Staying in this marriage was hurting him. Nelisa is never home, they spend a day or two and then travel to attend conferences or campaigns. Them accepting their identity and sexuality changed everything. Nothing is the same anymore. They do not even know that their daughter is starting school tomorrow. He sighed sadly and shrugged his shoulders looking at Sbani.

Sbani:Just divorce her, look how thin you are because you are always stressed.

Mngobi:At least respect their pronouns dude!!!

Sbani:Whatever! I have already drawn them papers up for you. When you are ready to let go of this, come to me. I'm even thinking of taking you to a shrink, so they can bring your mind back. Because I don't know the person sitting across me right now. I told you way before you started dating this girl, that you won't fit. You are too soft and she takes advantage of that.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 33

A week later, At Thabani's House.

Hlengiwe rolls out of bed naked and smiles looking at Thabani. The wait was worth it. She goes to the kitchen and open the tap, getting water. She sips on it and notices that the windows are open, she closes them and go back to the bedroom. She gets in and he pulls her closer to him..

Thabani:I love you.

Hlengiwe:I love you too...

He kisses her forehead. Her phone rings and she takes it, it was Nkanyezi. She smiles before answering.

Hlengiwe:Babe?

Nkanyezi:I need all the details, start talking..

She laughs and gets out of bed, walking out.

Hlengiwe:He really came back a week ago. I've been at his house for a week now. Moon I am so happy, I feel like a teenager all over again.

Nkanyezi:Ahh I can imagine. Seven years is really long. You two are crazy, I can't believe you waited.

Hlengiwe:It was worth it..



Nkanyezi: Now you can finally be in love and stop bothering me..

Hlengiwe: \*Laughing\* I will bother you anytime of the day. When are you coming back? I miss you.

Nkanyezi: I'm coming back today, I'm driving as we speak. I need to speak to my mother first..

Hlengiwe: I can't wait to see you. I feel like you have abandoned me..

Nkanyezi: I have not abandoned you, my work requires me to travel. But I will see you today okay?

Hlengiwe: Okay.

Nkanyezi: Goodbye darling, love you.

Hlengiwe: Love you too.

She hangs up and go back to Thabani.

Thabani: Who was that?

Hlengiwe: It was Nkanyezi.

Thabani: You two are still friends?

Hlengiwe: Forever. So when are we going to The Developers? I miss that place.

Thabani: I can take you if you want, but I retired.

Hlengiwe:Why?

Thabani:I just feel like I have done enough, and I want to be with you now without my job getting in the way.

Hlengiwe:One last mission before we call it quits? You said I was young back then and you couldn't take me. I'm old now.

Thabani:\*Chuckles\* I know you won't let this go, so fine. You have really grown up hey, you just got more beautiful..

Hlengiwe:Thank you. I even have large beasts, not the plate I used to have when I was a teenager.

He doesn't even laughs and remove the braids from her face, he needed to look at her clearly. He has missed this face.

Thabani:So how has your family been?

Hlengiwe:\*Sighs\* It's really been a long 7 years. Mom got remarried, Nelisa is now called they and they don't have sex. Dad sadly passed away 3 years ago due to a heart attack.

Thabani:I'm sorry for your loss.

Hlengiwe:It's okay, his sins caught up with him. I am ashamed to even say that he was my father. The things we discovered that he did!

Thabani:So your sister is non-binary?

Hlengiwe:Yeah, that's what they call it.

He nods..

Thabani:I've seen people like that, and they are happy with their decisions of life. I'm a person who believes that, everyone should do what makes them happy. The world is changing so fast everyday, and I'm glad everyone is embracing their true selves. Unlike before, where you hid who you were from the world. I know a lot of people may have judged her and felt like they were being over a top, or claimed they do not "understand" it. I don't see the big deal honestly, they just don't want to be called male or female because it doesn't make them comfortable. So what's the issue? It's their life.

Hlengiwe:I know babe, but at first I was shocked. It was my first time hearing that, but I didn't judge her..... Okay maybe I did.

Thabani:Don't do that, don't be like those people who want to see only what they believe a person should live like. Non-binary people are everywhere around the world, people should educate themselves. They are not seeking attention or bored, it's who they are. It's really embarrassing when someone learns they(non-binary) use different pronouns and start saying some nasty words. It's the same stigma they have towards the LGBTQ community. Just let people do what they want.

.

.

.

Precious's House.

Nkanyezi steps out of the car and walk inside. She lets herself in and finds her mother staring at the TV. She stands up when she sees her daughter and hugs her for dear life.

Precious:You didn't tell me you were coming.

Precious:I wanted to surprise you.

Precious:I have missed you. I would have cooked you your favorite meal.

Nkanyezi:We can still cook it together.

Precious:Go and change then, I want you to tell me everything. Any boyfriends?

She blushes.

Nkanyezi:Maybe...

Precious:Who is he?

Nkanyezi:He is someone I work with, he's kind and loving. I will introduce you to him soon.

Precious:I can't wait to see my future son in law.

.

.

.

At Beth's

She is at the kitchen cooking, so that Blessing can eat to take his meds. His health isn't good now

Advertisement

and is at the blink of slipping away. He has shown her love at her old age, he respects her. And he has been hinting death so much lately, it scares her. She can't be a widow.

She hears a voice speaking and looks back thinking it was her husband, but she didn't see him. She continued speaking but the voice continued.

Beth:\*Shouting\* Baba are you speaking?

A wave of silence hit her.

She sighs and continues cooking, it must be the neighbors' children.

"You killed me!", The voice spoke like it was echoing in her head. She felt the back of her hair stand and she got shocked so much that she missed her breathing pattern.

"Who said that?", she whispered. She looked around hoping to see something, but nothing.

"You will pay... Everyone will pay..."

She gasped, starting to get scared. She has been having traumatizing dreams lately. She runs to the bedroom to check on Blessing and finds him sleeping. She sighs relieved and sits next to him.

Beth:Baba...

She shakes him up but hears no response..

She shook him again but she noticed that he was not moving, nor breathing.

Beth:\*Panicking\* No no no, you will not do this to me Blessing... Wake up...

She takes her phone and call the ambulance.

.

.

.

Hlengiwe:I feel like I haven't seen you in years.

Nkanyezi:I was here two weeks ago, but don't worry, the trips are over now. I'm back for good.

Hlengiwe:I would love that.

They break out from the hug, and sit down.

Nkanyezi:So how is the new love flame?

Hlengiwe:\*Smiling\* Beautiful, we haven't stayed away from each other since he came back. I missed him.

Nkanyezi:Does he know?

Hlengiwe's smile drops.

Hlengiwe:I will tell him.

Nkanyezi:Don't keep secrets from him, your relationship is still early.

Hlengiwe:I know, I will tell him..

Nkanyezi looks at her.

Nkanyezi:You didn't lie to him and said you were still a virgin right?

Hlengiwe looks down.

Nkanyezi:What was the reason for that?

Hlengiwe:Nka this guy waited for me, what will he say when he finds out that I let another man take my virginity, and on top of that I have a child!?

Nkanyezi:Maybe he would have understood, seven years is a long time. You should tell him now, I don't even know why you would lie about something like this.

Hlengiwe:I will tell him.

Nkanyezi:Thank you.

.  
. .  
.

Philiswa opens the door and throws her bags on the bed. Work was very tiring today. She laid for a few seconds catching her breath. She got distracted by her phone ringing. She took it and answered.

Philiswa:Babe?

Mazwi:Hey love, I'm going to be late tonight. Don't wait up.

Philiswa:Okay, Thank you for letting me know.

Mazwi:I love you, take care of my baby.

Philiswa:I love you too..

She smiles rubbing her belly, she hangs up.

At the hospital.

The doctor looks at Beth with a sad look. She almost collapsed, she knew what that look meant. It's the same look they had when Jongi was announced dead.

"I'm sorry, but he's gone."



Her tears just fell involuntarily, she runs away to the bathroom. She looks at herself in the mirror and splash some water in her face. She couldn't believe that she just lost her husband, not now. Her heart was in pieces and broken, she held on to the sink, she was feeling weak by the second.

She heard a baby crying, she wiped her face and wondered who could enter the toilets with a baby.

The baby's cry got worse.

She walked to one of the toilets where the cry was coming from.

Beth:Mam are you okay in there? Hello.

She knocked on the door but no one replied to her. She slowly opened the door, and to her surprise no one was inside. She frowned and opened all the doors, and there was no one. But the baby kept crying. She kneeled down and leaned against the wall as she realized something.

It was seven years ago, she thought it was over. Why now!? She didn't mean to do it, she was angry and reacted badly.

She brings her knees closer to her chest and cries.

Beth:I'm sorry... I'm sorry... I didn't mean to do it...

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 35

Two days later.

Mnqobi:Here...

Nelisa:Thank you.

They take a pen and sign. He swallows hard, it's even easy for them to sign. Was his marriage really over? Maybe they never loved him.

Mnqobi:You can see Isiphile anytime you want, but she will be my responsibility.

Nelisa:I don't care, please move out immediately because this is my house. Go with your daughter.

Mnqobi:Okay, we will be gone by the end of the day.

Nelisa:Thank you. I need to go, catch you some other time Bro.

They run out of the house.

"Bro?? ", he says in disbelief. He goes to the bedroom and takes a big suitcase, he starts packing everything that belongs to him. When he was done, he went to pack Isiphile's things too. They would stay with his parents for the time being, until he can arrange for them to leave the province. He wants a fresh start. He loads everything to his van and looks at the house one more

time, he sighs and gets inside the car and drives off to his parents' house.

He hoots when he's outside and his father comes out to open the gate for him.

He drives in, he parks and gets out.

Ndlela:Normally, it's a woman who comes home with all her bags when her marriage didn't work out, in this case it's you.

He hugs him and Mngqobi can't help but sob. He has wasted seven years of his life to someone who clearly doesn't care about him.

Ndlela:I'm sorry son.

Mngqobi:They did not even care dad, I'm so hurt.

Ndlela:It will be okay, some day you will look back at this day and you will feel nothing. Let's go inside. We will unpack the bags later.

They go inside and Ma'Bishop also stands up to hug her son.

Ma'Bishop:I'm sorry Mngqobi. Where is my granddaughter?

Mngqobi:Still at school, I will fetch her later. Is it okay if we stay here for a while?

Ndlela:Of course, this is still your home. You can stay as much as you want.

Mnqobi: Thank you, I thought you will chase me out.

Ma'Bishop: We wouldn't do that, sure we were rooting for you and Nelisa but if the two of you are no longer happy together then we cannot force you to stay together.

.

.

.

HLENGIWE

She takes a deep breath and hold his hand.

Hlengiwe: I need to tell you something.

Thabani: Okay, I'm listening.

Hlengiwe: When you were gone, I did some things.

Thabani: What things?

Hlengiwe: I was 22, had just finished my Diploma and went out to celebrate with my former course mates. I had a.... I had a one night stand, and later discovered that I was pregnant. My boy is three years old now, the father is not in the picture because I don't know him. I didn't know who he was, I lied to you and said I waited because a part of me was embarrassed that I gave my virginity to some guy I didn't know.

Thabani: I know...

Hlengiwe:You know what?

Thabani:What happened, I couldn't stay away. I was disappointed when I learnt what you had done, but I understood. You were young and the excitement got the better of you.

Hlengiwe:I asked you to not keep tabs on me!

Thabani:I had to check if you were always safe!!

Hlengiwe:So you're not mad?

Thabani:Why would I be mad about something that happened three years ago? I got hurt back then and healed. Where is the boy now?

Hlengiwe:With my grandmother.

Thabani:Do you want to find the father?

Hlengiwe:I don't know, he probably doesn't even remember what happened. It was dark that day

Advertisement

maybe he didn't even see me.

Thabani:You won't know until you try.

Hlengiwe:Okay we can try... I need to go back home. Mom is losing her mind.

Thabani: Maybe she's not taking the passing of her husband well.

Hlengiwe: I think it's more than that, but we will see. I will see you later...

Thabani: I love you.

He cups her chin and kisses her.

Hlengiwe: I love you too.

She steps out of his car and goes back inside. Nelisa had arrived too. They hug each other.

Hlengiwe: Hey sis.

Nelisa: Hey, look how big you are.

Hlengiwe: I have always been like this.

Nelisa: \*Laughing\* But not like this.

Hlengiwe: It must be the happiness then. Where is mom?

Nelisa: In her bedroom, she's not okay. This must be painful for her, I can't imagine losing your partner.

Hlengiwe: Yeah hey, where is Mngqobi? I thought you would come with him.

Nelisa: We might as well tell you now, we are divorcing.

Hlengiwe: Divorcing? Why?

Nelisa:It's just not working out.

Hlengiwe:Oh I'm sorry.

Nelisa:It's fine really, we were supposed to do this years ago.  
And besides, we are seeing someone else.

Hlengiwe:You were cheating?

Nelisa:\*Shrugs shoulders\* He was boring us.

Hlengiwe looks at them and shakes her head, she misses the Nelisa who used to treat people with respect. The Nelisa who was called "She", not this one.

Hlengiwe:I will go and check up on mom.

At Isiphile's house.

Mnqobi waits for his daughter and sees her running, he runs too meeting her halfway. He lifts her up and spins her in the air. She giggles and laughs.

Mnqobi:How was school?

Isiphile:It was fun, I got 5 stars.

Mnqobi:Really?

Isiphile:Yes.

Mnqobi:I will buy you ice-cream to celebrate.

They get inside the car, and he drives away. Along the way, she notices that they are taking a different route.

Isiphile:Are we not going home daddy?

Mnqobi:No, we are staying with grandma and grandpa for now. I will explain when we get there.

At Beth's bedroom.

Her mother locks the door after checking if there was no one watching.

Mom:Bethany what is going on?

Beth:\*Crying\* The child is haunting me mom. He's tormenting me. I can't sleep, I can't close my eyes, I can't eat, I can't drink water, I see him everywhere. He is driving me crazy.

Mom:But it's been seven years, why now?

Beth:I don't know. Karma never expires I guess.

Mom:You should go and see someone who deals with these kinds of things.

Beth:No! I am a Christian, I'm not seeing a traditional healer.

Mom:But you need help, otherwise this will drive you to committing suicide.

Beth:I only believe in God and Jesus. I will pray harder, God will never leave me.



Mom: Stop being stubborn for once and do as I'm telling you. Or better, confess what you did and ask for forgiveness from the child. Maybe things will be better..

Beth: I can't confess, I will go to jail. Mama I'm too old to go to jail. I won't survive in there.

Her mother sighed defeated.

Mom: So what do you want to do then? Because this will not end well.

Beth: I don't know, let me bury my husband first.

They hear a scream coming from outside the room. They jump out of bed and head out, following the scream. It was at the kitchen.

Beth: What's going on?

Nelisa was screaming painfully.

Nelisa: This flame just came out of nowhere and burnt our hand. Ahhhh.....

Everyone panicked, and tried to help. Beth's mom looked at Beth with a look that says, "You see?"

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 36

Hlengiwe pours cold water on Nelisa's hand.

Hlengiwe:Leave it out for a few minutes. I still don't understand where that flame came from.

Nelisa:It came out of nowhere.

Hlengiwe:Maybe this house is haunted. I told mom to not buy a house, but rather build it and she looked at me like I'm crazy.

Nelisa:\*Laughing\* The house is not haunted.

Hlengiwe:Then how do you explain what happened?

Nelisa:Don't know.

\*\*\*\*

At Bethany's Bedroom.

Mom:Bethany I'm too old to be worried like this. Tell the truth about what you did.

Beth:That flame had nothing to do with this. Someone must have been pulling a prank or something.

Mom:Keep on being ignorant like this, and someone will die. It's clear this child is a ghost, his soul never crossed over to the other side. Because he's not at peace, my child please tell the truth. It will set you free.

Beth: Mom please keep quiet, I'm trying to think.

Mom: If you don't tell the truth, then I will.

Beth: You will do no such thing!

She moved to her and stood by the door.

Mom: Get out of the way Bethany. What are you scared of? Your daughters will forgive you eventually when they learn what you did, you will go to prison and pay for your crimes.

Beth: No one can know my secret. No one!

Mom: Move out of the way Bethany.

Beth pushes her roughly and her mother falls down, getting hit on the head by the drawer. She rushes to her and turns her around. She notices that she was bleeding on her head.

"Why are you... Killing me my daughter?", she says faintly and closes her eyes. She feels her pulse and she was still alive.

Beth: You can't tell anyone about this. I'd rather die than confess.

She lifted her bleeding mother and pushed her inside the closet. She sneaked out and went to fetch a mop with the bucket. She locked the door and started cleaning the blood.

.

.

.

Isiphile:So I will never see mommy again?

Mnqobi:You will, but we are not living together now.

Isiphile:Okay...

He closes his eyes and looks at his daughter's facial expression. Nelisa didn't show any interest in their daughter.

He took his phone and typed a paragraph to Nelisa via Whatsapp.

'You know you are selfish Nelisa! You are the one who came up with the idea for us to have a child, but now you don't even care about that child. You are hurting our daughter, I don't care about us because you have shown that you never loved me. But I cross the line when it comes to my daughter, you better make up your mind fast, whether you want to be in her life or not.'- Mnqobi.

He waited for a few seconds and they replied.

' We will see our daughter when we get the time. Do not be like those parents who uses children to fight their wars. It's pathetic and embarrassing, not for me but for you. We will take her to school'-Nelisa.

'Don't act like I'm forcing you, if you don't come tomorrow, just know that you will never see her again' - Mnqobi.

He clicks his tongue and sends a message to Sbani.

'Can you get me someone? I need to fuck!' - Mngqobi.

'I already have someone on the line. I will give her your number' - Sbani.

.

.

.

At Nelisa's House.

The following day.

Their boyfriend puts his small suitcase on the floor and looks around complimenting the place.

Nelisa:So what do you think?

"It is amazing and big"

They sit on his lap.

Nelisa:We want to change my pronouns back to her/she.

"Why?"

Nelisa:We are tired of being bullied and mocked for using Them/They. Everyone looks at us like we are crazy.

"If you want to do that, then I will support you. But I don't think you should do something to please people"

Nelisa:What's the point anyway? No one respects our pronouns, they still call us "She" . Only the narrator calls us "They". Everyone just looks at us Weirdly and think we're craving for attention.

"I'm sorry baby"

Nelisa:Even you don't respect the pronoun.

"I will do better my love

Advertisement

I'm sorry"

Nelisa:Nah it's fine, continue calling us She it doesn't matter anymore for us. That's just how the world is, we've gotten used to it. People will judge you for choosing yourself. So congratulations world, you won!

.

.

.

Nkanyezi waits to be called in, and walks inside when they did so.

"You have 13 minutes", the warden told her.

She nodded and sat down, across the man she thought she'd never see again. Dumi scratches his hands and smiles.

Dumi:It's so good to see you my daughter.

Nkanyezi:How are you?

She felt sorry for him a bit. He didn't look anything like the man who raised her now..

Dumi:Hanging in there. I will be out soon.

Nkanyezi:Mom told me they extended your sentence. What did you do?

Dumi:Prison isn't a park Nkanyezi, you can get framed for something you didn't do here. And when you can't prove it, you take the blame. So yeah, it's fine.

Nkanyezi:But that's not fair.

Dumi:Life isn't fair. Anyway, how are you? You are so grown. I have missed out on so much from your life.

Nkanyezi:I'm fine, I graduated and got my Diploma. I'm now working for some corporate company, it's really going good.

Dumi:\*Sadly\* I missed your graduation.

Nkanyezi:I will send you pictures that I took that day.

He sighs and looks at her.

Dumi:I am sorry, for what I attempted to do those years ago. I regret it very badly, I don't know what had gotten into me.

Nkanyezi:Why did you do it? I have always wanted to know. I thought you were my father and you were supposed to protect me.

Dumi:I got so angry and hurt when I learnt that you were not my daughter..

Nkanyezi:I'm not your what!?

.

.

.

At Beth's room..

She opens the closet and looks at her mother. She was still alive, and she didn't know what to do. If she takes her to the hospital, she will wake up and tell everyone what she did. But if she just leaves her to die, her secret will be safe and everyone will move on. There's no such thing as the truth will set you free to her, she can't be arrested now. The truth won't set her free.

"Kill her.... That's what you do... You're a murderer"

Beth:Shut up! Just shut up! Get out of my head!!! Get out...

"Do it.. You know you want to do it!!"



Beth:I SAID SHUT UP!!!!

She takes a hammer underneath the bed and goes to the closet, she bashes her mother with it still shouting.

Beth:Get out of my head!!! Shut up!!!

She stops and gasps when she realizes what she has done. She drops the hammer on the floor and kneel next to her mother.

Beth:\*Crying\* No no no, I didn't mean to. I didn't....

"Murderer"

Beth:I said get out of my head!! Please get out of my head.

She sobs and hugs her legs.

Beth:Please leave me alone.

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 37

At the prison.

Nkanyezi:I'm not your daughter?

Dumi looks at her and wishes to take back his words. Nkanyezi kept quiet and it made sense as to why her mother was always jumpy whenever they talked about Dumi, she even lied and said they are not allowed to see him. She has been keeping this big of a secret from her? Who knows what else she is hiding? Maybe she's not even her real mother, maybe she found her on the streets when she was abandoned. What if she was using her to get some sort of insurance? She snaps her head as her thoughts lead her to stupid land.

Dumi:Eish, I thought your mother has already told you.

Nkanyezi:So it's true? You're not my father?

He slowly nods.

Nkanyezi:Who is my father?

Dumi:I think you should talk with your mother. I didn't know she hasn't told you. I have said enough.

He called out the warden demanding to be taken back.

Nkanyezi storms out of the prison driving straight home. She needed answers, and Precious was going to tell her everything!

She gets out of the car and spring inside, finding Precious by the kitchen.

She put her hands on her waist and looks at her suspiciously.

Nkanyezi:Who is my father!?

Precious turns to her frightened. How did she know? By her facial expression, it was clear that she knew.

Precious:Nkanyezi...

She tried to soften her up..

Nkanyezi:No I just need to know the truth. Who is my father? And don't think about lying to me, because I already know that Dumi is not my father. I went to see him today.

Precious:My star, let's talk about this.

Nkanyezi:No... Just tell me the truth mom. You have been hiding it for 25 years. You owe me this much.

Precious:I thought I was protecting you. He wasn't a good man..

Nkanyezi:I just need the name.

She took a deep breath and moved towards her.

Precious:It was Jongi Mkhwanazi , Hlengiwe's father.

Nkanyezi:No...

She said not believing. Not the man who was fathered her best friend.

Nkanyezi:Did he know?

Precious:Yes, he knew.

Nkanyezi:And his wife?

Precious:No one knew except the two of us, and my parents. Dumi found out by mistake.

Nkanyezi:When were you going to tell me? So you slept with a man old enough to be your father!? You always preach to me like you are holy, meanwhile you also have your sheninagans.

Precious:Let me explain to you my star.

Nkanyezi:I don't need to hear another lie coming from you. You lied to me! How can I trust you now!?

Precious:Nkanyezi..

Nkanyezi put her hand up in the air and left her in the room like that. Precious followed after her, calling her name. But she had locked herself in her room.

Precious:\*Knocking on the door\* Nkanyezi please open for me.. I'm sorry for hiding this from you.. I was scared... Please open for me..

Inside, Nkanyezi contemplates on whether to tell Hlengiwe about this new information. What if she hates her after this? They never hide anything from each other.

.

.

.

MNQOBI

Thando:You don't have to give me money.

Mnqobi:It's for your ride.

Thando:I'm not a prostitute, Sbani said you need to release stress and I helped out. No need to pay me..

Mnqobi:Do you usually do this?

Thando:Do what?

Mnqobi:Sleep with people you don't know?

Thando:Do YOU usually do this? Or is it acceptable because you are a man and I am a woman?

Mnqobi:I didn't mean it like that, I'm sorry. And no, I don't usually do this. I was just stressed out and I have been in a sex less marriage for seven years, so I needed a stress reliever.

Thando:You were in a sex less marriage?

Mnqobi:Yeah, it's a long story.

Thando:I have all the time in the world. Let's talk about it. You seem like a good guy, but you look so hurt.

.

.

.

Thabani:Don't you remember her?

He looks clearly at the picture.

"Not really"

Thabani:Are you reckless that much that you forget people you sleep with? I'm not going to help you jog your memory. You had sex with her and the two of you have a child, it's up to you whether you want to be in his life or not. She thinks you won't care about the fact that the two of you have a kid, but I hope you will prove her wrong.

"I have a child?"

Thabani:Here are my numbers, call me.

.

.

.

At Nelisa's House.

Sabelo walks to get water with his dick swinging side to side. He goes back to the bedroom and gives Nelisa.

Nelisa:Thank you..

Sabelo:I am hungry, why don't we order in?

Nelisa:Me too I'm famished, and don't have the strength to cook.

Sabelo:I wish the funeral was over, I miss being inside you.

Nelisa:Don't be naughty, I have to go back. Mom needs all the support, she's shattered.

.  
.br/>.

At night, Hlengiwe goes outside to answer her phone.

Hlengiwe:Babe?

Thabani:I found him.

Hlengiwe:So soon?

Thabani:Yes. Are you sure you want to see him?

Hlengiwe: Personally, I'm not interested. But he deserves to know about his son, it will be up to him if he wants to be in his life.

Thabani: Cool. So when am I seeing the little man?

Hlengiwe: He's here

he arrived today with grandpa. You can come and see him.

The day of the funeral.

They are preparing to lay Blessing in his final resting peace. Beth was slowly losing her mind, the voices in her mind were getting louder. Her mother's body is still in her closet, she always locks her room. She doesn't know what to do with her.

Hlengiwe and Nelisa help her wear the black scarf appropriately.

Hlengiwe: We are finally saying goodbye to him today. He was a good man, he filled the void of having a father.

Nelisa: A good man indeed, I will miss him.

Hlengiwe looks at her.



Nelisa:We are going back to "she" now.

Hlengiwe:Oh.

Beth:Please give me a moment girls, I need to go to our room.

Hlengiwe:Take all the time you need.

She stands up and walks out to the bedroom, she unlocks and gets inside. She locks it when she has gotten in. The smell was getting worse. She sprayed some air freshener and kept the windows closed.

Beth:I will do it... I will do it.. I will tell everyone what I did... Just please get out of my head... You have tortured me enough now... Please I'm sorry... I'm sorry for killing you....

"It's only the beginning.."

Beth:Ahhh...

She screams in agony and pulls out strands of her hair, the doek was long down.

She fixes herself and puts it back on.

She walks out of the room and locks it. A relative pass by and closes her nose.

"What is smelling so bad from your room?"

Beth:It must be coming from outside. Let's go.

She shoves the key in her breasts and pull her away.

The send off service would be held at home and then they will drive to the cemetery.

"Uhambe kahle Sondiya, Shenge", she is brought back by someone reading the obituary, umlando kamufi.

"And now we have Bethany Buthelezi, who will say a few words".

Beth stands up to the front and they give her the mic.

Beth:I greet you all in the name of Jesus. Most of you already know that Blessing was my husband, I'm very sad about his death. I loved him, and he loved me too. We had hopes that we would try to find ways to have a child some day, but that won't be happening now. Blessing was a good man, calm and kind.

She wipes her tears and continues sharing.

Beth:He never raised his voice to anyone, he always wanted to help everyone.

"Confess..."

She gasped and continued wiping her tears that were falling uncontrollably.

Beth:My last marriage ended after being together for 25 years. The man I was married to, cheated, with someone younger than my eldest daughter.

From the seats, Hlengiwe squirmed in her seat, why she was mentioning that? She looked around for her grandmother and wondered where she was.

Beth:He even made a child, out of anger I ended up doing something terrible.... I... I....

"Confess.."

Beth:I killed the child... I threw him over the bridge and didn't tell anyone about it. Only my mother knew, and she wanted to expose me. So I had to remove her too.

People gasped and whispered.

Nelisa and Hlengiwe looked at each other shocked and shrugged their shoulders.

Beth knelt down, and removed all her clothes.

Beth:I have told the truth... Now please leave me alone... Please get out of my head... I'm sorry... Please forgive me...

She stood up, naked as she was and ran out of the yard. People were already taking pictures with their phones out. They all ran after her. Hlengiwe and Nelisa in the front.

Beth ran until she reached the bridge, and underneath, a river was heavily flowing. There was an equal long distance from the bridge to the river.

Beth stood by the beam and cried as she hanged her hand over it. Nelisa reached her first and held her hand.

Nelisa: Mom... What are you doing?

Beth: I'm sorry my daughter... He is haunting me. He is in my head, he is haunting me.. I'm sorry... Please get out of my head...

Nelisa: \*Still holding her hand\* Let's go back home. People are watching, we will talk about this.

"Jump".

Without thinking twice, she jumped over the bridge, taking Nelisa with her. Hlengiwe screamed rushing to them but she was late, they have already fallen. The water was moving very fast and she didn't see their bodies.

"Someone call the police or the ambulance.. Somebody do something please"

## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 38

The rescue teams and police had arrived at the scene. Hlengiwe was laying on Thabani's chest.

Hlengiwe:I hope they find them, I can't lose both of them.

Thabani:They will find them, let's wait.

Hlengiwe:Why would Bethany take Nelisa with her? If she wanted to kill herself she should have done so and not drag Nelisa with her.

She moves from his chest when she sees the professionals coming back up with a sealed body bag, she rubs her face and holds on tight to Thabani.

Hlengiwe:Did you find them?

"We only found one body"

Hlengiwe:Is it my mother or my sister? And why are you covering her?

"She's gone..", one of the team member say.

They open the bag slowly and Hlengiwe staggers seeing her sister's face.

"She drowned and was in the water for too long , we couldn't get the water out of her body. We could not find the other person, but we will continue searching"

Hlengiwe:Not Nelisa....

She touches her cold face, Thabani holds her back and Nelisa is taken away. She sobs and hiccups on Thabani's arms, she was an orphan now. Her father died, her sister is dead and her mother is not found, there are also slim chances that she survived.

Hlengiwe:We need to go to the cemetery and continue laying Bab'Blessing to rest.

They walked back to the yard and people preceded to the cemetery, the mood was now dull and the weather had changed.

Blessing was buried in quiet and everyone went back to their respective homes, no one was going to eat anymore, not after what just happened. Bethany's mother's body was removed from the closet and taken to the mortuary. Relatives had left and only a few remained, to clean up and be there for Hlengiwe in this difficult time. Nkanyezi was still around, she went to Hlengiwe and gave her the hot cup of coffee. She looked tired

and needed to nap a little, so she will wake up with a fresh mind..

Nkanyezi:You're going to bed after this.

Hlengiwe:How can I sleep? My sister is dead and my mother is nowhere to be found.

Nkanyezi:I know, but you need to get some rest. They will find your mother.

Hlengiwe:\*Crying\* I'm all alone now. All alone.

"I'm here as your sister", Nkanyezi wished she could say that. This was a bad time to talk about that, and she was scared that she will maybe reject her.

Nkanyezi:I'm here for you.

"Hlengiwe there's a woman who says she's Philiswa here", one of the relatives peep her head in and announce.

Hlengiwe:She has probably seen the trending videos, I'm coming.

They both stood up and went to the living room, Philiswa was on her feet, and there was a man next to her. When she saw Hlengiwe, she sobbed and shook her head.

Philiswa:It's true, isn't it? She did it?

Hlengiwe:That's what she said, I also didn't know I swear.

Philiswa:She killed my baby... Where is she?

Hlengiwe:They haven't found her body... Nelisa is gone..

Philiswa:I'm sorry for your loss.

She nictated her eyes rapidly, stopping her tears from falling any longer. She had made peace with her son's, passing hearing the news that Beth was behind his demise was awaking the pain. How can she throw a new born over the bridge? She saw them going through the most because of their son, and she didn't say anything. She continued with her life like everything was normal. He was only a day old, and she just killed him with no remorse.

Hlengiwe:She said he was haunting her when she confessed, I don't know much but from the little I know, I think your son's spirit is not at peace, because his killer was never punished. I'm not going to defend my mother, I too am disappointed that she did this. So I don't know what we are supposed to do from now on.

Philiswa:A ceremony will do, to help him get to the other side, and forgive.

Hlengiwe:Okay... You can tell me what I'm supposed to do, because I'm the only one remaining now.

Philiswa:I will be in touch.



She walked out with her husband.

Mazwi:So how do you feel to know that it was her?

Philiswa:I have always suspected that it was her, but I had no proof and the police weren't much help either. She was breathing fire during that time, she even poisoned me to induce labor kanti she knew that she wanted to steal my baby. I hope they don't find her body rhaa!!

She clicks her tongue and they go back inside.

.  
. .  
.

Following days later, Nelisa was also buried.

Beth was nowhere to be found, and the rescue team had exhausted all resources into finding her. She was presumed dead at this point, there was no way she could still be alive.

Philiswa and her husband did the ceremony accordingly

Advertisement

with Hlengiwe present and asked Vuyo to not be an angry spirit, and cross over, rest in peace.

At Hlengiwe's house.

She places her son on the counter and feeds him the yoghurt. She was meeting with the man who made her pregnant, and she did not know how to feel. This was her one night stand and it led them to making a baby. She hopes he doesn't reject his son.

She hears a knock and tell Thabani to get in, she knows it's him. He enters and gets to them. He gives her a kiss on the cheek.

Thabani:How are you feeling today?

Hlengiwe:Better.

He sighed and held her waist, he was worried about her. She was taking everything that was happening all too well, she last cried at the funeral.

Thabani:Next week, I am taking you to a few therapy sessions.

Hlengiwe:Therapy? What for?

Thabani:So you will deal with your loss, I'm worried Hle. I once told you that you pretend like you are strong when you are actually soft, I know that you are hurting but you are acting strong because you think you are alone. I'm here for you.

She put her son down and told him to go and watch cartoons.

Hlengiwe: \*Sighs\* I'm just trying to act strong because everything is up to me now. I lost everyone and I'm the only one left.

Thabani: You don't have to pretend when you are with me.

He pulled her to him and she laid her head on his chest.

Thabani: This is your safe space mama.

Hlengiwe: Thank you for being here with me, I don't know what I would have done without you.

.  
.br/>.

At Mngobi's parents.

Isiphile: And then mamncane said she will buy me chocolate, and that I can call her mommy when I miss my mom.

Mngobi smiled listening to her speak like this, she was too matured for a six year old.

Isiphile: My teacher said people who go to heaven are in our....  
Hatts...

Mngobi: They are in your heart?

Isiphile: Yes..

Mnqobi:She was right. Your mother will always be in your heart.

He walked out to answer his phone, it was Thando.

Mnqobi:Hello?

Thando:Hey, want to go out? I'm bored.

Mnqobi:I don't know, I have to help my daughter with homework.

Thando:Come on, for only an hour.

Mnqobi:My daughter comes first, I'm sorry.

Thando:\*Sigh\* I understand, come with her then.

Mnqobi:T are you not hearing what I'm saying?

Thando:I heard you, but I'm sure she needs some fresh air. Come with her. I will send you the location. Toodles!

She hangs up and he smiles a little. She was very persuasive and he enjoyed her company a lot.

.  
. .  
.

Nkanyezi:I'm your sister... No that's bad.. My mother told me that your father was also my father, no that's too long.. Okay..

Okay... I'm just going to go in there and tell her.. If she rejects me it's fine I will heal.

She rehearses outside Hlengiwe's house. She finally gathers the strength to knock.

Thabani opens for her, her nervousness just goes high.

Nkanyezi:Hi... Is Hlengiwe here?

Thabani:Yeah... Come in....

He lets her in..

Thabani:She's in the bedroom, I'll call her for you. You can sit down..

She nods and sits down, holding on tightly to her handbag. Seconds later she heard feet dragging and it was her. She sat next to her and gave her a side hug.

Hlengiwe:You didn't tell me you were coming.

Nkanyezi:I didn't plan to.. How are you?

Hlengiwe:I'm fine, Samkelo's father was here.

Nkanyezi:Did he deny him?

Hlengiwe:He couldn't, Samkelo is a replica of him, but we will do DNA tests so that everyone can be at ease. But he was willing yena shame and respectful.

Nkanyezi:I'm glad... So I came here to tell you something...

Hlengiwe:Sure what is it?

Nkanyezi:Well you know how I went to see my father in jail weeks ago right?

Hlengiwe:Yes, you told me..

Nkanyezi:Well I found out something. I was asking him what led him to doing what he did years ago, and he told me that when he discovered that I wasn't his daughter he got angry. I stopped him and asked him what he meant by that, he looked surprised and asked me if my mother hadn't told me. He did not want to tell me anything more so I went home and confronted my mother, she told me who my real father was. It's your father, we are sisters.

Hlengiwe:Whoa what!?

Nkanyezi:We can do DNA tests if you don't believe me. I'm still shocked about this, I don't know how it happened.

Hlengiwe:We are sisters?

She asked feeling confused and excited at the same time. The bond she shared with Nkanyezi was questionable sometimes.

Hlengiwe:So did my dad and your mother cheat or what?

Nkanyezi: Mom says your father took advantage of her when she was 18, and denied the pregnancy. That's when she pinned it on Dumi.

Hlengiwe: Dad had scandals for days, so him being a pervert was a thing he did even long ago. I wonder how many more people he fathered out there.

They look at each other for a moment and Hlengiwe jumps into her, hugging her.

Hlengiwe: I'm only glad that you are my sister, but we've always been sisters, but now it's by blood. I can see that you are nervous, I'm still shocked and it will be a while until I can register all of this to my head. The person who did all of this is no longer here and I can't spend my time getting angry with the dead.

Nkanyezi: Thank you, I thought you will chase me out and shout.

Hlengiwe: I can still do it..

They laugh softly.

.

.

.

At a Coffee place.

Thando, Mnqobi and Isiphile are enjoying their coffee.

Thando:You're beautiful Isi.

Isiphile:Thank you.

She smiles and nods.

Mnqobi:Thank you for inviting us, we really needed to get out of the house.

He held her hand.

Mnqobi:I know you are looking for something more, but I can't give you that right now. I have too many issues that are unsolved.

Thando:\*Smiling\* I have patience.



## LIFE UNDER THE MASK CHAPTER 39

Weeks later.

@ Around Umkhomazi River.

Zanele and Mandisa rush to the person who was washed out from the river.

Zanele:What happened to her?

Mandisa:I don't know, check if she is still breathing.

Zanele:Barely, let's pump the water out.

Zanele did CPR and the woman coughed out water.

Mandisa:Thank God.

Zanele:Mam are you okay? We found you here... You look like you drowned. How are you still alive?

Mandisa:Stop asking her so many questions. Let's take her home.

They lift her up and walk home with her, they find their grandmother by the veranda and she asks them who the woman is.

Zanele:We don't know, she must have been washed away by the river.

"Take her inside. She looks tired"

They take her inside.

Zanele:She is cold. Bring blankets and open the fire so that this room will be warm.

Mandisa does as her sister is saying and they help the woman get warm and comfortable.

Zanele:So who are you?

She cleared her throat and closed her eyes, and opened them again.

"I don't know, I don't remember anything. I don't know how I got in the water"

Zanele and Mandisa look at each other and shrug their shoulders.

Mandisa:So you don't remember anything? Your family? Husband? Daughters?

"No, I don't. Thank you for helping me"

They nod and go out to their grandmother.

Zanele:She looks like a crazy woman, she doesn't remember anything.

Grandma:She does look disturbed a bit. We can't have her here. What if she steals everything?

Mandisa:Exactly, she looks dangerous. When she wakes up, she needs to go. We are too poor to feed another mouth.

.

.

.

@The Developers.

Hlengiwe takes off the blonde wig and the fake hips. She takes out a bottle with green liquid and gives it to Agent Zulu.

Hlengiwe:I believe this is the stuff.

Zulu:It is, good job!

Hlengiwe:So can I get a job here?

Thabani:No.

Zulu laughs. He missed Agent Ncobela, but he understood, every man needs to do what he must for his family.

Zulu:I hope this is not the last time I'm seeing you two.

Hlengiwe:Anytime you need us.

Thabani:Let's go. I'm sure Samkelo is awake now.

Hlengiwe:Okay.. Goodbye everyone

She shouts and they walk out of The Developers and head towards their car, Thabani drives them home.

Hlengiwe:Nkanyezi is coming for a sleepover tomorrow, please go somewhere.

Thabani:Why am I being chased out?

Hlengiwe:It's a girl's night and you will disturb us.

Thabani:Fine. I will go.

Hlengiwe:Thank you baby...

.

.

.

At Nkanyezi's home.

Nkanyezi:My house is almost done, I'm tired of living here with you.

Precious:\*Laughing\* Just say you want more freedom with your boyfriend.

Nkanyezi:Maybe... Things are getting serious between us.

Precious:I hope he marries you.

Nkanyezi:We are in no rush to get married. We are both still young, rushing to get married never ended well for anyone.

Precious:So how are things going on between you and Hlengiwe?

Nkanyezi:Better than ever, I'm going over for a sleepover tomorrow at her house. I still can't believe she's my sister... I'm also sorry for the way I shut you out without giving you a chance to explain.

Precious:It's okay, anyone would have behaved the same way after finding out such news.

Nkanyezi:I went to Mkhwanazi's grave yesterday, and I couldn't even talk. I wish he was still alive, I've never gotten his father's love.

Precious:He must be watching over you..

.  
.br/>.

At Mngqobi's house.

Thando is wearing an apron and setting up the table. Mngqobi comes to him and hugs her.

Mngqobi:Smells nice.

Thando:Please help me finish setting the table.

He helps her and they finish up.

Thando:I'm so scared to meet your parents.

Mnqobi:They are nice people. Don't worry.

The door bell rings and Thando's nerves skyrocket.

Mnqobi:Relax.

He goes to open for his parents.

Mnqobi:Mom, dad, come in..

He leads them to the living room and they look around the house complimenting it.

Ma'Bishop:This couch is so comfy.

Ndlela:The floor is so white, you can lick it.

Ma'Bishop:Baba don't embarrass me kude kangaka. So Mnqobi where is she?

Mnqobi:I will call her.

He goes to the kitchen and take Thando's hand who was so scared.

Mnqobi:Mom and dad, this is Thando the woman I'm planning to spend my future with, and T these are my parents.

Ma'Bishop:\*Smiling\* Nice to meet you my daughter.. You are beautiful, Mnqobi wasn't lying.

Thando:\*Blushing\* Thank you, nice to meet you too ma.

Ndlela:Ayy ndodana Uyena. It's nice to finally see you Thando.

She nods and smiles.

Ma'Bishop:I hope you also won't be having some gender identity issues and being a tomboy or something. Phela Mnqobi's dead wife was a man and a woman, and she was apparently not sexually attracted.. So I hope you are not like that Thando.

Mnqobi:Mom!!

Ma'Bishop:What? I'm telling the truth.

Thando awkwardly nodded. She didn't know Nelisa, but from what she's heard, she's concluded that she wasn't a nice person.

Thando:We can go that side, I cooked.

Ma'Bishop:She can cook. A wife material!

Late at night.

Hlengiwe puts down her phone and clicks her tongue.

Thabani:What is it?

Hlengiwe:That was Nelisa's boyfriend, he was telling me that they are repossesing the house, I don't know what he wants me to do with that. Nelisa left everything for their daughter, I don't have a say with their monies.

Thabani:Doesn't he have his house?

Hlengiwe:I don't know.. Let's stop talking about him. I have better things in mind.

She smiles naughlity and gets on top of him. She slides it in and hiss in pleasure, she would never get used to it.

Thabani grabs her butt and helps her as she bounces on top of him.

Thabani:That's it right there baby....

Back at Zanele and Mandisa's home.

The woman wakes up and stretches her arms. She goes outside and find them sitting on the chairs and enjoying the shade.

Zanele:You have woken up.

"Yes"

She sees a baby at Mandisa's lap and chuckles nervously. Mandisa holds her baby tightly, she wasn't trusting this woman. She looked to shady. The baby giggled in Mandisa's lap and clapped hands.



The woman felt her body getting itchy.

Zanele:Ngishilo ngathi zithi mzala la(I told you she was crazy).

She whispers.

Mandisa:Are you okay?

She doesn't answer but runs out of the yard and get hit by a truck that was spiraling out of control. Zanele and Mandisa screamed standing up and rushing to the scene.

Zanele:Nkosi yami! (MY God!)

The truck driver finally managed to get the truck to stop, and got out. He ran away, on foot.

Mandisa:Nja ndini!!! (Bloody dog!!!)

She shouted at him.

Zanele closes her eyes seeing the state thbe unknown woman was in.

Zanele:She's dead.

The lunch was going well and Mnqobi was glad that his parents liked Thando, it made things easier because Isiphile was also fond of her.

Philiswa holds her baby boy close to her chest and falls deep to his sight.

Philiswa:He's perfect.

Mazwi:And more.

Thabani brushes Hlengiwe's arms and feels even more in love with her. This was the woman he had waited for, for a whole seven years. It felt so good, and he wished that it would last forever.

Thabani:Ngiyakuthanda yezwa(I love you).

Hlengiwe:Ngiyakuthanda nami(I love you too).

The audience starts clearing out of the cinema as the movie ends.

Elizabeth:That ended too soon. Oh gosh, I'm so emotional.

Her husband, Menzi, laughs and helps her stands up. They walk out of the movie theater.

Elizabeth:Beth deserved it though, she was so evil.

Menzi:It was just a movie.

Elizabeth:It wasn't just a movie, I heard it's based on a true story.

Menzi:I liked Nelisa in all the characters. She/They were misunderstood so much.

Elizabeth:True, but my favorite was Hlengiwe. The girl spoke her mind. The movie had lessons, I liked it.

She rubs her big belly. She was due anytime, and she was ready to meet her daughter.

.....**THE END**.....

Thank you guys for downloading this book from my site please keep visiting <https://novelsguru.com/> for supporting me and also don't forget to share it with your friends. Dear Friends please download these books direct from <https://novelsguru.com/> bookmark this site for latest African books, and also supporting me Thanks.

For daily latest books please visit <https://novelsguru.com/>

And also visit my Facebook page, and like and share it

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/3345453369055623>