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ONE

Swazi

Tears are harshly flowing on my miserable face; Tracy holds me even tighter. Reassuring me that she is here, with me. I wish it was enough to give me the courage to face it all, to push harder but Deep within me I know, I am crushed..

“everything will be okay Swazi”

She's been telling me this, but the saddest thing is I see no light at the end of the tunnel. I'm ripped, I'm drowning, it's as if someone is unmercifully slitting my bleeding heart into tiny million pieces and I can't help but feel every single pain because I'm powerless.

“Uber is here”

She whispers in my ear, I draw in a long breath and let go. My first move is on the box Infront of me..

“No! don’t bother, I’ll pick up everything”

I nod my head. Opening the backseat of the car, its locked

“HEY!!!! OPEN UP”

I yell loudly hitting the window, instantly they unlocked.

I get in, throw my head on the car seat then let them all out again. It wasn’t me I swear, yes Fikani and I have been having issues in our three years of marriage but a part of me still believed that we would one day conquer them. who would believe me anyway? Even my own mother didn’t.

I don’t know, I don’t know if I’ll ever walk in that huge building ever again. Five years ago I had biggest dreams when I first walked in, a warm proud smile was plastered all over my face because I knew

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I knew that my dream of becoming the best chartered accountant were about to come true. After busting my as* off in Varsity, securing a brighter future for myself never did I think one day I’d watch it crumble Infront of my eyes...

The car starts moving, the bold letters written ' KK. Jama Logistics' slowly vanishing behind me leaving my spirit shattered. Reality hits me hard like a hot unforeseen slap, no one sees me as a qualified chartered accountant anymore . All they see is a scorned bitter wife who tried to kill her husband because she wanted a second wife.. no one wants my side of the story, no one cares to give me a chance, to listen to me . A loud sob escapes my mouth, this isnt what I prayed for Lord, this is not my life please make it all stop!!

I'm woken up by someone softly patting my back. My eyes opens and landed on downturned deep eyes staring at me..

"you are home..."

His scratchy voice says, I get out of the car while stretching my stiffed muscles. My four full boxes are in front of me, I wish I could just leave them all out here but I cant.

"I'll help"

He is still here, I follow like a lost puppy as he carries two of them as if they are nothing.

After a while he is gone, leaving me at the door with my four boxes, a key in my hand and an empty beautiful home.

I unlock the door but stand still astonished of what stares
infront of me..

My bags are all packed, they are all squashed at the corner..

“mam!”

I yell starrled of the sudden voice behind me

“this is detective Beth, you are under arrest for the murder of
Fikani Mthembu, you have the right to remain silent. Anything
you say or do can be used against you in court. You have the
right to”

Darknesss! Nothing but darkness falls upon me..

“my husband is not dead! He is at the hospital when did he
die... when!!! He was alive just.. ..”

“mam! Please!”

TWO

Swazi

Its biting cold, its freezing in this deserted dungeon of a cell and I have only a simple long-sleeved and jeans on my body. I've been listening to every sound, the ringing cell phones along the passage, the curses of those angry folks who've been thrown in here like me, the police singing, shouting and laughing. The Whole night I've heard it all, the birds chanting uniformly and dogs barking at a far distance. I couldn't sleep, was just shaking and crying all at once wishing that it was all just a nightmare.

Our love story was sweet and short, Fikani and I. 2017 March 06, the day we first bumped onto each other in the passage, it was my second week at work and we just hit it off, who wouldn't fall in love with the youngest, handsome CEO of KK .Jama Logistics anyway, everyone envied me at work and I couldn't be happier. Being in love for two years then tied the knot in March 2019, the happiest day of my life. Never did I foresee that this would be the end of our love story, with him beyond the veil and me deep inside the long steel doors.

All was sweet and beautiful until he allowed his family to meddle in our marriage. At first it was as simple as dissing my clothing style. 'a good wife never wears pants; a good wife covers her head with a doek not weaves' his mother would say. It expanded to how I dished up his food, how I handled myself during dinner and how I cooked. Not even once did he defended me, his words were " they are your family now, this is how they are so just get used to them and I let them, I let them say whatever they wanted in the name of family. Being the only child who's lived her whole life with just my mother who is also a hard worker I accepted it all. It went on and on and before I knew it I was under a pressure of bearing children for the Mthembus.

When a year ended after our marriage with no sign of pregnancy whispers started to grow in corners of the house, they extended to workplace, three years later no one whispered anymore. The sour words would be thrown at me with no one defending me, I've been called a barren, a killer who aborts children, a witch, a gold digger and all in the name of family I bared it all but what did I get in return, nothing but betrayal and misery.

Of course I lost it when he broke the news about a second pregnant wife, what did that mean for me. Little did I know that in the midst of all the drama Fikani would get shot and the blame would be shifted on me, the poor barren wife..

Hard footsteps hit my ears, in less than a minute a woman in her early thirties maybe approach my cell with a smile on her face, I keep my composure while rubbing my face

“Swazelihle, Mrs Mthembu. The husband killer”

She says as she leans against the steel door, it's that detective who arrested me yesterday without giving me a chance. The smug look on her face makes me realise that she has already declared me guilty. What happened to innocent until proven guilty?

“you look mmm what this word that you rich people use, you look incredible!”

She laughs tapping her hands on the door, Tears burn my eyes instantly. What kind of human being finds humour in another human's pain. This world is surely coming to an end

“I never killed my husband detective I swear”

I say, my voice sounding so rough

“you people are annoying sometimes. A murder weapon was found in your house with your fingerprints. The night of the shooting you were not at your house..

“I was at work! You can even search the CCTV footage”

she gives me a long angry glare

“first lesson, do not interrupt me when I’m talking I’m not your friend. Secondly we’ve checked that CCTV and you Mrs aren’t there”

My knees weaken as I feel my heart sinking

“someone is setting me up !!”

I yell at her, she just laughs at me

“you know its easy for you to commit crime but when consequences come knocking you just cry conspiracy theories. Its annoying really”

I stare at her , hoping that maybe she can see through my eyes that I know nothing

“follow me, you have a visitor”

I stand up immediately.

The steel doors are opened for me and I follow after her looking like a wet chicken..

“Tracy”

I break down completely, she hugs me tightly

“Hey NO touching!”

we let go, that detective hates me, all because I’m a murder suspect

“how are you though”

She asks when we are seated, I shrug my shoulders while wiping the tears furiously.

My heart is breaking, I don’t know which one breaks me even more, the thought of losing my three-year husband to death or the betrayal I’ve subjected to

“here, eats something”

She hands me a bottle of cold drink and a plastic bag.

I thank her and start digging in, it’s a beef stew and pap.

I only notice when I’m done eating that there is also a man seating next to her

“now that we are full, this is Siyabonga Mbatha, he is a lawyer and he will get you out of here”

I shouldn’t be having anymore tears to shed at this point but I can’t help it

“oh, Tracy you I don’t know what to say. Who told you that I was arrested?”

“news travel faster, don’t forget that you are the wife of a CEO”

I nod..

“I take it you are the client..”

He says while extending his hand for a shake..

“I will get you out of here I promise but for starters what I need is R100 000”

I gasp loudly

“let me finish, it’s a once off payment covers all the case expenses, that also include the bail fee which might be tomorrow if we manage to wrap everything up here”

I sigh loudly

“don’t tell me you don’t have the money Swazi; this is by far the cheapest lawyer. don’t forget murder is a serious offence”

She is right, my worry is that this will finish all my savings. But then what the point if I won’t be there to spend the money, id rather spend it on fighting for my freedom

“I have the money, but the problem is how do I withdraw that sum of money without being present..”

The bank wouldn’t approve

“don’t worry about that, just give the lawyer your banking details and he will take care of the rest”

That’s simple

“oh okay then, when can I get out of this hellhole”

I ask

“for now, lets discuss this case of yours, then we can discuss everything else thereafter”

I nod

“I’ll give you guys some privacy, so I’ll be outside”

Tracy says then stands up, but quickly sits down

“hey, what’s wrong?”

Siyabonga instantly ask

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panic visible on his voice

“ just feeling a bit dizzy...”

“did you eat this morning...?”

He quickly asks

“yes, maybe its just this whole thing. It stresses me out”

She responds, sounding really stressed; I'm touched. Out of everyone, my friends, my mother she has been the only one supporting me. From the Personal assistant to being the friend

"Tracy don't worry too much; I will get out of here..."

I wish I believed these words but..

"be good and be strong okay, God will never forsake you and I'm here shall you need anything."

She squeezes my hand then leaves the room

"now tell me what exactly happened?"

a heavy sigh escapes my mouth

"last week on Friday Fikani told me that he was taking a second wife who was already pregnant, lost it and even tried to burn him with boiling water but I was just angry"

I stare at him, searching for judgemental eyes but nothing

"go On"

He says

"since that day I just stopped coming at work at all afraid of what people would say. But the day before yesterday I went to work and decided to take another three hours because the workload was heavy. it was around eight in the evening when I received a call that my husband has been shot at home and was

rushed to the hospital. I hurried to the hospital but then his family was there, and they denied me from seeing him, they said I'm the one who... I'm the.."

My chest tightens as it all replays in my head

"take your time.."

I breath out then regain my composure

"they said that ah.. that I tried to kill their son all because he has finally found a woman to carry him a child.. I thought they were bluffing but they were not. It happened so fast, I was suspended from work the following day and as I returned home the certain detective arrested me for murder...

By the time I'm done my face is wet

"So, these are just allegations, for all we know the killer might be out there planning the next move"

My mind goes blank as I think of Fikani lying cold in mortuary,
He cannot die!

"I didn't even know Fikani died, I mean when? How?"

Tears chock my voice, it cuts even deeper because I still love him

“don’t worry, we will get to the bottom of this. As of now I’m applying for bail hearing, this case is as good as dead. We will squash it before it even turns into something big..”

He hands me the tissue and I wipe the uncontrollable tears on my face and sniff.

I feel hope slowly creeping in...

“thank you bhut Siyabonga. I really needed to hear these words...”

He smiles

“don’t mention it, just doing my job. ..”

He gives me a long unsettling look

“what, did I say something wrong?”

I ask

“is there something else, something that you haven’t told me?”

I chortle in disbelief

“what do you mean exactly? You think I killed him too?”

“No! I didn’t mean it like that. what I’m trying to say is that you must tell me the whole truth. Including anyone who might have wanted to kill your husband. Someone we can use”

I promised Fikani I wouldn’t say

“Swazi!”

Oh flip! He is not here is he!

“well, there was this other client. I once noticed insane zeros on his finances then I told my husband I called the client. Later that day I found that client pointing a gun at him. and I was instructed to forget about it all and I did”

He doesn't look surprised

“when was this?”

He asks

“a month ago, I think”

“this is conspiracy and whoever behind it made sure to make you look guilty. Anyway, now I need the banking details so that we can just wrap up anything to do with fees and face this case head on..”

I tell him where to find my essential documents and my banking details..

“okay, I should take my leave now so that I can start preparing. The bail hearing might be tomorrow if we are lucky”

He gives me a card with his contact details then leaves. A hide it in between my breast and stand up heading back to my temporary hell feeling a bit better..

God hasn't abandoned me after all

Nelile

Ever since that curse of a child was brought into my home nothing was ever the same. She brought nothing but bad luck!

"I'm telling you Thoko, that child killed her husband."

"aw kod Nelly I think you are a bit harsh, what if they set her up"

I laugh

"really Thoko you think this is a movie neh"

She shakes her head disapproving..

"Swazi has always been a warm, well behaved child and you know it. No matter how bad you'd treat her she will always smile. There is no killing bone in her heart, I just know it"

I feel myself getting hot

“that girl is bad news! Why would they accuse her of killing out of everyone in this entire world. what’s special about her!”

“why do you hate her so much?”

she asks taking a sip of her coffee, I click my tongue. That child was brought as an infant after her mother died while birthing her, its high time I cut ties with her and tell her the whole truth! I can’t be associated with destroyers! Everything she touch just turns into death!

“she destroyed my marriage, as if that wasn’t enough her mother died leaving her with me. in less that a year since she was born my husband and my only son died in a car accident, she is nothing but a curse! I hate her”

My life was perfect until she resurfaced, yes I did everything for her, from taking her to school. Best schools and clothing her, raising her because a part of me still has a soft spot for her, she is Afterall the only remaining reminder of a man I used to love. But then after everything, this is what she does to me!

“the child is innocent nelly, why do you blame her for the wrong doings of her parents who are no more..”

“are you her spoke person, because of you are then just leave my house, don’t forget to leave my coffee and my cake ...!”

After a long darkest night, it's another day again. The second day in a dungeon, today I'm hoping that Siyabonga will bring good news. After everything I've been through I deserve to have at least an inch of hope. God knows if it wasn't for Tracy I would have lost my mind.

It is no surprise that the Mthembu family hates me, but my mother. I'm the only child she has but she's never treated me fairly. Sometimes I wonder if she regrets giving birth to me, maybe if my father was alive things would be different, but he died before I even turned one..

I've been restless since morning, turning my neck until it started to hurt, listening to every footstep hoping that maybe there might be a visitor but nothing. As the day ended so did my hopes of ever getting out of here.

I've been wrapped up like a ball in a corner, rocking back and forth with tears streaming down my face. I did everything right, I was a respectful child, I graduated at the age of 23, got married at 25 then became the best Accountant ever! What went wrong?

There is suddenly a loud commotion growing with each second in the hallway, another hard footstep nearing! Slowly I sit up while quickly wiping tears in my eyes.. it's another policeman, being followed by a lady.

The doors are unlocked, and she is pushed in, on the same cell as me and I gulf in fear.

She looks enraged, the tattoo of a knife on her left cheek doesn't make things any easier for me.

She is furiously chewing a gum; I feel sorry for that gum because wow! it needs someone to bail it out just like me..

"Hi.."

I reluctantly say but all I get is a mean glare that has me shaking in my boots

I'm back on my corner again, not crying anymore but stealing glances at this scary woman in another corner. Ever since she came in, she's been leaning against the wall, arms crossed on her chest, legs crossed together and a nasty look glued onto me. With each hard chew I feel like I'm the one being abused on that mouth! It's a nightmare. now I'm wondering if what they say about prison is true or not, but this is a holding cell what can she possible achieve by hurting me...

I'm in deep sleep when its suddenly too hard to breath,
opening my mouth my voice doesn't come out. I feel trapped..
my eyes shoot open, there is a figure on top of me strangling
the life out of me

“ p..please...”

I cry out while trying to fight but to avail. The hard knee pinning
me down makes things even more hard.. I can't breath! My
head is spinning and I'm getting weak! my body is giving in, if
this is my end then God please accept my soul.....

3

The beeping sound wakes me up from a deep slumber. I feel trapped, my whole body paralysed; I can't seem to move. My eyes are so heavy as I try to open them, I blink a couple of times then they shoot open capturing my surroundings. As exhausted as I feel, I can tell that this is a hospital judging by the other beds not so far from me with sleeping patients. Tears start forming on my eyes as what conspired before I blacked out replays in my head, people are cruel, how can she just attack me for no apparent reason. It's just doesn't make sense to me..I suddenly cough and moan in pain, my whole body instantly writhes in extreme pain

“you're awake”

A scratchy voice suddenly says, I'm met with a tall, brown skinned male figure wearing a white coat, stethoscope hanging around his neck

“what's wrong? Are you in pain” he asks, his cold, strong hands already running all over my face. He is the doctor he should be the one telling me what's wrong

“water..” I whisper, the pain in my burning throat is unbearable. My rough voice is evident enough of what I've been through. He helps me drink and our eyes meet. I might be in a complicated situation, but I swear I've seen this face

before. Those deep downturned sleepy eyes staring deep in my eyes makes me feel uneasy, his stare is just not warm, its dry and cold..

“you’re going to be okay Swazelihle” he gently says brushing my cheeks, His scratchy yet a bit warm voice doesn’t match his glare. why is he so nice? Maybe it’s his job to be nice to patients.

“which hospital is this?”

I ask

“Eshowe hospital, from what I’ve been told you were brought in from Eshowe police station, in the wee hours of the morning unconscious. The doctor will come and check up on you any second”

“aren’t you the doctor?”

I quickly ask

“I am”

He doesn’t give me more explanation as I expected.

“How long have I been out?”

I ask again, he checks his wristwatch

“about 10 hours, since its quarter to two..”

“Doctor Zulu, your favourite patient is finally awake Thank God!”

I turn my eyes at the direction of the voice, it’s a beautiful young woman.

“I’ll see you later”

He says staring at me, I keep quite

“ I said I will see you later”

He says, a bit bold

“okay” I respond, reluctantly and he turns to the doctor who just walked in

“treat her well MaNzama”

And he leaves me even more confused

“he is strange isn’t he”

She says, I just nod

“anyway, let’s forget about him. how are you feeling”

She is already inspecting my body, touching my face, my chest and my tummy and I flinch

“in pain I guess”

She says again

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I nodded

She is now using a stethoscope

“breath in, out”

I do as instructed. When she is done she gives me a long-concerned look

“what happened exactly?”

I narrate what I remember..

“where were the police when all that happened, how can this happen in the only place that’s supposed to be safe? You are not going back anytime soon! That Police can guard that door for a month if he wants to, I don’t care but what I will not allow is someone to hurt a vulnerable woman while she was pregnant!”

She is so worked up, Wait

“I’m not pregnant”

I say

She sighs

“yes, you were. Unfortunately, you lost the baby. I’m sorry”

What!

“What do you mean baby?”

My heart is suddenly pumping hard, it can't be true

“you were four to five weeks pregnant and...”

My vision becomes blurry and its blank!

Waking up my head just pound even harder and I moan in pain

“Swazelihle” a scratchy voice suddenly booms

Opening my eyes I quickly close them due to light hurting my eyes. After a short while they shoot open meeting him again

“you gave me such a fright”

He has a frown on his face and I can't tell whether its anger or fear..

“I'm sorry about what happened”

He says, my heart sinks instantly, I've always wanted a child of my own, I've been praying for that for a long while and now that I've finally conceived this happens! God never loved me

“stop crying. Please”

His cold hands are wiping tears on my face, why is he so generous..

After a while I've calmed down.

“eat something, I’m sure you’re hungry”

He suddenly says, taking a plate of food on the side cupboard next to my bed..

“I’m not hungry...”

He helps me sit up instead, take out the foil then try to feed me, but I keep my mouth shut

“Swazelihle, open this tiny mouth of yours. you can’t take medication on empty stomach”

Why do I feel like he is telling me rather than begging? I slowly open and yes he feeds me. this food is really great, they serve such good food in here I didn’t know!

I’ve been eating for a while when this uneasy feeling grows in my stomach, looking up his eyes are just glued onto me. I stare at him hoping that he will back down, but he doesn’t. I give in and look away..

After few spoons, I drink pills. He suddenly stands before me ready to go I assume, I’m sure it passed his knock off time because I can tell that its already dark outside

“be good, I’m leaving now”

“why?”

I blurt out before I can even hold myself..

He looks a bit surprised..

“you want me to stay?”

I quickly shake my head; nod then shake it again. A ghost smile forms on his lips, but it fades quickly. He brings the chair closer and sit, then does what he is best at, stares at me

“I’m scared”

I say, which is true

“of what?”

“everything. I’m scared of going back to jail.. of being here and feeling so lonely. Can you believe that I’m being charged of the murder I didn’t commit? I mean why would I kill my own husband! For what exactly. I can’t believe there was a soul growing inside me and I didn’t even feel anything! And to think that after three years of trying for a baby he just had to be the reason why I lost my baby before I even knew that i... ”

I sigh when I realise I’ve said too much

“I’m sorry you don’t need to hear my sob stories...”

“says who?”

He ask deeply staring at me, his eyes are sleepy as if he just woke from a deep slumber

“I ... mm”

I stutter

“go on, I’m still listening”

he does look familiar though,

“don’t you have a family to go back to, I’m sure they are worried sick about you”

I feel a bit better with someone to talk to but I’m being selfish right now. I don’t even know this doctor

“that’s not your concern”

I keep my pie hole shut..

4

Swazi

I'm breaking silently, losing a child is the vilest thing that you can't even wish for your worst enemy. It's like someone stealing a part of you that you can never get back. The pain I'm feeling is unbearable, unspeakable but sneaky. Unlike a glass that make a sound when breaking my heart doesn't, instead it just breaks silently and leaves me shattered.

"Mrs Mthembu,
Swazi!"

Someone calls out my name and I turn slowly, it's the nurse handing me pills. I drink them then handed her the glass back. She looks at me, pity written on her face, I just turn to lie on my side back facing everyone and facing the cold wall. Out of everything that's been happening to me, losing my baby that I never even knew about just cuts me too deep.. Five days, it's been Five days since I was admitted on this hospital, each day is harder than the previous one..

all I do is cry, sleep, eat just so I can drink pills and then sink deep again.

I hate Fikani and his family for putting me in such pain. My child would be alive had they not accused me of such evil deeds, I'd be home and happy. What makes things even worse is that I have no one, just me and my suffering. Tracy has also dished me; the lawyer was supposed to be fighting for my freedom, but he is nowhere insight as well.

"hey!" a tiny voice suddenly utters near me. My hands quickly find the pillow and I wipe my tears quickly. I then turn to a young girl, probably in her twenty's

"I'm Nonhle" she says again.

"Swazi.."

I whisper, crying too much has awarded me a blocked nose.

"You are beautiful Swazi, whatever it is that you are going through don't let it define you. All will be well in time" tears instantly fills up my eyes...

"Thank you" she smiles sadly, as she is about to go back to her bed I speak out

"can you .. please lend me your cell phone."

She nods then goes to her bed, comes back then hands me the phone.

“can I use your Facebook; I want to search for someone”

“okay, no problem, just stay away from my inbox if you value your sanity”

I chuckle softly.

I search for Tracy on Facebook, then take her number on her account. Now I’m about to ask for another favour

“can I please call someone”

She smiles then nod.

It rings, for a while. She picks up as I’m about to give up

“Tracy hello”

She seems to be in a good mood, there is noise wherever she is

“Tracy, its Swazi...”

There’s no response for a while, I check the caller thinking she has dropped but she hasn’t

“Tracy! Ae you there?”

I ask

“yes! What do you want? “

To say I'm shocked would be an understatement, she sound so impatient and unhappy about this call. Wasn't he a supportive friend days ago?

"it's Swazi, Mthembu..

"I KNOW! THE QUESTION IS WHAT IS IT THAT YOU WANT?"

I gasp, she just snapped at me

"well, I.."

I run out of words; this isn't what I expected

"Swazi listen here, I'm a bit busy here, if you don't know what you want then please just let me be"

She furiously says

"send me Siyabonga's numbers. I want to know what's happening with my case"

"I don't have his number"

She replies, coldly. Unbelievable!

"Tracy you can't be serious right now, you are the one who introduced this guy to me! how come you don't have his numbers?..."

There's no response..

"Tracy!"

Yeap, she dropped the call on me. I try calling her again, it doesn't go through.

I feel so hot right now! My armpits are burning, I'm agitated. I don't want to believe what my mind is telling me

"what's wrong?"

Nonhle ask, instead of responding I log into her account again the search for Siyabonga but there are countless Siyabonga's.

" I think I've just been played..."

I blurt out, staring into space.

"played? By who?"

She asks, a bit shocked

"well, I think I just handed all my savings to a lawyer suggested by my P.A, I mean come to think of it he hasn't visited me to let me know about the ongoing case. He is just nowhere!"

My heart is pumping harder than normal! What's happening in my life

"I can't believe they played me and I didn't even see it coming! A stupid lawyer, how will I even afford another one?"

"You don't need lawyers anymore!"

Scratchy Voice!

He is at the door as he suddenly speaks. No white coat today, just casual clothes.

Nonhle rushes back to her bed..

“Swazelihle”

He says, staring at me. This man is strange, he has been also AWOL too.

“where have you been?” I’m suddenly angry, how can he just vanish after leaving me in such a miserable state.. men are trash!

“I had something to take care of”

He says, too chilled for my liking

“why are you here?”

I ask, staring up at him. He frowns

“to see you”

“I don’t know you, you don’t know me”

Which is true

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I don’t know him..

“but I know you, Swazelihle”

Mxm!

“crawl back to where you came from”

The frown grows

“are you angry?”

Am I?

“No”

That ghost smile again..

“good. Because what I’m about to tell you will brighten up that sour face..”

I sit up slowly then fold my arms staring at him. He does it again, staring me straight in my eyes, not today Satan, I won’t back down.

“well!” I softly yell

“the charges against you have been dropped”

I stare at him blankly, waiting for him to say he is joking but the look on his face says otherwise

“wait, how do you know about my case? And why would they tell you instead of me.”

“I work here remember”

“oh, okay”

Strange, he put a nandos paper bag on the side cupboard then grabs a chair and seat. I wonder why is he so nice to me but I've got no strength to ask my mind is still starked on the case, and the fact that I might have lost all of my savings to a fake lawyer! Jesus!

“so, does this mean I get to go home when I leave here?”

He nods

“this is strange though. No one has said anything to me. are you sure about this?”

I ask, staring at him. I don't want to believe him, though I haven't seen that police man who's been guarding my ward since this morning...

“Why would I lie about such a sensitive issue. I'm not stupid”

He sounds angry all of a sudden.

I'm about to respond when someone suddenly get inside the ward, it's that detective who arrested me..

“hi, I'm here to let you know that the charges have been dropped. You are free to go back home”

What!!! My heart swells up in excitement.

Now that the jail is out of the picture let me introduce myself properly. I'm Swazi Hlatshwayo, a 28-year-old woman married to Fikani Mthembu who is no more, he was a CEO of where I work, or used to anyway. We have a house in uMlalazi, just 30 minutes away from his home.

My father, Bheki Hlatshwayo died before I could even turn one year old, but my mother Nelile Hlatshwayo is still alive. A hardcore mother that I have but I love her still. My hometown is Eshowe, my home where I grew up is situated in KwaMondi...

Sunday!! Its Sunday morning and I can't wait to leave this hospital. The doctor told me that I will be discharged today..

"you are really leaving?" Nonhle, she's been asking me ever since yesterday

"yeah, I must go back to my life and try to sort it out"

I respond, she is sad.

"tell you what, I will take your number with me, then we can call each other."

She smiles widely. I can't say I'm not hurting because I still am, but at least the jail is out of the way and I'm glad.

“Swazi, ready to go?” Doctor Nzama says while getting inside the ward, I nod.

“well, just don’t forget to come for therapy session. What you’ve been through is really hard. You need all the help you can get to deal with it”

“I will do that; can I go now?..”

“you can’t wait to leave us here, were we that bad?”

She asks, I smile

“No not at all, it just that you know how hospitals are sometimes”

“Mthunzi advised me to never let you leave without him seeing you so lets juts wait for him...”

I’m confused

“who the hell is Mthunzi?”

I ask feeling all worked up

“Mthunzi, Zulu”

I stare at her

“I still don’t know him..”

She is looking at me strangely

“Mthunzi, the doctor”

She adds, am I supposed to know all doctors around here.

“you know what, I’m leaving. You will deal with that Mthunzi”

I stand up, then search for my clothes in the side cupboard. The one I came here wearing.

“fine, before leaving pass by OPD”

I take my clothes then head out to the bathrooms to change.

I bump on someone at the door, it's him again!

“Mthunzi, finally!”

The Doctor says....

“are you leaving? Without me?”

Scratchy voice again , wait

“are you Mthunzi?”

He nods..

“so you are the one who.. you know what never mind. I’m leaving anyway”

I pass him by then head to the bathroom. I change back to my clothes then return to the ward. He is still standing on the same spot

“are you done?”

He asks as I finish packing my medication..

“yes”

I respond..

“let’s go then, I’m giving you a free ride...”

God works in mysterious ways!

I follow behind him until we reach his car I assume. He opens it then we get in and off we go...

There is a comfortable silence in the car, I’m good with it.

He drives faster because in no time we are outside my house... I don’t remember telling him my address but that is a story of another day.

What’s happening! Its so crowded as he drives inside the yard, there are many people moving up and down. Id say it might be Fikani’s funeral, but no one seems to be in a sour funeral mood. Instead the jazz is playing softly, I get out of the car and wander around like a lunatic. I feel like I’m in the wrong address, but this is my house..

I pass by these people giving me really strange looks and get inside the house. I don’t know these people, but I spot one of Fikani’s sisters and I pat her back as I reach her

“Swazi!”

She looks so shocked, as if is seeing a ghost

“what are you dong here? when did you get out!”

I look at her like duuh this is my house

“the question is what are you doing in my house, in my absence...”

“its my brothers house too, I’m welcome anyway”

Bloody spoil 14-year-old girl

“what’s happening here Gcini”

She grins

“it’s a wedding..”

What!

“wedding! While we are moarning! Whose wedding is it?”

“Gcini!!! Have you seen my bowww... SWAZI”

AM I DREAMING!!!

My heart is hysterically pumping in my chest, my eyes wide open... "I can explain babe" He says, looking so shocked, confused and remorseful. I'm glued on the same spot, emotionless, speechless. "babe.."

dizziness is all over my head, I allow my feet to carry me out of this suffocating situation, tears streaming harder on my cheeks that its even hard to grasp my surroundings, but I keep going until I reach the back porch.. The first thing that catch my attention is a white stretch tent covering my entire garden, the place I love the most in this house.

Its crowded, decorated beautifully then I remember what Gcini said, it's a wedding. My feet lead me towards it, Maybe the warm wedding spirit might bring a bit of hope and light in my doomed life "Swazi, please babe don't go there! Swazi..." The moment my eyes landed on the bride my feelings just mix up.. Then it hit me like a bomb. Meeting the sympathetic glares just confirms everything and I wish the world would just open up and swallow me whole.

Chest pains instantly engulfs me, my hands furiously clutch my chest and I let out a deep cry slowly succumbing to the ground. How can he be so cruel!

My whole body is vigorously shaking, I cannot bear to lift up my eyes and meet the eyes of everyone.. Strong hands grab me from the ground, I'm powerless to even fight...

I'm woken up by the sound of voices shouting angrily. Opening my eyes, I realise that the bedroom I'm in is unknown. My heart is painfully throbbing reminding me of the pain I've been subjected to by the same man who swore to love and protect me, I'm shattered beyond repair. My dry throat has me getting out of the bed searching for at least a kitchen to drink water. I head towards the direction of the shouting voices...

"can you just keep it down already Ngcebo, she is still sleeping!" the angry scratchy voice states "I don't care!! This is my house and I will not tolerate nonsense!" I haven't reached the kitchen, but I know that it is an intense argument.. "Oh shut it already! I know that this is your house.

All I ask is that you keep her just until I figure something out. please" An unfriendly chuckle breaks "figure something out you say! Tell me something Mthunzi., why are you bothering yourself with this girl? She is not your problem to fix!" I'm now standing at the kitchen door, afraid to even let my presence known "you won't understand even if I try to explain" They still haven't realised that I'm at the door, Mthunzi is back facing me and this other guy looking older than him is too angry to even notice my presence. "why don't you make me understand then

brother..” Mthunzi heaves a heavy sigh “it’s complicated.. but I promise I’ll deal with this before uNdabezitha finds out” “I hope you know what you are doing because I don’t want to fight stupid battles that” My eyes meet his hard glare as he spots me at the door and I gulp, Why is he familiar in my eyes!

“she is at the door” He says pointing me with his eyes
click his tongue than pass me by. Mthunzi turns, he looks flushed but quickly replaces it with his usual unreadable expression making me question my sanity. Then I wouldn’t be surprised if I’ve lost my sanity “Swazelihle, you’re awake ” he says, staring at me intensely “I need water..” I whisper, my voice is worse than before. He takes out a bottle of water in the fridge and hands it to me. I take a long sip and release a long sigh... “do you need anything else, something to eat?” he asks, I shake my head no. He leads me back to where I came from.. “don’t mind my brother, he is just being overprotective as always..” He says as we reach the bedroom. I get in bed and lean on the headboard; he does the same too..

“thank you for taking me out of there” I utter, staring into space. God knows what would have become of me if Mthunzi wasn't there. My heart drops to the pit of my stomach as I reminisce today’s episode. How can Fikani do this to me, marry

Tracy of all people. My P.A, I have so many questions in my head, was I not good enough, what's special about her. What is it that I lack so much that he had to do this to me! I'm human too, and I get hurt like everyone else. This is too much for one person, I can't breathe it hurt so bad! hot tears flush down my cheeks. Betrayal slice deep, I don't see myself recovering from this

“He doesn't deserve you..”

Mthunzi, he says softly trying to make me feel better, but it doesn't work. My heart has been shattered already and it hard to convince it otherwise. At this point the pain is too much, I'm numb. “if you need anything, anything at all. I'm here” “I need you to make it stop, it hurts” I say then turn to meet his deep sleepy eyes His hands finds my face, he slowly wipes my tears but they don't stop falling. My hands grab his and I blankly stare deep in his eyes.. “have sex with me” I blurt out and he freeze instantly. I need to feel something. I heard that sex can help release stress and at this point I'd do anything to take my mind away from everything.. “No.. you're not thinking straight” “it cuts deep, please make it stop” his eyes shy away from me, I grab him by his head then shove my lips on his. He doesn't kiss me instead he pushes me... “you don't know what you're asking for Swazi.. just sleep” I take out the top leaving bra underneath

“I need this” I say staring at him He is battling with emotions so I unclip the bra and hear a hard gasp..

My heartbeat intensifies as I see his face dipping slowly with each passing second. His warm breath tickles my skin that I feel hot flushes all over me.. my eyes shut close as our lips meet. We kiss, hard and fast that I find my body longing for more....

Swazi

I'm peacefully sleeping when loud voices disturb my beauty sleep. I huff in annoyance, what is with this house and shouting! There is just no peace at all! I shift angrily then put my hands on my ears blocking out the noise. The sore feeling in between my legs reminds me of what went down yesterday. I sit up, peak through the sheets and see my naked body, this is embarrassing, especially with a ring on my left finger which is strange because I should have taken it out already.. "Swazi! SWAZI!!" my heart literally stops beating! I quickly get out of bed and grab the first thing my hands lands on. The minute I'm done putting the shirt on the door furiously swings open. I'm spooked as I see who just rocks up at the door looking dangerous and livid.. "Fikani" I'm shocked, why is he here? how did he know that I'm here "so, this is your revenge? To sleep with an enemy?" he shouts angrily charging towards me. "I don't owe you any loyalty Fikani. Why are you here?" he is Infront of me, breathing heavily! "YOU'RE MY WIFE! OR YOU'VE FORGOTTEN THAT?" He roars like a lion, something instantly shifts within me, after everything he's done to me he still has the nerve to regard me as his wife! "you are so vile you know that? this isn't your house where you can just barge in and

scream like a lunatic! Have some respect Fikani” I’m a guest here, Mthunzi’s brother doesn’t like me much as it is! “respect! Respect for who? A man who sleeps with other people’s wives?” I chuckle, unbelievable “ what wife Fikani? You mean the wife that you deliberately lied to and sent to jail just so you can have your dream wedding! You mean the wife that spent two full days in a holding cell while you were busy with your wedding preparations. Which wife are you talking about because last time I checked my husband is dead! Oh, and I’m the one who had him killed!” Silence, suddenly all the energy he had is gone. What is left is just a wet chicken staring at me apologetically... “Swazi... it just” “SAVE IT!! DON’T, I WANNA HEAR MORE OF YOUR LIES!” “if you can just give me a chance...” I’m furious, I feel like strangling him with my bare hands “do you realise that you are a ghost to me! faked your own death Fikani and blame me for it! do you think that low of me? ” I’m yelling at the top of my lungs, He brush his face furiously looking stupid!

“get out Fikani” He widen his eyes in shock . “NOW!” “you heard the lady, leave” Scratchy voice utters, he turns and point a finger at Mthunzi “this is not over Mthunzi Zulu.. its not over” he gives me an unsettling glare then take a shameful walk towards the door. Every emotion suddenly engulfs me, the heartbreak, betrayal, the loss of my baby, everything he has

done to me come crushing down and I break down completely.. I cry even more as I feel strong arms embracing me warmly...

I've calmed down, only strong hiccups keep on hitting me. Now I'm afraid to meet his gaze, am I even sure of what I'm doing. The old me would have never slept with a man no matter how intense things were, I'm disappointed in myself... I feel his strong embrace slowly untangling; a cold wave of embarrassment washes over me when our eyes meet that I quickly move away from him heading towards the bed. The moment I get in bed I cover my revealed body part with the blanket.. "I'm late for work. If you want something to eat, feel free" He is in light aged jean, white long sleeved top and sneakers as I turn to look at him, I can tell the he is ready to go.. "where is this place?" I ask, I was in a complicated situation yesterday, I couldn't even see where I was taken all I wanted was to get out of that hellhole "next to uMfolozi college.." I nod, he gives me a long deep gaze so I shy away and face down "I'll come back around lunchtime, be here when I come back please" "okay" "if you need to buy something, there is a R50 note on top of the counter" "thank you, for everything" I say, he leaves and I breath out of relief. When I hear the car driving out I quickly get out of bed searching for my clothes. Where the

hell are they? I start making the bed, when I'm done still no sign of them.

I sigh then open the wardrobe at the far corner, still nothing. There are few male clothes, I take the black t shirt and a Gray short. I doubt these will fit but what other choice do I have, I can't just go around naked.

It isn't hard to find the bathroom; I take a 3-minute bath. When I'm done I use the male lotion that is on top of the sink. Wait, as I look down next to the sink there is a 10-litre white bucket full of water, and my clothes are inside, completely wet. The hell! Why would he dampen my clothes!

I wear the huge t shirt

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then put on this oversized short, luckily on the waist it fits but it ends just below my knees. I'm five feet in height, not too short, just average.. My lips cracks into a smile as I look at my own reflection, I look like those cute girls who loves oversized clothes, except I'm not cute and my messed up miserable face and short hair just don't do me justice. However, my alluring amber skin pops out, I comb them hair with my hands then head back to the bedroom. after making sure that everything is in order I head to the kitchen to take that R50 note. my

stomach grumbles indicating that it need to be fed, not now tummy, wait a little longer until I get home. When I reach the kitchen my eyes instantly run towards the counter, R50 is there so I take it. I use the kitchen door to head out.. “going somewhere?” I gulp nervously when a deep voice suddenly speaks behind me.. I turn slowly and meet an older version of Mthunzi “I ask a question” he says firmly. “I’m going.. to the.. ah shops..” he looks at me too deep, as if searching for the truth. he turns and leaves me shaking like a leaf. Now that I’ve seen him this close I remember where I saw this face. It’s the same client that was pointing a gun at Fikani! My goodness the world is a smaller place. after regaining my composure, I rush out, luckily there is a taxi coming as I approach the road. It stops Infront of me, I get in and release a long breath. When I reach town, I head straight to the rank and take the taxi home.

After shouting my stop, I get off the taxi just outside my gate. I’m confused by the 3 different cars parked in the middle of the yard, including my white Nissan Qashqai. This can only mean one thing, Fikani and his family are here. I feel my heart dropping, what do they want now! Reaching the front door I knock softly “come in” that’s my mother, I know her voice too well the moment I get inside all eyes are on me “sanibona” I

say, greeting politely. No one dares to respond instead my mother charges towards me and before I know it a hard slap falls on my cheeks.. “mah!” I exclaim, holding my burning cheek “ma! Kwa kwa my foot! So, what my son in-law said about you is true! Not only are you a barren wife, you are a loose one too! How can you sleep with another man while married Swazi! How can you embarrass me like this!” tears are already streaming down my face, I should be used of her harsh words by now, but every time she says hurtful things it just cuts deep! “did he tell you what he did ma?” I ask, trying hard not to disrespect her “I don’t care what he did! you are a woman Swazi you are supposed to be well behaved. Where are your manners! You’re a disgrace you know that! what you did was pure whoring sies!” My heart bleeds as she spit down on my feet. She is my mother, she is supposed to be on my side! “mah, Fikani faked his own death! His own death and let me take the fall! as if that wasn’t enough he married the very same woman he cheated on me with. How can you stand here and judge me while you have absolutely no idea what I’ve been through!” “your husband is here to try and explain everything. Give him a chance, everyone let’s give them privacy” they follow each other out, Fikani’s mother, his grandmother from his mother’s side, and his two uncles.. I’m left with a devil himself “babe I’m so..” “just stop calling me babe!” “sorry, I want to say I’m sorry for the way things turned out. You know I love only you” I find myself

laughing through tears “don’t patronize me Fikani, you know nothing about love” “the only person that I love is you, I knew you wouldn't have agreed if I wanted to marry Tracy and this was the only way..” what did I do to deserve such a stupid husband “did she tell you that she took my money with her fake lawyer! did she?” his eyes shy away from me.. “please don’t tell me this was the plan” he shut his mouth “oh my God who did I get married to? who are you because I don’t know this person. Fikani you are just.. you” I can’t do this anymore “we needed the money for the wedding, I’ll pay it back I promise. I mean you wouldn’t have borrowed me so this was the only way” this is too much I stand up and head outside. I seat on the ground under the tree shade and allow myself to dive deep in my endless sorrows “I didn’t mean to hurt you Swazi , the wedding had to happen. You and I have been married for 3 years with no kids. Tracy threatened to abort the only way was to marry her ” he suddenly says behind me, “how .. did.. we get here” “I don’t know...” “you hurt me Fikani, I was attacked in that holding cell and I lo.. I lost my baby and not even one of your family came to see me ” this tears my soul apart “wait, what do you mean you were attacked? A baby, what baby?” I cry even more, this is it. I’m done with this doomed marriage. This was the last straw!

7

Seven

Swazi

I don't know how the day ended, as they say even the long darkest ones do come to an end. I've been sleeping in my room the whole day after dealing with Fikani's shenanigans. "Swazi!" she likes yelling for no reason my bedroom door opens and she gets in then seat on my bed "I hope you fixed things with your husband, phela I can not keep someone's wife in my home it's not right" I feel like clicking my tongue "this is also my home mama you seem to forget that" "you are a married woman Swazi, what will people say when they see you here" there she goes, always worrying about other people rather than her own daughter "mama do you love me?" I ask seating up "why are you asking me stupid questions, would I have raised you if I didn't love you" she's so worked up suddenly "it hard to believe that sometimes. After everything that I've been through not even once have you asked how I really am, instead you are worried about other people. I was alone ma, in a prison cell! I was attacked by some woman I dint even know and lost my child in the process mah! Not even once! Once did you come to

the hospital to see how I was doing. I was just all alone..." I furiously wipe tears that are suddenly falling. She's quiet, I expected more from her as a mother... "Fikani betrayed me mama, he cheated, faked his own death, sent me to jail, took my money without my concern and all you care about is what will people say! I lost a child! My child that I dint even know about in the first place! I'm dying inside.. I'm drowning and its getting to much..." tears chock me as I yell loudly, slowly she stand up, head towards the door and leaves me crying. She's never been supportive I don't even know why I expected something.

**

It's another day, another day to keep pushing. The sun is all out and shining beautifully, how I wish my life had so much light. life with a man who lies just to get away with what he wants isn't the life I dreamt of. I've been seating under the shade since the sun came up, thinking about my life, where to from here. The only thing I'm sure of is that everything that has to do with the Mthembu's is history, their wicked son, their company I'm done. "Swazi" I look up when someone yells my name softly. It's my mother's friend, Thoko " mama, ninjani" I ask, she gives me a long sympathetic look "I'm fine sis, are you okay?"

Your mother told me about you being in jail. I didn't know you were out" wow, I wonder how many has she told "Is your mother home" she says again as she realised I'm plainly ignoring her comment. "yes" she gives me one last look then turn to leave.. I look around this whole yard, my eyes landed on my father's grave just outside the yard, a man I've never met but saw in pictures.. Slowly I take a walk towards his grave, it's always clean mom make sure to keep the graveyard clean. I seat next to his grave and heaves a sigh "I wish it was her who died not you" I confess what's been in my mind since forever, she's never been proud of me, no matter what I do she always find something to criticize "I know it's wrong to feel this way but I can't help it. I wish I met you. My life is a mess without you, I'm alone and it is getting too much each day.. I'm exhausted baba, I wish you were here maybe my life wouldn't be this sad and empty"

crying has to be the only thing I do these days, I'm tired but I'm breaking at the same time, I just want a break, a break from an unsupportive parent and my miserable life...

I've been feeling a bit better since I came back from my father's grave. Mom is somewhere in the house with her friend making noise. At this point I really wish I had siblings, those I shared a womb with , who'd forever have your back no matter what.

“Swazi! Where are you. Come and see this!” I huff, what is it that she wants now. I get off bed and head out. “Mah” I yell when I don’t see her in the lounge.. “the door!” she yells back, “what’s going ooon ...oh” what the hell! My heart skips as my eyes landed on him at the door “he said he is here for you; do you know this man Swazi?” I gulp, Mthunzi is losing it! how did he even know where I live “Swazi, who is he?” she asks starting to get annoyed, I mean who wouldn’t be when some creepy looking man is at your doorstep demanding for your daughter! My mouth suddenly becomes so dry! “Mthunzi Zulu mah” he responds politely, mom gives me an “explain” look “He is the good doctor who took care of me while I was in the hospital” I say while brushing my hands together, this is so awkward! “I get that and I’m grateful, however what I don’t get is what does he want with you? is he looking for some reward money for taking care of you. It’s his job mos” Mthunzi’s jaws clenched, no doubt he is offended. My mother can be mean sometimes,

“with all due respect ma, I have my own money and I respect your daughter I would never do her like that” why is he still talking? He’s got some big balls!

“am I talking to you boy?” “Mah! I think Mr Zulu had no idea that I was discharged so I guess he just wanted to check if I’m still alive” This has to be the stupidest lie I’ve ever told “oh, as

you can see good doctor she is breathing and kicking! you can leave now..." she says staring at him sternly.. He turns and walk away, I feel a ping in my stomach, I can't tell why I feel this way..

I've been restless ever since Mthunzi rocked up at my doorstep. I can't believe my mother was this rude towards him, but then she is rude to everyone ..

"Swazi!" this time I scream, I don't care if she heard me or not "I heard that wena!" she yells, ah! I take my time getting off the bed. She is disturbing my peace. "here, go to the container and buy a bread for me.." I wonder who she would be sending if I wasn't here..

I take the money and start walking towards the gate.. There's a car I'm approaching, parked few houses away from home. It's a Gray Volkswagen Polo hatch, I stare at it in awe! As I come closer I realise the owner of it, damn him why is he still here!

I should be rushing to the shop before that woman skin me alive

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but I am scared because he is leaning against it, staring at me.. Reaching him I ignore him and pass him by, I feel a strong hold grabbing me by my hand "Mthunzi" I whisper, instead of

shouting. He lets go of me but blocks my way standing too close
“why did you leave without my knowledge?” He firmly ask
staring down at me

“I didn’t realise I needed your permission to go home” I say,
staring up at him while folding my arms. “feisty aren’t you” he
says, narrowing his eyes “feisty is sexy.. but I hate it when I’m
not listened.” his intimidating presence weighs down on me but
I don’t show it “you haven’t told me why you just rocked up in
my doorstep, what you did wasn’t only disrespectful, it was
crazy and spineless. Especially to someone’s wife” his eyes
darkens instantly “you are beautiful Swazelihle” okay that was
random, I feel my cheeks getting warm but I quickly cough .. “I
need .. to continue with my journey..” “please don’t go” he
quickly says, I look at him confused. “not yet, I want to take you
somewhere” “but my mother...” His warm, strong hands are
suddenly on my chin, and he gently lift my face and look at me
straight in the eyes, I feel my knees getting weaker by second
that I find myself holding onto his shoulders for balance..
“Mthunzi..” I whisper “please” why am I even entertaining
“okay” The ghost smile appears on his face, and vanish
immediately “ngyabonga Nkosazana” hebana! Im a Nkosazana
now! He is looking at me deeply, flip my hands are still holding
onto his shoulders, I quickly remove them feeling all kinds of
emotions..

We've been driving for a while; he keeps on stealing glances at me and I keep on dodging his gaze. Whatever it is that I'm doing I just hope it won't backfire

"we are here, please don't freak out" "okay" I keep on agreeing on everything this man says. we are in front of a very beautiful big house. I'm walking really slow, what if he wants to kill me, take out all my organs and sell them on black market. I've read really shocking news about doctors. I guess he sees the uncertainty in my eyes, so he holds my hand and I feel it gain, the pit in my stomach that I cant explain. "I won't kill you I promise" he says, for the first time after a long time I genuinely laugh and it feels good, does he read mind too?

He knocks on the door and nothing, I mean nothing would have ever prepared me for what is standing in front of me... "baba" the mini Mthunzi is standing in front of the door with the cutest smile ever, she is the female version of him, a complete replica! how insane can my life ever be

"is this her, is she my mama?" the little girl is staring at his father with hoping eyes, I am just astonished I don't know how to react, I feel his hands on my waist, he is pulling me closer to him...

"yes, this is her Ndondo yababa" the little girl screams happily, before I can comprehend of what exactly is happening, I feel tiny hands hugging my feet. What is Mthuniz doing to me,

where on earth is the mother of this child, no doubt that the kid is his.. “Hellow” I find myself kneeling on her level, she still hasn’t stopped hugging my feet, like she is scared I might leave or something, so I lift her up and put her in my arms. Suddenly she sobs and start crying, im losing my mind right now “what am a going do, she is crying” Mthunzi looks at me with pleading eyes like I am supposed to perform some miracle for his baby to stop crying, hell I’m at the verge of crying my self ..”shhhhh Thula thula mntwan, umama uzobuya ekuseni” she cries even louder, mind you I heard this song in some movie I don’t know if I’m even singing it right. Isn’t this child a bit older for the song! “don't cry baby, mama is back now okay. I’m not going anywhere, mina nobabakho asiyindawo, we love you so much” I had to say something to calm her down.

“ but daddy left me, and you left me too” she says while sniffing .I’ve never been so confused in my life ever “I am here now baby, we are not leaving okay...” Turning to look at Mthunzi, his eyes are red. Is he crying, what am I going to do with 2 babies now? and where are people of this family anyway... "Mthunzi, how long has it been!" a middle-aged woman suddenly says, standing at the door with a smile on her face...

After spending hours in here we left, which was a struggle because Ndondo, Mthunzi’s little girl didn’t want us to leave at

all. “thank you..” he says , I smile stupidly. After that emotional torture he put me through what else can I say. I’m thinking of a better way to confront the situation without sounding like I’m prying. Mthunzi is just unapproachable at this point I’ll have to swallow my words. Mom will skin me alive if she ever hears what I’ve been doing, Jesus I’ve forgotten about the bread!

Finally we are here, he parks exactly few houses away

“you left your medication yesterday..” he says handing me a brown paperbag. As I take it he hold my hand instead, Someone suddenly hoot behind us. I try to remove it but his hold tightens, he parked on the road and now this might just draw unnecessary attention. A bhantinti wife who was seen in another man’s car. Id be the talk of the village for days! “THIS IS’NT YOUR GRAND MOTHER’S STREET! JUST MOVE” I know that voice! Can I just vanish into thin air..

Swazi

I try to wiggle my hand, his hold tightens “I need to go Mthunzi!” I firmly say.. “please stay a bit longer..” he pleads gently his sleepy eyes staring deeply at me as if staring deep into my soul. It hard to keep up with his deep gaze, instead my eyes settle on his fuller lips which are very light pink but a a bit brownish. His lower lip is very light in pink but his upper lip is a bit brownish. So far his lips are my favorite.. “SWAZI!!” I jump out of my skin when Fikani’s voice suddenly boomed angrily as he furiously hit the right front window.. Mthunzi is out before I can even stop him. I’m not ready for any quarrel that’s about to break off ..

I follow after him and find them deadly staring at each other “what do you want with my wife?” Fikani is livid. I don’t get why he still refers to me as his wife.. I must divorce the bastard asap “why are you here Fik..” “don’t you dare open that mouth you bitc..” a hot slap lands on Fikani’s cheek and I gasp “Call her that again, I wont hesitate to kill you..” Mthunzi says calm but deadly. I can’t stay here another minute; I rush inside my home and never look back! They are old men, they can sort themselves out, mina I won’t be that in between woman trying to stop grown men from fighting. They can kill each other if they want to. imagine looking like a cat trying to stop two bulls,

No
ways..

“and then wena? Where have you been all this time I had to send one of Thoko’s grandkids to the shop because you suddenly vanished..” I ignore her and rush towards my bedroom. Throwing my body on the bed a heavy sigh escapes my mouth, now I feel uneasy for leaving them there what if they really hurt each other. I’m a bad person!

"Jesus brought me this far, not to leave me, when my friends and loved ones are nowhere to found he is always closer no no no no!!" I’m woken up by this very old song blasting through every corner of this house and I feel like shooting my mother. Who wakes up on a random Wednesday only to play gospel. “morning princess” Mother’s happy voice yells as she peak through my door, why is she in such a mood today “ morning.. why are you so happy” I ask staring at her strangely “can’t a woman be happy for no valid reason. Come to the kitchen, I’ve made breakfast” okay this is even more awkward.. “are you okay maNdwandwe?” “The devil is a liar, no no no no!” yes! She sings loudly while getting out. I’ve never been this confused in my life.

I get out heading to the bathroom, I take a bath then changed into comfortable clothes. If this woman is about to poison me then I'd rather die clean.. "you took your time; the breakfast is getting cold" she says as I walk inside the kitchen. "well the microwave is there for a reason" I say then settle next to her. "give me your hands" she says, I reluctantly give her. As if what I've seen isn't enough she closes her eyes and start praying "Lord, we come before you this morning to thank you for being our protector and our provider. We thank you for this amazing food that we are about to indulge in. may you continue granting us strength to go on, to keep moving even when things aren't going the way we want. Please bless my daughter and be with her through it all. Amen"

By the time she is done my eyes have longed opened, I can not believe she just prayed. My mother doesn't attend any church, she's not that strong as well when it comes to praying so what she is doing here today scares me "mah, are you sure you are okay?" I ask, searching her eyes "why wouldn't I be" she shrugs then indulge in her food. I do the same too. Her head is dancing with the song, its Sfiso Ncwane's kulungile baba this time. What a strange morning this is!

After breakfast I thank my mother then do what I've been doing, lie in bed and indulge in my miserable thoughts. Lucky

for me Fikani never left with my car that day when I found them here, if I ever find enough courage I'll go and get my things in what used to be our house. For now, I nurse my broken self-esteem and sleep the entire day if I have to..

I'm starting to doze off when my mother screams out my name, God what did I do to deserve this! There's a sudden soft knock at the door right after that. "OPEN THAT DOOR SWAZI!!" she yells again, I drag my annoyed self and open it "Thembeke!" I'm shocked, I can't even hide it. "if you widen out your eyes just one more time, I'll be helping you to pick them up in the next few seconds.." she moves past me then head towards the windows "God! Its so sticky in here. how do you breath in such a suffocated hell hole" I rest my hands on my waist staring at her opening up curtains and windows, she goes on to make my bed then open the fan as well. The nerve! "you are disturbing my peace Thembeke" I am angry but I'm trying to control it. "you can enjoy that peace in a fresh bedroom. damn girl you don't look too good. When was the last time you made your hair, do you even remember the way to the salon? You look awful, but then I don't blame you hey, Fikani is a true definition of man are trash" This one qualifies to be a TV Presenter, she talks too much... "why are you here" I ask settling next to her, what else can I do because she's found herself a doll to criticize.. "I'm here to check up on you sister wife, God I miss

you” yeap, she is Fikani’s older brother’s wife. She is way too forward that’s why her and I aren’t that close “where is your new sister wife?” my heart pinch as the thought of Tracy walking around naked in my own house fills up my mind

“that girl is on a mission to drive your mother in-law crazy, can you believe that she wants to have shares in the family company. My God the girl hasn’t even lasted for two minute in that yard already she is feeling like the Queen of Sheba! I hate her hairstyle, its just so dull!” how can someone speak this fast and still breath normally “wait, so she wants shares in KK Jama Logistics.. even I never had them” I’m interested in this “wena you don’t know anything. She demands the shares, something about being a wife of a CEO! I was like Duh girl you are a Mafikizolo

hell even I don’t have the shares I’m still a cleaner in the hospital while I’ve been married for five full years with Delani” Her tone of voice is so squeaky, she is witty but a breath of fresh air at the same time

“so, did they give her the shares” I ask

“hell to the biiig no! not until I also get mine. I told her straight in the face that she is just an experienced professional whore who just steals people’s husband and trap them with a baby. If

she ever thinks of stealing my man hell will break loose. I swear to God the streets of uMlalazi will be filled with her blood. I will mop the streets with her face” I’m still caught up in the pregnancy, “so, she is really pregnant” I whisper, I suddenly feel this pain that I can’t describe. “ow me and my big mouth, I’m sorry I shouldn’t have said that” she says softly.. “so they are expecting a baby while I lost mine...” it hurts “you lost a baby?” she ask, a bit shocked. I nod while blinking away tears, I’m not surprised that Fikani never told them. “I’m so sorry. I didn’t know” she hugs me tightly “no one deserves to go through such pain. I know, I’ve been there three times, the pain just doesn’t go away” tears are streaming down my face...

“so, the salon today” she says giving me a puppy look as we broke the hug. I wipe my tears while shaking my head.. “there’s nothing wrong with my hair” I shrink at her sudden ear cracking laughter; she is extra this one! “please there is everything wrong with you. The hair, the nails. You need a whole makeover and I know just the place” looking at her I feel like a hooligan, she is on her best outfit and her nails are on point, her make up as well is just on point. The long curly weave looks good on her.. I’ve never seen a slay queen, a wife of a truck driver and a cleaner all in one person. Delani drives trucks of the company, I don’t know why he is not a CEO because he is an older son. “even if I wanted to go, my best clothes are not here..” I say “well lucky for you I brought you your staff, it was staffed in the

Garage like that wasn't your house. I blame that clown husband of yours for this! How can he allow this to happen! Hhay if Delani takes another wife I will burn him alive, take his ashes and put them under my bed then have sex with one of his friends right on top of him..." This woman mara, to think I used to dislike her character... "thank you Thembeke." I say as we stand up heading outside.

The Boot is full of the boxes, the backseat has some of my suitcases. Though some are not here but at least I have them. "I cant believe I've spent such a long long time without my cell phone, I wonder if they ever found it because it was in my bag when I was arrested.." "that 2-minute wife was using it imagine! but I took it after almost slapping her. God, I hate gold diggers!" how will I keep up to her bright energy "thanks hey, you're the best." "don't thank me yet, take one suitcase so that we can get ready for the salon. It getting late and I don't want Delani to return to work while I wont be there. I can't believe I didn't cook" its gonna be a long day! I already know she loves her husband so much. Unfortunately they also haven't been blessed with children, when Thembeke falls pregnant she always doesn't carry to full terms. They've been in numerous doctors but none of them seem to help. I should ask Mthunzi, maybe he might help. I should show gratitude after what she just did for me, she basically saved me the embarrassment of

going to that house and having to endure the neighbour's nosy stares!

I leave Thembeka with my mother in the lounge then head to the bedroom with my suitcase and my phone in my hand. First thing I do is to charge my phone, then take out what I will wear, I choose the ones that won't need ironing. When I'm done I take a quick shower. After that I wear the white boobtube, Demin short with Harriet sandal white heels.. I make a simple make up on my face, I mess up my short hair then sprayed my body. Phew! I look more like a beautiful woman that I am. I grab my dusty pink blazer then head out.

Whistles breaks off as I reach the lounge.. "wow, you are rocking! You might even find yourself a rebound to warm your bed" that landed her a slap on her head, mother doesn't play.. "don't allow this kid to spoil you wena mtanami. You look beautiful Cebisa" I blush, it's not every day where mother complement me, while using my clan name.. "thanks mah, I feel like hugging you right now" I say squealing in happiness "what are you waiting for then, come and give your mother a hug" I smile then hug her " Let's go please! It's getting late" Thembeka says while grabbing me by my arm. We head out laughing.. "wait, I need my ID and my bank cards in that house, can you come with me please", it's time to take my life back. I can't believe this is me who is feeling this warmth in my heart.

Swazi

A while ago I was feeling epic ready to take on the world but now that we parked outside in what used to be my house I don't feel ready anymore. In fact, I just want to get out of here and never look back. "hey, you're not alone okay" she says giving me an assuring look "I can't go in there, Thembeke. I just ..." I rest my head on my hands as flashbacks of my last time hit my mind "its okay, tell me where to look" what would I be without her "just ask Fikani, he knows" she nods then get out. in no time she comes back with my documents and hands them to me. "that was fast, why is he not working today anyway?" I ask as she start driving "I don't know. might be his swollen face, I think he got into a fight he looks so bad" I find myself laughing, so the fight continued even after I left. "serves him right.. I should pass by the bank first" "sure"

After a while I'm done with almost everything. I've sorted my banking details and lucky for me Fikani never used all my savings... "you look pretty..." says Thembeke as I stare at myself in the huge mirror. I smile "thank you..." I decided to go with a Peruvian lace front weave, its 22.5 inch and black in colour. I'm finally looking like a woman.. After paying we leave the salon. "So where to from here" "I'm starving! Let's go to spur shall

we!" oh their Ribs, my mouth waters
instantly

We are eating in Spur when I suddenly feel a soft pat on my shoulder. I turn to see Ndondo's cute face "Ndondo" she raise her hands and I lift her up and put her in my thighs "Are you good Ndondo yababa" she shakes her head "Did someone hurt you" "you promised to come back" she says her eyes staring at me innocently and my heart breaks. Mthunzi should never have introduced me to her "and I will, I will visit you this weekend and we will sleep together on the same bed" her smile widens "really! I'd love that!" my heart melt, she is just a cutie "who did you come with here" "I'm with gogo" "don't you go to school? It a school day today right?" her hands run on her head "I was sick in the morning so gogo said that its okay if I don't go to school" "Aw! Were you really sick?" she laughs softly and shake her head "you are a little liar aren't you" I say tickling her, her giggles fills up my ears "no no! please.. mama stop" "not until you tell me why you didn't want to go to school!" I find myself laughing along with her "okay okay I'll tell you" I stop and look at her as she giggles breathlessly, she is a beautiful girl with her warm dark skin.. "talk young lady I'm waiting" she suddenly looks sad.. "Amahle doesn't like me. she says I'm ugly and my skin looks like a frog" she tears up and my

heart sinks “listen to me baby, you are beautiful okay. You are the most beautiful princess that I love so much. Do not listen to Amahle, she is just jealous because you are more beautiful” “really” “yes really. Now why don’t you smile for your mama” she smiles, and all is forgotten, I feed her some ribs but my heart is breaking inside. Mthunzi need to hear this “Swazi, are you ever going to introduce me to this beautiful princess” oh! That “its Ndondo.” I say, I can’t give her more. She is still a Mthembu “hi Ndondo, I’m anti Thembeke” “Sanibonani” I lift up my eyes to be met by Ndondo’s granny “mama, how are you?” as she is about to respond I feel Ndondo suddenly shaking vigorously.. “what’s happening?” I’m panicking! “she is having an allergic reaction! What did you give her” “ribs.. nothing el...” “she is allergic to Pork!!!” I cry instantly “Oh GOD! What have I done!!! “Stop crying, we need to get her to the hospital”

I’m pacing up and down on the hospital hallway, it’s been horrible hours and I’m failing to understand why the doctors are quite “sit down will you, she is in good hands..” Thembeke says, I can’t help but feel guilty.. “I should have asked; this is all my fault. What if they think I was trying to kill her.? what if she doesn’t make it..” ” “Swazi!! Stop overreacting!” “IT’S A BABY! ..SHE IS JUST A BABY...” tears are burning my eyes but I’m trying

not to break down.. “you didn’t know Swazi, its not your fault..” she holds me and make me sit on the chair. “where is her granny anyway, its been a while since she went to check” my hands are running all over my face, I’m losing my mind! “she will come back. Wait a little longer” “Mthunzi! He works here and he doesn’t even know that his baby is in trouble. I should look for him” she gives me a confused look, I never told her about Mthunzi “What’s going on?” suddenly a deep voice asks and I freeze as I meet their deep gaze. “sanibonani...” I reluctantly greet while standing up, its Ngcebo with a very older version of him “what happened?” an old man whose beard is Gray suddenly ask and I cringe, what an intimidating man, his voice is worse... “ah.. its ... am” I’m stuttering! The old man is straight up staring at me, its creepy “Mah called and said Ndondo is in trouble” Ngcebo Jumps in up “yes, she is with the doctors” I respond as politely as I could. My heart is pounding really hard “what happened? And how are you here?” why is he drilling me with questions.. “ah.. it’s a long story” he frowns then they settle next to me on the benches. I’ve been dodging his gaze, the old man gaze is still glued onto me, it’s as if he is analysing me. damn my outfit just makes things worse...

“Baba! Bafo” Mthunzi, he is here and I feel a bit relief, I dont even know why “we’ve been calling you. Has mah contacted

you?” Ngcebo ask.. “yes she did. Ndondo is fine...” I heave a sigh of relief. Thank goodness!

“what happened exactly?” ask Ngcebo

“she had an allergic reaction. But she is fine now. Come with me so you can see her” he says, though I feel like he ignoring my presence “what caused it?” his father ask and he gives me a short look, I feel my inside turning “she ate pork but she is fine..” wow, he is not selling me out “and your girlfriend, what is she doing here..” Ngcebo! How can he say that especially in front of his father “I’m not his girlfriend..” I jump in but quickly regret it when I get a strange look from the old man “stay here

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I’ll come to get you” Mthunzi says.

I breath out of relief when they are out of sight.. “okay that was intense!” -Thembeke “tell me about it” “well it’s time for me to leave now Delani must be wondering where I am, he still doesn’t like that I drive his car but I always remind him that what is his, is also mine. Anyway, do Call me please” she says standing up “thank you, for everything” “no worries babes” she hugs me then leaves. I guess I’ll have to rely on Mthunzi again for transport.

Someone is patting my back, opening my eyes they land on Mthunzi's forever sleepy eyes. I must have dozed off while waiting. It's even dark outside "let's go. She is waiting for you" I stretch my body then follow behind him. She is just lying on the bed, her eyes light up when she sees me. Her face is a bit swollen "mama" she says innocently, my chest tightens instantly. ... "don't cry mama. I'm fine".. a single tear drops and I wipe it with my hand "you scared me Princess " I say taking her hands in mine "I'm sorry mama" "don't be. It's my fault I should have asked before giving you anything" she shakes her head "its not your fault. Come sit next to me. you must be tired of standing" she says grabbing my hand, I laugh while seating next to her. "baba, mama said I am the most beautiful princess" she suddenly says staring at Mthunzi, he is too quite leaning against the wall. "that because you are the most beautiful princess..." he says smiling at her.. "can I go to Disney land mama? Like the real princess" she ask, "of course you can, your father will take you to Disney land on your birthday.." I don't know what I'm even promising here "really!" she is booming in happiness, so cute "yes, your father loves you and he will do anything for you" I don't know how Mthunzi will pull this off, but he must try something "my birthday is on May 23" "can't wait for your birthday, I also happen to be born in May" "we are twins. Did you hear that baba! I finally have a twin" she happily yells, this is heart-warming "well hello twinny" I say

pinching her cheeks, she dangles her feet on air “so how old is my twinny” I ask “ I am 5 Years old” she says then lies on my thighs “I love you my 5-year-old twinny” she smiles wider. she is such a breath of fresh air. I just catch a glimpse of Mthunzi, I think he was smiling but you can never know this one.. She is starting to doze off, it might be the medication kicking in. “I think we should take our leave now” whispers Mthunzi, she is fast asleep on my lap and it hard to leave her behind but what other choice do I have..

We are already in the car, in silence. He keeps on grinding on a steering wheel, I don't know if he is angry or what... “Mthunzi I didn't know he was allergic to pork I swear. I'm really sorry” I say when I can't take his silence anymore. “mmm” yes he just mumbled “it's my fault , I know” I add he sigh deeply.. “why are you naked?” he suddenly ask firmly “I'm not naked..” I respond even more confused... “you are wearing an underwear Swazelihle!” did he just shout at me.. “they are called shorts; they are not underwear. And no, we are not discussing me here. we are talking about Ndondo. I know you are angry at me for what I did” “I'm not angry at you Swazelihle it was an honest mistake...” he says gently, that's a relief “how many men stopped you today? Do you realise how naked you are right now! You are just sooo bare! All your thighs are out for every hungry man to see!” he huffs angrily. Wait, is he really angry about my outfit, and here I am thinking he is angry

because of Ndondo.. “where is Ndondo’s mother” I ask, plainly ignoring what he just said. I’m not about to apologise for my choice of clothes nope. “where are your clothes? Why are you naked?” he asks, Jesus! “Mthunzi I’m being serious here” “and you think I’m not serious” he turn and look at me, his eyes are a bit darker. “I don’t know what your problem is, and I won’t even entertain it. Ndondo needs her mother she is convinced that I am her mother and we both know that I’m not. I’m worried about her. A girl like her age should be living with her mother” silence... “her mother is no more. She died when she was about 2 years...” this is not what I expected “do you realize what you just put me through Mthunzi! If she is dead then why did you lie to her?” “don’t raise your voice..” ah! “Mthunzi what I don’t get is why you made her believe that her mother will come back one day.. I get that she was young and probably doesn’t remember her mother’s face but if she grows up to believe that I’m her mom then it turns out that I’m not what will happen. For god sake I’m nothing! I’m no one”

“we will cross that bridge when we get to it..” I sigh, this man is more messed up than I am “she is growing Mthunzi, do you even visit her more often” he doesn’t respond. “God Mthunzi what the hell is wrong with you. She gets bullied at school and I’m sure you don’t even know that!” he gives me a look then keep quiet. “I’ll try harder. It’s just that when her mother died I just couldn’t tell her that she was never coming back. I just

couldn't." he sounds broken, I suddenly feel bad. "she was living at home with my mother and my sister. But .. they were killed so my mother's sister is raising her..." the car stops suddenly, we are home. "Swazelihle, I'm messed up, but I want what's best for my child. She needs parents and I can't do this alone.." what is he on about "of course you can she is your child" I say staring at him. "I can't, not without you" okay, this is awkward! "I need to go" I quickly open the door and leaves. I can feel his gaze on me, but I don't dare turn. I hear his car driving away when I'm in the house. It's quite and dark in the lounge, the kitchen lights are on. "mama!" I yell but she doesn't respond. Then I head to the kitchen.. "aaahh" I scream loudly, she is lying on the ground, I shake her but nothing "mama wake up! Mama! Please wake up!!"

Swazi

Deep into the darkness, we all get lost at some point. The pain ignites from deep within my soul, engulfs my unstable mind, escalates to my shattered heart and everything else in my body shut down entirely. Somewhere in this house, the sad yet soft humming is heard pleading for her safe journey to the other side. She is gone, just like that. She has to wake up, I've been praying since that day and I know God will come through for me. she's never fought battles with me, I'm only asking her to fight this one battle, to find her way back to me. she owes it to me "Swazi, they are asking if they can bring the prayer in here" Thembeke, she is kneeling next to me staring at me as if I'm suddenly a glass that might break at any second. I nod shortly, Thoko, her best friend is leading them as they all get inside the lounge and it becomes full instantly. Everything was moved, it's just me on the mattress at the corner. A coffin is on my right side, she is inside. "ningakhali bazalwane bami, sehlukeni umzuzwana nje, ezulwini sobonana futhi zonki nsizi seziphele nya.." I can hear them, singing softly but I can not join in, I'm too numb to even utter a single word. She has to wake up. It's her last day, tomorrow is the day she will be laid to rest but I cannot picture it. its too soon, at least she still has hours to

prove to me that she is a fighter. The service goes on and on, I listen to every word attentively, what else can I do but to listen to them saying really good things about her. I spot Thembeke from a distance pushing her way towards me.. “I will seat here for a while, go out someone is here to see you” she whispers. My feet carry me out, out of the house filled with dark cloud and terror! “mama” I meet Ndondo’s face at the door. Though it is too dark but the outside light helps “come here” I say opening my arms widely, she hugs my feet first then I lift her up in my arms.. “Swazelihle” my heart skips, his voice comforts me and I know that I am glad he is here. “lets go to the car, this kind of environment is not good for her” I follow after him until we reach his car. He unlocks the door and I get in with her in my arms.. “I missed you mama” she says staring at me, I just know that she is what I need at this moment “I’m glad you are here” I say then careless her cheeks “you look ” I feel my throat getting dry but I hold it in. “ah.. I will be fine. You make me feel fine Princess” Her tiny hands encircles my neck and I let her innocence rubs off on me, how I wish I was as young and clueless as her. “ngane yam” a gentle yet bold voice of a woman says suddenly behind me. its Ndondo’s granny at the backseat of the car, she gives me a sympathetic smile, it’s what I’ve been getting from everyone and it’s starting to make me feel like I’m mentally disturbed. “all will be well my child. Trust in Lord” I do trust in Lord because I know that he will bring her

back before sunrise. "Ndondo yagogo, let's give mama and baba some privacy. We will come back shortly okay" she doesn't protest, she can feel the negative energy on me. I let go of her and they get out of the car. "come here" he makes me lie on his lap and slowly run his hands on my hair. "whatever you need. I'm here" gently he says, slowly brushing my hair. My eyes waters and I feel it slowly building up from deep in my stomach and it rises up my chest. A trembling sob involuntarily escapes my mouth, another follows, and I quiver wailing hysterically. Multitude of heavy devastating emotions overwhelms all of me instantaneously, crushing every fibre in me. Sadness, Guilt, fear, numbness, pain, anger, confusion, grief, sorrow I'm intoxicated in all of them combined.

I'm wrenched in tears since yesterday I haven't been able to stop. I've stopped wiping the tears that are heavily flowing .. My heart is torn, its as if its pumping blood due to the immense pain overwhelming my whole. The soft humming doesn't comfort me, it doesn't enhance my soul as it should, it does not give me strength. "uthuli otthulini, umhlabath omhlabathini, umlotha emlotheni" I'm nudged by someone, I stand still next to an open grave, trembling. The man holding a spate full of soil is staring at me sadly. I'm frozen, I can't do it, I cant say goodbye. I feel betrayed, by her and the man above all. she was

supposed to wake up, to come back to me. “Swazi, it’s time to pour the so..” “No.. NO no no.. please.. give her at least an hour she will wake up.. mama nyakcela!..” my knees weaken and I feel lightheaded... “she will wake up... pl. ma” a shallow cry escapes my mouth and darkness befalls me...

Thembeke

After a long, depressing, saddening send-off everyone goes back home. The funeral has ended, almost everyone has left. Only three woman and some teen girls that are here. The reality will kick in and I’m afraid that with this rate Swazi might lose her mind. I’ve been here, planning the funeral while she was just zoned out. not crying, not talking, not eating. Thanks to this Mthunzi guy that came to see her, after him only then did she start to cry.

I’ve been on my feet all day long, Delani might be angry wherever he is. He hasn’t been himself lately, I don’t want to go but I have to because I know Delani. When he is sick, he is stubborn and never ask for help from anyone in that yard. “hey, you need to seat down and eat something.” my colleague who happens to be my friend says, she’s been covering for me ever since my off days ended. “I’m almost done.” I say washing the load of dishes. “for the sake of that soul growing inside of you just please..” I heave a sigh. “I’ll go check on Swazi” I stand up and leave. I shouldn’t have told her, not even Delani knows

about this. I'm five weeks pregnant but I cannot break him again because I know that chances of losing this one too are high.

She is still sleeping; she's been out ever since she fainted in the cemetery. How do I even break the news to her, I have to leave my husband need me even though he won't say it. I head outside to Mthunzi, he is leaning against the car seat, there is a beer in his hand. I knock on the car window and he sees me "HI.." he says rolling down the window, I know him. he works at the hospital, where I also work. "can you please tell Swazi that I rushed back home but I will see her after work tomorrow" he nods.

Swazi...

I'm woken up by loud quarrelling, its coming from my mother's bedroom. its hard opening my eyes, headache is killing, my throat is just worse, but I wake up anyway heading towards her bedroom "that's mine! I chose it first!" says one of the woman whom I've seen at least twice in my life "come on it wont fit you, look at that fat as* you have. This one is for me!" another argues. "NO! its mine, there are plenty of them to choose, just leave this one to me!" I'm clueless of what's happening until my eyes land on scattered clothes all over the floor. "what ... ahem what are you doing" my hoarse voice grabs their attention "oh you're awake, we were just choosing which clothes to take.."

“take where??” I ask again.. “take with us, my sister is no more it only fair that we look after her clothes..” she says as if it’s the normal thing to do. My goodness it hasn’t even been a day! “you cant do that! who gave you the right to touch her things because last I checked she was my mother!” they look at me as if I’m crazy “You are married ,that means it belongs to her family. us..” my head spins literally, I’m boiling “what family, the one whose never bothered to check up on her? You were not even here for the funeral preparations but now you are suddenly family. if you don’t want me calling cops on you, you will leave right now” I’m trying to stay calm but they start arguing loudly “AND THEN!” Scratchy voice, I’ve never been this happy to hear his voice “Mthunzi, please tell them to leave..”

“you heard her leave now. Before I make you” “its already dark outside! How are we gonna find transport” “the same way you found one on your way here” he says firmly, the tongue clicks and the claps of hands follow “we are not leaving...” the other protest. “forget it! this is not your home. Phela we know the truth. Nelile is not your mo ..” a loud bang! “Leave!” screams are too loud as they push each other out and I turn to see Mthunzi holding a gun! “Mthunzi!!” he shrugs his shoulders as if he didn’t just fire a gun while I just buried my mother!

Swazi

A mouth-watering aroma hit my nostrils as my eyes shoot open, I get off the bed and follow it. The house is awfully quiet, its just empty and depressing, it hit me that I'm all alone in this world.

"you're awake" Mthunzi says as he stands before the stove, doing God knows what. I lean against the wall "you can cook" I can not hide the shock in my voice.. "yes I can, maybe even better than you" he smiles, for the first time since I met him and I feel my heart getting warm "I love your smile" I blurt out, his smile grows even wider "oh is that so?" he says, wiping his hands with a swipe. " yes! I mean no. I didn't mean it that way" "what way" he is slowly charging towards me "I mean I don't love your smile, no I do like your smile it just that.." I sigh "what else do you love about me?" he ask, grinning "nothing" he raises his jaw, amused. He is standing tall before me "don't you love me" he ask giving me a deep look, I gulp. "NO!" "are you sure" His drowsy eyes are staring down at me making my heartbeat increase. "yes.." I whisper, he is too close, and my stomach is in knots. "you love the smile but not the owner, how is that fair" he presses his hands on the wall, on each side of where I'm standing completely closing me in.. I have nowhere to run to "do you wanna know how I feel about you" he gently

says, I feel so hot “Mthunzi..” I say softly, staring at up at his eyes “do you?” I gulp and push aside heading towards the kitchen door leading outside, I have to stay as far away from him as possible.. for god sake I just buried my mother yesterday, he can not be doing this to me. its wrong “are you running away from me mignon” he is back on the stove, amusement written all over his face.. “what’s that?” I’ve never heard of it” “that’s for me to know..” “as long as its not a bad thing” I say, he shakes his head. “why are you ignoring my question?” He ask “what question?” “are you running away from me?” he is so persistent! “why would I run away from you” I say, sounding serious “if I say come and stand before me you will?” he is crazy, for a moment the pain in my heart shifted, I’m grateful that he stayed. Though he slept on the couch, but I knew I wasn’t alone. “are you not working today?” I ask, ignoring his comment “don’t worry about me Mignon” that name again! “sit down, I’ll dish up and feed you”

Thembeke

I’ve been cleaning the floors the entire day, but my heart is just torn up. I ‘m worried about Swazi, at the same time Delani is not well, he did not even go to work. “Thembeke, someone is

here to see you” I drop the mop in the bucket and follow. I find bhut Fikani

“is everything okay?” he shake his head and I feel my knees weakening “is it Delani?” “No” I release a sigh of relief, I worry about him more than I worry about myself “I want to go see Swazi but I’m afraid she might chase me away..” he says sounding stupid “do you even blame her, after what you did” “but I love her, what I did was for our family.” I chuckle “if that is your definition of love then it sucks!” he frowns “do you think she’ll forgive me” “bhut Fikani, you are asking wrong person. The only one who can answer that is Swazi, not me” he looks really worried, Jesus “you two have been close lately, did she say anything about Mthunzi, that ugly doctor” “oh, this is why you are here, to fish information about him” he is unbelievable “come on Thembeke you know how that family has destroyed us.. you need to warn her stay away from the bustard” I find myself laughing, all I know is that the Zulu family and the Mthembu’s don’t get along but I don’t know why “ please keep me out of this. Incase there is nothing else id like to get back to work”

Swazi

I've been restless since I ate breakfast this morning, I just don't feel good maybe my monthly periods are approaching. I go to the toilet and check, nothing so far. I head back to my room to check for sanitary pads just in case they start, you can never be too sure with these things. I find none so I head out searching for Mthunzi.

I hear his voice in the lounge, so I headed there. "I said I know what I'm doing Ngcebo!" Mthunzi's angry voice roars. He quickly turns, I guess he feels my presence. "I'll call you later" he drops the call and his drowsy eyes land on me. "twinkles" I smile "really Mthunzi, where do you get these weird names" "it's a secret

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do you need something?" "yes, I think that I need.." okay, this is awkward "I need to go to the shops" I say "you can't, it's too early, I'll go. Write down the list of what you might need. I need to see Ngcebo anyway" that's much better. I search for the pen and paper, jot everything and hand it to him.

He leaves and the silence becomes too loud in this house, I'm guilty. I think I caused this, I should never have said those words while next to my father's grave, what if it's all my fault that she is gone. Tears are burning my eyes as I stare at the cold walls, if only they could tell me what happened. she was fine when I left the house, she was happy. I don't know why God

would take one person that I need in this world, at this point I even prefer her angry face scolding me. it's too lonely.

These walls are closing in on me, the pain in my heart is suffocating. I feel like I'm drowning. I can't handle being alone in this house, Mthunzi has been gone for a while. The sudden knock on the door has me startled, I wipe the tears and shout "come in"

"Swazi" it's Fikani, the last person expected to see. "Fikani" I say while standing on my feet, he gives me that sympathetic look that I've been given by everyone "I'm sorry, I know how hard it is to lose someone you love. Though I can never compare it to losing a mother but losing a parent, that I know" he means his father "I don't think the pain will go away, it hurts, and I don't know what to do" tears blurring my vision. He hugs me and I break down completely.. "it's gonna get better, I'm here" he says brushing my back softly. Fikani has this side of him that is so caring and vulnerable, I used to love that about him. He breaks the hug when I've calmed down "I know that I'm the last person that you'd want to see but I'm here Swazi if you ever need a shoulder to cry on.." he gently says, I stand still as he wipes my tears softly.. "thank you" I say, our eyes lock, for a moment I see the man I married, the man I've loved for as long as I can remember.. "I'm gonna take my leave now. What I

want you to know is that don't just trust anyone Swazi. I'm not gonna beat around the bush, Mthunzi Zulu had a hand in my father's killing. We do not get along with his family, they are our enemies.." "what do you mean, I thought your father was mugged" "there is someone else, his older brother Ngcebo. He is heartless and dangerous. You remember what you found on his profile" now that he ask, I remember "an amount of money that goes to their account every month is huge" I add "the day you found him pointing a gun at me, he was angry that someone else knew about this secret. I don't know what the deal between their father and mine was but what I know is that they wanted a lot of money from him and when he didn't agree they had him killed.. " This is confusing "Swazi I'm not trying to dictate who you let in your life but I know that the Zulu's would do anything to get back at us. They know that you are my weakness, my wife and they might be using you"

my throat is dry, this might be true because Ngcebo has showed me that he doesn't like me much.

"be careful, these people are snakes...." "Am I interrupting something" my heart skips At the door stands Mthunzi, unreadable look plastered on his face. His eyes staring exactly next to me, he is staring at Fikani.. "he came to check on me.. you can go Fikani. Thanks" his gaze follows him until he goes out.

“here” he hands me the plastic and seat down on the couch..
“Mthunzi, can I ask you something” he doesn’t respond but I will ask anyway. I mean he has a gun, he suddenly came out of nowhere just when things weren’t looking good between me and Fikani,. “you are a killer?” what if Fikani is right. “do you want me to answer that” he says, coldly. “yes, you have a gun that you carry everywhere you go, you just resurfaced in my life just when things were going south and and.. Fikani said you killed his father!” I screamed; his faces changes quickly, his jaws start to clench, he is angry “I do kill when necessary, is that all you want to know?” my heart sinks “so you did kill my father in law?” “father in law?” he ask, firmly “is that all you heard!” I shout, when I’m angry my voice rises up. I can’t help it. “believe what you want to believe Swazi...” he says boldly and stands up “aren’t you going to explain to me?” “why? Why should I when you’ve already decided...” our eyes meet, his eyes staring at me with burning authority. I involuntarily turn away down when I can’t handle his intense gaze. “I’ll be in my car if you ever need something”

He leaves, what have I done!

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Swazi

I've been feeling like crap ever since Mthunzi left, as much as what Fikani said made sense I should never have assumed that it was all true. I'm too old to know that there are two sides to every story.

I begin cooking, something I haven't done for a while. I'll opt for a simple meal, beef, pap and maybe few salads on the side. I take out everything that I'll need and start the process.

I'm in the middle of it when I knock, mam Thoko gets in "ntombazane" she says "ma" I say, she seat down on an empty chair. I decide to boil water for tea "how are you holding up sis" she ask, gently. I sigh "I don't know" which is true "your mother and I have been friends since she married your father, yes she had her crazy moments but she loved you in her own twisted way" "I miss her already" she gives me a sad smile "we all miss her"

A moment of sadness falls upon us. I use it as a chance to make the tea

.I hand it to her when I'm done. "thank you sis, she loved making a tea for me,then when we argue with something she'll say ' leave my tea and go back to your house Thoko" I chortle softly "yeah, she was something else.." "if you need anyone to sleep with in this huge house do tell me. I'll bring Nokwanda and Senzeni" those are her grandkids who are ten I think , I'm not really sure "id like that mah, thank you" the six roomed house is too big for one person. "another thing, I'm not trying to pry or anything but you are still in mourning sisi so you need to keep away from men for a while. Until seven days have passed" she has a point, maybe she has seen Mthunzi getting in and out "Mthunzi was just helping out ma, we are not doing anything" she smiles standing up "I just came by to check on you, the kids will be here before six" she leaves and I continue with my pots

When I'm done cooking I dish up for myself and Mthunzi, the problem now is to call him. I swallow my pride and head out. reaching his car I knock; the window rolls down and our eyes lock for a moment.

"the food is ready" I say then quickly leave. After a while he gets in, take a seat and I hand him his food. "thank you" he utters softly.

Only cutlery is heard in the kitchen, I don't dare say a word. "she was just like you" suddenly he states, I decide to keep quiet and let him speak "my sister was bubbly, full of life, ambitious and determined, she had just been accepted in UJ to study BCom" he release a small sadly laugh, I cannot see his face because his head is bowed "and my mother, she was a strong

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amazing woman that was loved by everyone" he takes a long breath. "I'm the one who found them lying lifeless on the floor" he clears his throat. My hand find his and I hold him tight , assuring him that I'm here. "blood was everywhere, that image has haunted me my entire life".. " I'm sorry..." I suck when it comes to condolences, I just don't know which right words to say. I've never seen him this broken, to me he always seems so strong

"thank you for the food"

Tuesday morning, the second day reminding me that I'm an orphan. To tell the truth, I don't know how I am. One minute I feel ready to take on the world, the next I just feel like breaking down and cry. I'm in my room, having no plan of doing anything

at all. The kids did come to sleep with me, but they left very early this morning. Thembeke called, she couldn't come because Delani is not well, I understand she can't put her life on hold because of me.

I hear a soft knock on my bedroom door, Mthunzi is at the door "Swazelihle..." he says "Mthunzi" he comes in slowly than seat at the edge of the bed "how was your night " "okay I guess..." "I wanna tell you something, you deserve to know the truth. Its up to you who you decide to believe" I look at him listening attentively "my father and Your ex's father were best of friends from what we were told. they had a dream of owning something big, a company. My father then had a girlfriend, actually it was a fiancée because he said he had already paid lobola for her. To cut the long story short, Mthembu was smarter than him so my father gave him his whole cattle for him to start the company of which he did. As we know money changes people, when the company started making money not only did he forgot about my father, he even took his girlfriend and married her..." what! that's deep "that's when the feud between families began, all we wanted was the money to be paid back to my father nothing else. I can't go into every detail but what I know for sure is that Mthembu sent his people to kill my father but when he wasn't found in the house my mother

was killed and my sister. We retaliated and killed the man... since he was gone they've been repaying every cent every month. .."

I take a long breath, I feel so stupid for letting Fikani get to me.... "I'm sorry for judging you Mthunzi, I should have known better" I say "that's why I've come to a conclusion, I'll stop being around you all the time. I'll give you time to yourself, to heal and decide what is it that you want. You've been through a lot the last thing you need is someone controlling you..." I'm sad, I don't want him to "I understand" I say , my heart is screaming but I don't show it on my face he stands up and come to me then grab my hand making me stand. "you are beautiful you know that" he gently says, staring down at me with so much warmth. I feel his strong hand brushing my face gently..

Swazi

I am fine, but when her picture flashes in my mind I get so worked up all over again! My head has been all over the place ever since Mthunzi came with a doll look alike lady to Ndondo's birthday party yesterday. As if that was not enough she gave her the large teddy bear that surpasses even her height.

Where is the hell is this Aromat? I'm done with breakfast and it's the only thing missing. I'm sure everyone is still sleeping and here I am behaving like a wife to a man who has totally forgot about me. yes, he has, since that day he decided to give me some space he never even bothered to check on me. I had to contact Ndondo through her granny. I'm at a better space now, I even sent Fikani divorce papers last week, though he has not got back to me, but I've made the first move...

I search all the cupboards until I spot it, at the top shelf. How do I even reach that! God, please intervene. I start jumping, come back empty handed. I jump again, jump and jump still no success ah!

"need help with that?" I almost scream at the sudden scratchy voice speaking. I turn and meet his gaze, he is standing in the middle of the doorway, hands shoved deep in his pocket. "where is the doll wanna be if you are here this early, or you

just left her all alone in bed. I wouldn't be surprised because well that's your specialty! You leave and never come back!!" breathe Swazi Breath, I'm so worked up "do you need help with that" he asks again, grinning this time. I feel like mopping the floor with his face "what's funny Mthunzi, or you think I'm funny or maybe stupid. Listen here if you don't know what you want with me you can just say so damn it!" "I feel so hungry.." he says coming towards me. I'm painting, that's how frustrated I am.. "why didn't you ask the doll wanna be to cook breakfast for you, I'm not a puppet Mth.." Goosebumps shoot all over as he shut me with his fingers. Our eyes lock, he is staring at me like I'm some sort of a meat, his drowsy eyes are filled with something else, there's a burning desire in them "Tell me what you want me to do" he softly says pressing his body on my depth. My clit bounces, I feel my knees weakening, my heart is racing "I.. want.. I.." He presses even deeper, and I suck in my breath with a weak "ah" "I asked a question mon mignon.." he whispers driving me even more crazy. His face is dipping slowly, his breath tickling my skin. Our lips interlock and a I feel a wave of electricity deep within me. He slides his tongue inside my mouth and I melt.. "Mama" I freeze, completely.. "baba, what are you doing to mama" Mthunzi's body is still pressed hard on me, I try to push him but its like pushing a wall.. "I'm asking her a question Ndondo yababa. What do you want me to do Swazelihle?.." is he stupid or what .. "Aromat..." I whisper,

damn my voice is also a betrayer like my pumping body. Lord knows it was a simple gesture but who would blame me, its been ages since I had it! I think he will move but he doesn't instead he goes to my ear

"I want to make you scream my name in pleasure, I Will have you, soon." he whispers in my ear then bite it. heat is throbbing through my blood! "mama, is he hurting you" I'm screwed!

I'm running my eyes everywhere but his direction. My mind is still glued on what went on earlier. I cant believe his mere touch made me melt right under his command. Damn him "gogo, baba was hurting mama at the kitchen" I instantly cough, my eyes bulge out! "really, how" "no he wasn't, he was helping me Princess" yes I jumped in. "mama needed to release salt.." he says, looking at me with a smirk. The hell.

"on your eggs princess so I helped her get it" he adds, my stomach is in knots, what's wrong with Mthunzi today. Luckily mama doesn't seem to pay attention on this stupid conversation

" I don't like salt in my eggs. Did you put it mama" Ndondo's innocent eyes are making me feel like crap

"No Princess, I didn't"

“We Mthunzi I was talking to usbary earlier. He said you haven’t been home for a while now” she says, now that’s the conversation I can listen to “I will see them soon mah” he says, sounding not promising “I’ll let him know. khona when was the last time you visited” she asks again, I look at him but he is suddenly to shy to respond.. “ah.. I’m not sure mah” he says rubbing his head “that’s a bad habit Mthunzi. When was the last time you even talked to Phikelela, he calls me more often and he said you never call him, and don’t tell me you will call him soon because I’ll use this spoon and whip your stupid head” mothers! One minute we are talking the next threats are just being thrown in the wind. “I do talk to Ngcebo though, he talk to him so...” this man is stupid “why aren’t you the one talking to him, don’t you have his numbers” I ask, the look he gives me makes me even regret opening my mouth “yes ask him wena ngane yam, why are you looking at her like that? she asked a question” yes! Finally my ancestors are on my side “I will call him..” he says then stand up “where are you going, aren’t we talking” “I need some air..” he says, that was rude. Is he rude? “out of all my sister’s children, Mthunzi is the rude one...” she says shaking her head. I don’t know how to respond to that, so I keep my mouth shut. Who is Phikelela anyway “Phikelela is his younger brother. He is the last born. He is doing grade 11 this year” she tells me, as if she knew I was struggling. So

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he has 2 brothers, Ngcebo and Phikelela. I wonder what's pushing him away from home!

I'm washing the dishes in the sink when my phone rings, its Thembeke. "hey babes.." I say

" hey please give me 15 minutes then I'll be ready.." wait, "ready to go where?" I ask "to accompany me to see that sangoma in Ndulinde.." oh flip, it must have slipped my mind. Who would blame me "ow! Okay.. ..." "I can't go to town so I will wait for you next to the tavern" "because it's a bit far from the household that's fine.. "she hangs up. Thank God I brought enough clothes, so I just have to take a quick bath then get ready.. I can hear through her strained voice that she is dealing with so much. Delani hasn't gotten better. Its sad really, he is just bedridden now. So Thembeke thought it'll be good if she goes with a traditional route. Western ones haven't had luck in helping him....

Its been a while since we left, we've joined this road heading to Ndulinde. Thembeke said the sangoma lives next to the primary school called Mandlasonke. "he is gonna be fine" I say seeing that she's been too quite. This is weighing down on her I can tell. Today she's just a normal wife. No weave, no makeup, just a headwrap on her head and a respectful long dress. She looks really stressed.. "I've been wearing baggy clothes around him. I can't even tell him that I'm pregnant because he might just worry too much and then.." she sighs worryingly. I feel so sad for her "I'm sure the sangoma will help. Just have hope. he needs you" she closes her eyes "ooh! Swazi its just so hard, every night when he is asleep I go the bathroom and cry. when he wakes up I wipe my tears and pretend to be in control but I'm just not strong.." tears drop on her face. God what should I do now! "lets hope for the best sisi" I say, holding her hand briefly then concentrated on the road, the tarred road has miraculously ended and we are in this bumpy gravel. "its hard. I wont lie"

After a long, bumpy ride we arrive at this primary school. I stop my car and call a girl passing by

"hi, we are looking for a Qwabe household, where there is a sangoma" "gogo Mkhehlelezi" adds Thembeke... She point a

very big household with really beautiful rondavels and a big house at the centre...

we thank the kid and drive there....

We are on foot after parking the car next to the gate. This home is really beautiful, there's this real warmth demeanour around it. We are in deep rural areas, neighbors are way too far in this mountaneous area. I can spot cattle scattered all over.

I spot a boy coming towards our direction "sanibonani. she's been expecting you. Come this way" oh, strange. We follow after him passing about three Rondavels. "get in, she is inside" this one is different than others, the roof is of thatch, there are horns in different sizes hanging as we get inside the hut. The atmosphere changes and I feel shivers all over me, being here is just chilling

"hhheyiii!" I jump, someone is kneeling at the far end, the head bowed down. Thembeke grabs me and I fall harshly next to her, damn I think I hurt my bums "what took you so long...hheyii..hheyii" she huskily ask, chanting really weird names.. I think it's a man. no woman can have such a deep voice "Makhosi!" Thembeke chants with her clapping her hands, I do the same. Thing is I've never been in this kind of environment ever! My mother hated these things I'm sure she is turning on her grave

“your husband is not bewitched, his ancestors want him home” I’m pale, is he not home! “Makhosi! He is home. I left him with his mother” says Thembeke, she is responding to this, wait it’s a woman! With such a deep voice. And why would they call a woman who looks like in late thirties a gogo! Hhaykhona! “your husband is not sick, he needs to go home. He will be fine.. hhey! Hheyi!” “Makhosi!!” I look at Thembeke, she is as confused as I am. We just told this woman that Delani is home. “do not worry, the babies you are both carrying will live. They are special..” okay I’ve heard enough. Thembeke is the pregnant one here, not me weird lady! “Makhosi, he is sick. What must I do?” desperation in her voice makes me wanna puke, anyone can see that this woman is splitting crap! “I will mix herbs to help him release some pain. He is suffering, he is in so much pain.. hhey! Hheyi!! Tell the mother he will kill her son! Hheyi! Tell her to bring the child home!!” my heart is pounding, you can not mention death while I’m in the room, I haven’t healed “Makhosi!” Thembeke chants clapping her hands, she is still entertaining this, ah! “maMthonga...” she deeply chants, I look behind me, but her eyes are staring at me. her gaze is dark and commanding.. I cant face her. “my name is Swazi, I’m from..” “hheyi! Hheyi! Worry not, the Mthonga ancestors are always with you. Soon, you will be home hheyi!!!” she is concentrating on me now, I’m not the one with a sick husband you weird 30 something old gogo! Thembeke

nudges me. I am not entertaining her “you will find me outside”
I stand up and leave them. I can’t stand for this!

After a while Thembeke comes, she is carrying something. I don’t know what it is, maybe it the herbs she was promised “how much did you pay her” I ask the minute she reach me. she shakes her head in disapproval. These kind of people are known for milking desperate people for money.

“I didn’t pay a cent, she said I should come back on Friday..”
“count me out then, I wont be coming with you..” we get in the car and I start driving “please Swazi, you are the only one that can help..” she is right, this is not about me “I’ll do this for you. Why are you even entertaining her at all? she said crap the minute we walked in, I can’t believe I wasted my petrol for this!” I’m furious, I can’t even hide it

Thembeke

When Swazi dropped me off at the gate I thanked her then run towards my house. I don't knock, I just barge in rushing to the bedroom. His eyes are closed but he is softly moaning in pain .. "y..youre..b..back" he says as he feels my presence. it took him a whole minute to say these words. I stand over him and hold back tears. "I'm back sthandwa" I softly say caressing his forehead. His eyes slowly open "h..how ..d..di..d y..you g..o" my heart sinks.. "it went well, you will be fine. I promise" I don't dare tell him the whole truth, even I am still confused... "you're.... Hid..ding someth.." he stops and release a long low-spirited sigh. I'm too transparent when it comes to him, he can always tell when I'm lying but I can not tell him everything. "I hope they treated you good while I was away. let me prepare something to eat then we can bath you Sthandwa sam" I say, smiling. His eyes closes and I take that as a chance to leave. I had to quit work to care care of him, he has no one but me. His mother is just his mother. I head to the main house to prepare the herbs I was given and also make something light for my husband. We have a two bedroomed house, a lounge and bedroom. being married to Delani comes with lot of difficulties, one of them is that he never wanted to move out of his

mother's yard so we stay in the same yard as her, I cook and do everything a wife is expected to do..

I'm greeted by a mountain of dirty dishes in the sink, I wonder what the excuse was this time. Gcini always has an excuse when it is time to do house chores, she's spoilt and its annoying. I start by making soft porridge, it's the only thing he can keep down, the rest are either too hard to chew or he throws up. I also boil water with a bigger kettle to help him bath. The herbs will be put in his bathing water, then the other will be for drinking.

In a while I'm back in my room. I start bathing him, then when I'm done I feed him then help him drink the herb. I just hope the pain will be a bit better tonight.. "Mama.." he says suddenly, slowly taking my hand in his. Our eyes lock, he is thanking me with his eyes. "I love you Delani, you don't have to thank me.." his eyes waters, I put down the cup then quickly wipe his tears, I might break down any moment if he doesn't stop crying and I don't want to. I have to be strong, for him. "Delani please" I say tearing up, tears are just streaming down his face breaking me even more. I let mine fall and I cry until I feel better. Looking at him after I've calmed down, his eyes are just so dry as if he wasn't crying a second ago.. "y.. you don't ha.. ve to pre..tend with m.." he says staring at me. Then it hit

me, he wanted me to cry, to know that he is also here for me. My hand finds his and I hold him tight.

I take the kettle and dishes and head back to the kitchen. The loud shouting voices hit my ears before I even reach the main house. As I get in through the kitchen door, the shouting persists “I’ve given you what you wanted ntomazanyana! My son! What more do you want” “you know what I want Mrs Mthembu, shares in the company” I stand still and listen attentively, so Tracy is here again, demanding shares. I blame Fikani for building a house closer to home. She spends more time in here rather than in her home with her husband “you are not getting those shares, finish and klaar!” mother-in-law screams in anger, she is a stubborn woman I know, I live with her “why does it seem like you forget what I know Mrs Mthembu, I don’t mind spilling the beans to poor Delani..” that grabs my attention. Before I can stop myself I rush to the lounge “what beans will you be spilling about my husband Tracy?” they look shocked to see me.

“aw! Koti you are back” mother, she is looking at me.. “why are you talking about my husband Tracy?” I ask

narrowing my eyes at her. instead of responding she takes her bag and leaves. “how did it go?” ask mother while taking a seat. I might as well tell her “she said you must bring him home because the ancestors want him..” she looks pale for a second

but quickly mask it with anger “I told you not to go to these crazy people. My son is home, where he belongs. You just wasted your money over nothing Thembeke. You don’t listen” I sigh, I don’t know what I expected really “she also said you are killing him mah. Is there anything that I should know about?? Delani’s health is deteriorating each day and if there is somehow a chance to help him heal please just do so..” she blinks, her eyes shying away from mine. I huff then head out, if she doesn’t want to tell me then I’ll see what I can do.. there is a secret here and I will get to the bottom of it, one way or the other. I won’t be surprised if she is not Delani’s biological mother, she’s always excluded him in many things .

Swazi..

I should have driven home but here I am on my way to Ngcebo’s house. That’s where Mthunzi lives.. I can only hope that Ngcebo is not home because if he is then I’m screwed. Reaching the yard I park my car, take my handbag and get off. The kitchen door is wide open, flashes of the last time I was here hit my mind. Time flies!

I knock, no response. I get in, pass the kitchen and head towards the bedroom I used while I was here. The door is

slightly open. I knock “come in..” a scratchy voice orders and I know he is inside. Thank God. “hi” I say getting inside, I put my things on the bed and seat down. He is on his feet, brushing his haircut. It’s like he is going somewhere “Swazelihle..” he says, then give me a look. This is the part where I tell him why I’m here “is the doll wanna be still around?” I ask the dumpiest thing “who is that?” why is he pretending to be lost “the girl you came with! in Ndondo’party” I say, a bit frustrated “she’s a doll?” he ask, frowning, he is stupid. “are you jealous?” he ask, amusement plastered all over his face. “No! of course not” I argue, which is pointless because its clear that he doesn’t believe me “or you also want to be my doll?” why am I here again, I stand up ready to leave but he instantly blocks my way... “where do you think you are going, we are not done here woman” he says, a bit deep “I’m the one who came here last I check and I decide if I want to leave or not” I say, bold .

I regret saying that because he is doing what he did this morning, pressing his body in my depth “is that so?” I swallow nothingness as our eyes are locked, his eyes are normal brown but drowsy as if he just woke up from a deep sleep. His browner skin suit perfectly with his narrowed face shape, I love his close to nothing eyebrows.. His face lowers and our lips meet that my eyes automatically shuts. I feel my body quiver as he starts to kiss me, softly, gently, towing with my lips. His hands cup my breast, gently playing with my nipples and I feel

my body heating up. A soft moan escape my mouth as the kiss deepens, I wrap my arms around his neck bringing him closer.. his hands move down and he start rubbing my depths. I feel pleasure slowly building but he suddenly stops leaving me gaping.

“duty calls mignonne...” Im thinking he is joking, until he get out of the door leaving me gaping like a fish. A minute passed and I realise that he is really gone, leaving my body yearning for him, horny as hell. I feel like crying loudly , how can he be so cruel!!

"MTHUNZI!!" I run after him!

15

Swazi

I can't breathe! Have you ever been stranded, in the middle of nowhere with no petrol in your car, zero percent battery on your phone, all the cars passing you by as if everything is normal? that moment of feeling helpless, sad as if the world is suddenly on your shoulders! I am the stranded, deprived of her right as a woman, staring at people passing by in the street as if everything is normal. I thought I knew pain but this, it just a different kind of pain. It covers all aspects, from physical, emotional, spiritual to physical again! All I can say is men are trash. I quickly wipe the few tears I've shed with the back of my hands and head inside the house before I lose the little energy I have left.

I'm hungry! What's in the fridge. Yoghurt, carrots, cheese and a bottle of tru-lem lemon Juice. This man really needs to get a life, where are other nice staff, he is a doctor for Christ sake! I might as well sip on the lemon juice since there is nothing else to drink. Something moves in my chest the minute I swallow; I find myself rushing outside and I puke out everything. Damn it, I head back wiping my mouth. Water, I drink it but the bitter

after taste is still there. Cupboards, I open them. I can see Kellogg's cornflakes, koo baked beans, mayonnaise, Aromat, peanut butter, yes let me try peanut butter.

I softly moan in enjoyment as I'm stuffing myself with it. Damn this is good! I never though peanut butter tasted this good, its strange because I've never been a fan at all. I feel really great as I eat it while still on my feet. My eyes land on the mayonnaise, maybe it might go well together, hell let me do it. People should tell us, why didn't say peanut butter plus mayonnaise equals to such an amazing taste!. Phew! I feel like a new person. I make my way to the bedroom to take my things and leave. I seat on the bed, I'm a bit sleepy, I'll just take five-minute nap then I'll be out of the dick's house!

I'm in deep beauty sleep when I feel a weird funny feeling down there I whimper as the feeling comes a bit stronger "Ah" I moan involuntarily, damn this idiotic doctor!..... My head bangs on the bed, my legs wide open as his tongue is working wonders driving me crazy. I'm now wide-awake pushing his head deeper as pleasure consumes me fully, palpitating through my blood. He thrust one finger inside me hitting the right spot and I feel it building deep in stomach, I release a long, piercing cry as I quiver reaching an earth crushing orgasm. It's been long, I came to soon! "are you okay sweet cheeks" his scratchy deeper voice

says, staring at me amused. I grab him by the neck and kiss him, I want more, and he must deliver.. he kisses me back with the same hunger and energy, my dress flies over my head. Our lips find each other again and we get lost in the hot steamy kiss that has both of us wheezing. My hands are racing all over his body, his hands are rested on my breast, cupping and caressing my nipples. I can feel his member, hardening in my stomach that drives me to the edge “please....” I whimper my hands touching hm. Softly he groans, I’m dripping wet and ready. His lips moves away from mine and land on my neck, he nipples on it and I tilt my head “ relax sweet cheeks, allow me to take care of you” he vibrates in my ear. Relax! What does that even mean, this is not time to talk you douchbeg doc.. a deep faint “ah!” escapes my mouth as he slowly enters my opening, nothing in this world feels as good as the sensation of him slowly sliding in me. ...

Thembeke

Its Monday morning and I’m already at the kitchen cooking food for Delani. The herbs really helped

he said he feels like he can eat today. Gcini enters the kitchen and start scanning her eyes all over

“and then, where’s breakfast sis Tee” she ask, as if I’m some sort of a maid “open the fridge you’ll find one” I respond, she quickly rush towards the fridge, her face suddenly falls “there is nothing here!” she angrily grunt, I’m not her friend maybe I should remind her one of these days “eggs are there, bread is there, cheese, bacon . what you need to do is to use those hands to make yourself one” she heads out after clicking her tongue. I don’t have time for her. mother comes in the kitchen, take an apple and leaves, no good morning, no nothing. yeap.

I look outside the window checking if she has drove out and yes she has. I quickly run back to her bedroom. if there are answers, then they will be in her bedroom. it’s not locked, phew, I get in. where do I start? Drawers, I take everything out and start searching. Nothing serious. I sigh and look around for the next search.. “ haybo! Thembeke what are you doing in my bedroom” flip!

“I know what you’ve been hiding from Delani” I firmly say staring deep into her eyes. Tasting the waters, maybe she might spill the beans “don’t you dare tell a soul Thembeke, it will destroy Delani. Or you want him to be hurt, he is in pain as it is this will kill him” she is pacing up and down “the least you can do is to tell him who his biological mother is..” I say, she stand still and heaves a sigh of relief “leave my bedroom Thembeke.

Another thing, Delani is my child and I will never let him die while I can help. A pastor is on his way to pray for him”

Swazi

When you are very happy time flies! I can't believe I've spent the entire day, naked in bed with him. we've been at it almost the entire day and my body is beyond exhausted. I've become too clingy, something in me just can't allow me to let go. I think I'm falling in love with him, faster at that!

“Swazelihle” he says gently, we are lying next to each other, our hands intertwined “Mthunzomuhle” I say softly and turn to look at him, did he just blush! “you are something else you know, something special and rare to find..” he says pinching my cheek, I softly laugh. His face suddenly becomes serious “I'm falling in love with you Swazelihle, ngiyakuthanda maHlatshwayo” my heart pumps harder as he says genuinely. What he says is written on his face and I feel my heart melting “whatever happens I want you to know that I do love you, hard and deep. You've become a huge part of me in just a short space of time. I will forever treasure this moment with you..” I get teary

“I think I’m falling for you too, Mthunzi Zulu” I say staring at him. He takes my hand putting it on his chest, his heart is pounding “these feelings are new and scary to me but I’m willing to explore them with you by my side” his voice is filled with warmth.. “just, don’t hurt me..” I say, my stomach grumbles suddenly. Ah! I’m hungry again. He laughs loudly, he heard it too “nothing is funny wena khanda khulu!” I say then get off the bed.. “did you just say my head is big” he ask, laughing even more, ah!

I’m taking my dress on the floor when I suddenly feel his hands wrapping my waist. “Let me go Mthunzi, I said I’m hungry” I feel like eating peanut butter and mayonnaise, maybe a bit of tomato sauce. “what caused this?” he suddenly ask, touching the tiny scar behind me, just above my buttocks “I was born with it” Mthunzi is too observant, the tiny mark is unnoticeable. He is on my butts now, grabbing them and my body reacts to his touch “I love your butts, they are soft, they are like a fat cookies down the street, soft yet fatty..” did he just say fatty? “Mthunzi! izinqa zam zifana negwinya!igwinya pho” I’ll never recover from this!

Swazi

What a bad way to start my day. I was woken up by a tight chest and everything I ate the previous night came harshly out of my mouth! Here I am making brown bread with mayonnaise and peanut butter in the kitchen. one of these days I'll pay Fikani a visit and demand my job back, if he knows what's good for him he will give me what I want or else I'll sue him for wrongful arrest. My phone, its ringing in the bedroom, I head there and pick up "Thembeke" I say "babes, how are you?" she ask, "I'm good, how is Delani" I would have went to check up on him myself but I don't want to find myself in the same room as Fikani's mother. "he is a bit better, the herbs really helped him" 'oh, that's great news. I'm glad he is improving. No need to go back to the strange magogo" she laughs "that's exactly the reason why we should go back.." ah no! "ay! I don't want to go there Thembeke. The gravel road just doesn't do justice on my tyres, and beside that mountainous area is just not for me" "we are going back Swazi, I want to find out more on what was said about Delani" just because the herbs worked doesn't mean that middle ages gogo was telling the truth.

I'm busy with my delicious breakfast when the owner of a fat cookie enters the door, he comes to me and try kissing me but I look away. "come on babe, you're still angry about what I said" why is he giving me that look, as if I'm overreacting "what if it was me who said your face looks like fat cookies " yes I'm still angry, I was angry when he left for work yesterday afternoon and I still am even now "but I didn't say it was your face!" why is he still here "I'll never forgive you for calling me fat cookies from down the street, not even the Nando's fat cookies at least" he frowns "does Nando's bake fat cookies ?" "I don't know! am I the Nando's owner!" "you are beautiful when you are angry" he says gently, why is he confusing me. "don't try to soften me up Mthunzi, it won't work on me. it wont!" I point my fingers at him "I'm sorry darl wam" he says, but he wants to laugh I can tell. This idiot! "am I joke to you to you Mthunzi?" "never, you are my beautiful, yummy woman that I love so much" I hate his eyes, I'm still angry "but" He shuts me with a kiss, a gentle kiss that wash away all the anger I had a minute ago "Mthunzomuhle!!" I jump and almost fall down! God please give me the ability to vanish into thin air, I promise to pray every day! Maybe every second of the day "Ndabezitha.." Mthunzi's fainting voice says, he looks pale, the old man looks livid I feel myself shaking He slowly charges towards us, his eyes spiting fire. "ndabezitha I can expl.." Phaa!! I'm beyond shocked, he actually slapped him!

I'm pacing up and down in the bedroom, I can hear the old man shouting. After the hard slap I was ordered to leave the men talk, its concluded, after God, I fear Mthunzi's father. The way he just threw that hard slap as if he is slapping a kid. Mthunzi is old but he looked really afraid, embarrassed and humble. I yes you Mr Zulu, you are my nightmare "ungenelwe yin wena mfana! Ulala nabafazi babantu qede uyabamithisa! (what's wrong with you boy? You are sleeping with people's wives and impregnate them)" his deep angry voice shout, aw! But I'm not pregnant old man! and I'm divorcing Fikani or that doesn't count "there are plenty of woman out there to choose from and you go for someone's wife! And ot just anyone, the Mthembu's are you insane! Do you have cows to cleanse a man's household for taking what is rightfully his!" its intense, now I know why God took my father. This gender was sent to torture their kids "is this what your mother and I taught you! To sleep with people's wife! Uyaphoxa!! Uyaphoxa Mthunzi" tjoh, I wish the earth would just swallow me. he just had to barge in while we were kissing, but at least we are just kissing. "does she even know or you are just blinded by sex!!" eish! "pack your bags! We are going home . NOW!"...

The door burst open and he get in, “wear something presentable, we are going home” he says not even looking at me “what home?” I quickly ask “home, my home” I frown, is he losing his mind “Swazelihle we can’t keep Ndabezitha waiting!” he is changing and wearing something else. “don’t worry I’m not leaving” I say, he quickly turn and look at me, I feel my heart skipping. “I said to you wear something presentable. Don’t make me say it again” he is angry, but why is the anger directed to me, the poor divorcing wife!

My eyes are scanning this dungeon for the umpteenth time. okay, it’s not a dungeon. It’s a modern rondavel with a tiny lounge, a bit wide bedroom and a bathroom that does not have taps and a toilet by the way. Just the bathtub, only the big bathtub. Where does he get water then? Yes, people I was brought against my will in Mthunzi’s home, I don’t know why. All I know is that Mthunzi left me here then disappeared. The smell does show that it’s been long since he was here, the bedsheets are not appealing either. This is not what I signed up for, to be summoned without my concern. I don’t even have clothes

let’s not forget that I went straight to Mthunzi’s when I was coming from the sangoma. The only thing I have is one bra, one

underwear and one dress. No cosmetics, no clothes to change nothing! God I'm even hungry, it's been hours!

The soft knock disturbs me as I was dozing off, my eyes land on a light skinned teen boy carrying a tray covered with a cloth. He smiles showing off his teeth. "you look exactly like her" he says then put a tray on the pedestal next to the bed then stares at me in disbelief "God, I love your skin! You are just sooo cute to watch. You like a doll" doesn't he greet "hellow" I say, with a stupid smile. "hi, I'm sure they've forgotten about you and you are here all alone . hungry and pregnant. I swear I'm the only sane one in this yard, after mom. Tjo Men are one disturbed species" he claps his hands, wait is he not a man! and why do they keep insinuating that I'm pregnant! "I'm not pregnant" I say, a bit frustrated "oh sweaty Ndabezitha's dreams never lie. I can't believe bhut Ngcebo and that goat Mthunzi decided to impregnate at the same time.. and both of them are denying this, don't they know that if you have unprotected sex you say hello to babies." okay, first he is too loud, secondly "I am not pregnant." He takes a seat on the bed and look at me "it's confusing, I know. my father has been having really strange dreams lately. " There are people who still believe in dreams in this time and age "eat, you need the strength. Can I call you Doll?" I sigh and open the tray. It's a chicken stew with pap, no salads nothing. well beggars can't be choosers. I take the plate and muff myself, its been long! "I'm Phikelela by the way, the

only handsome in this yard” he finally introduces himself. I swallow then smile at him. “I’m Swazi” “where is Mthunzi?” I ask, his little brother is really cute and warm compared to him and Ngcebo “he is being drilled by my father and his brother. He brought a disgrace into our home by sleeping with a married woman. He should apologise and cleans your husband’s yard.” this again! “oh, but Fikan and I are in the middle of a divorce. We are separating him and I” “it doesn’t work that way darling, there is no divorce in our tradition. So technically you are someone’s wife and for him to claim you as his, he should cleans the family you are wedded to first, pay dowry in that family then he can marry” this is crap, all of it. but I don’t say “thanks for the food” he smiles then take the plates “no worries..” as he about to stand up I stop him. “so, tell me when was the last time Mthunzi came here” “I don’t remember, its been a while though. One of the things that angers Ndabezitha even more is that he doesn’t come home anymore” tjoh “but why? This is his home” there must be a reason “you should ask him, what else did he tell you about him. did he tell you about Ndongdo’s mother?” he ask I shake my head no “he hardly talks about her” I say “mmmm” there is a story behind that mumble, I’m sure and I have a feeling I wont like it “is she still alive?” I ask, staring at him. I’m already being a psycho “no no! she is gone” he says and I heave a sigh. “so she came here more often” I ask “yes, she was a reserved woman, my father really

loved her” my heart pings.. “aw!” am I jealous of a ghost, I see a smile approaching his lips “are you jealous?” he ask, smirking. “I’m not..” he nods while smirking. Then he stands “let me go, I have dishes to wash then homework to write” he says then he leaves.

Instead of looking like a depressed girlfriend let me get busy, I start by taking off the bedsheets, when Phikelela comes back he will have to give me the new ones because by the look of things I’m not leaving anytime soon. Something suddenly drops as I’m busy, it’s a picture. I take it, as I’m about to look at it Mthunzi barges in, our eyes lock for a moment. He doesn’t look good; his presence though is just heavy, He doesn’t look like the playful Mthunzi I’m used to. he is just unapproachable “what’s on your hands” he says as his eyes land on the picture “stop snooping around my house Swazelihle!” he grabs it from me and go out with it, not after clicking his tongue. My heart drops and I feel tears threatening my eyes. Maybe Ndondo’s granny was right about him. he is rude

After what feels like eternity he enters again carrying a kettle. He passes me heading to the bathroom. He comes out and leaves. In less than a second he enters with a large can of water “come and bath” he says, I follow after him. He prepares water for me, when he is done I strip naked and enter the bathtub. I think he will leave but he starts bathing me. I don’t get why he

is angry at me because I'm not the one who slapped him, and I didn't bring myself here... "I'm sorry to cause trouble between you and your father" he stops and stare at me straight in my eyes. He is suddenly carrying this heaviness demeanour; I turn away failing to keep up with his hard stare. Tears start filling up my eyes, his sudden cold behaviour is hurting me I feel his hands on my face, he makes me look at him and start caressing my face wiping my eyes.. Slowly he brings my face closer and he kisses me, gently, passionately, our tongues dancing in sync reviving every emotion in me. In that heartening kiss I find him, I feel him from the depth of my heart, his touch melts all of me and take me to a place of pure love and happiness. I know now that I'm deeply in love, I love him with everything in me.

Its in the middle of the night when my phone start ringing, Mthunzi's hands are holding me tight but I manage to take my phone. Its Thembeke. This late! "hey.." "HE IS NOT TALKING, HE IS NOT OPENING HIS EYES!!! SWAZII!!! PLEASE HELP ME! PLEASE!11" she is wailing painfully; I feel my heart stop beating.

17

Swazi

I'm wide awake since he left a while ago. minutes feels like hours of misery. Mthunzi refused to let me go and see Thembeke. He left, I don't know with who, but he is a doctor, I'm hoping he will arrive just in time to help. It took us about 30-40 minutes yesterday to get to these walls, I'm sure he will be there in 20 minutes if he drives faster. I can't imagine what Thembeke must be going through right now, I'm even afraid to call her and find out.

Thembeke..

It's been a while since I called Swazi, I don't even know why I did because she can't help with anything. I just had to call someone, and she was in my mind. We are now seating on the bed, looking despondent next to Delani. I panicked when he wasn't responding but he is still breathing, that's a blessing to me.. "we should have drove him to the hospital, where is this ambulance?" I impatiently ask "the ambulance is on its way, my

son is gonna be fine” I stare at her angry “its your fault, all of it is your fault! He was doing fine until that stupid pastor showed up!!” I’m hysterical, my head is spinning “you know I was just helping my son and I won’t apologize for that” “the only help he needs is the truth! Nothing else.” I hear the sound of a car, I thought it was the ambulance but Fikani budes in “mah, what’s happening?” his eyes are all out “help us carry your brother to the car outside, the ambulance is taking too long” another car is heard before we start to carry him, it has to be an ambulance. “I’ll go and check” Says Fikani then he heads out. I stand up and start gathering his things. Suddenly loud commotion breaks off, the voices are that of men because they are deep and strong

“and then” mother says, I also look at her confused. The door burst open and what is at the door is not what I had in mind “Bheka” she says looking so shocked and pale. Mthunzi is at the door, with an older version of him and a much much older version, Fikani follows after them looking ready to kill. I’m confused

“Pamella”

both of them are staring deeply at each other, like long lost , I don’t know “ahem” I clear my throat trying to bring then into the matter at hand, my husband “who told you?” she suddenly ask, her voice shaking.. “told me what?” the old man asks

“stop! stop doing that because I know that you know, otherwise you wouldn’t be here! right now..”

“what exactly are you talking about Pamella?” “this! What you are doing now pretending not to care, pretending to be clueless brought us to this mess today!! You don’t change Bheka, always oblivious!” she screams angrily.. “mah, I can kick them out, they are here to finish my brother off” Fikani roar in anger, but no one pays attention.

“Just tell me who told you, they had no right! absolutely no right!” she is screaming, but she is speaking in riddles. Why is she livid all of a sudden “Pamella, if you don’t know wh..”

“damn it Bheka! Damn you!!” wait, she is breaking down “you knew, all along.. you knew but you pretended that you didn’t you psychopath!” “I DON’T KNOW WHAT YOU TALKING AB... ”

“HE IS YOUR SON! DELANI IS YOUR SON AND YOU JUST STAND HERE PRETENDING TO BE LOST!!”

WHAT!!

Swazelihle

I’m woken up by the queasy feeling in my stomach, I quickly stand up and drink water. It dies down. Mthunzi is not in the bedroom, his side is just empty. I take my phone and call

Thembeke, she doesn't pick up and I feel myself getting hot. I dial Mthunzi's number.. "I'll see you in a short while.." he says the minute he answered "is Delani okay" I ask, he sighs 'he is gonna be fine, he is here" "here, where? " "at home, it's a long story. I'll see you just now" "I'm hungry Mthunzi, bring something to eat, and, bring peanut butter as well" he says "ngiyakthanda yezwa (I love you)" he just had to make me blush and hangs up leaving me all smiley. I wonder why they brought Delani here, of all places. I get in bed and cover myself, it's a bit chilly.

I'm almost dozing off when I hear the key turning

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Mthunzi locked me in, yer was I too worried to even realise that he locked the door with me inside "the drama in this family never ends" that's the first thing he says, does he ever greet "Phikelela" I say, he put down the tray. I scan for my fav, there it is. I grab it and start muffing, " this is so good mm" "are you not going to ask me what happened, well I'll tell you anyway. As it turns the sworn enemies actually had a son together! Hehana, so I have another older brother. What's his name again, Delani" I choke, really hard until he pats my back. It doesn't stop, he hands me water and I drink it. after a while I'm calm.

"i need to go or else I'll be late for school" he leaves. I'm sure he is confused why I just reacted this way

My heart is beating hard in my chest, I'm beyond shocked. How can this happen to me! I don't care about the stupid secrets, if that woman was telling the truth then that means I'm pregnant, am I really? Come to think of it, why the sudden love for peanut butter, no I need to be sure first. I must see the doctor first, if it's the truth then I must visit that woman, she owes me some answers!

I'm staring at my tummy in the wardrobe mirror, there is nothing that shows any sign of pregnancy. Mthunzi enters the door looking gloomy. "ayi, this family !!" that the first thing he says as he throws his body on top of the bed. I join him "I can't believe he has been in our eyes for years! What if we killed him, women are selfish and she is busy saying she thought Ndabezitha knew, how! How was he supposed to know when she hid the truth from him, God knows what else she is hiding! Or I swear to God I will.."

"Mthunzi, breath.." tjob, he is so worked up, its understandable though. "how is Delani?" I ask "he is going to be fine" he says , heaves a sigh then stare at me. "I'm sorry about this whole thing, I'm sorry with the way my father summoned you here. are you okay" he gently ask, giving me a warm look. "don't worry about me, how about you tell me why you don't like

coming home” “I just.. that image of my mother and sister is still in my head, when I’m here its like I relive that moment over and over again” that’s deep “I’m sorry babes, that must be awful” I say, caressing his arm “its okay, maybe it will get better. I miss you” I smile “I miss you too” he grabs my face and kiss me, I love his slow gentle kisses. They are my weakness

“I need to ask you something” he says as we stop, staring in each other’s eyes “what is it?”

“you and your..ex. what kind of a wedding did you have ” why is he suddenly interested in my past

“why? Why are you asking?” “just tell me, I’ll tell you why?” “we had a white wedding” he sighs “thank God, in our culture white wedding is like a party, its not regarded as the real marriage. Did you perform all the pre wedding ceremonies, from abakhongi, lobola, izibizo, umkhehlo..” “well, not that I know of. It was just mother and I so we just go married. My mother just demanded a sum of R50000 I think and he transferred the money” I don’t get why this is important

“technically, you are no one’s wife because no traditional route was taken for you to be rightfully married to him. its only on paper, your ancestors must be angry for him to just take them for granted” okay this too much for one person, I do

know culture here and there but the deep sh*t, I'm totally clueless "this means I don't have to cleanse anyone's home. Ndabezitha must hear this. Damn, that clown ex of yours is a total bullshit" really, a clown!

Swazi

“this means I don’t have to cleanse anyone’s home. Ndabezitha must hear this. Damn, that clown ex of yours is a total bullshit” really, a clown! “you are something else, one minute you are fine, the next you are just crazy” he smiles and suddenly he flips me over “babe!” I scream staring up at his drowsy eyes “I love your lips, they are just so soft, delicious, yummy with a bit of sweatiness” he says caressing gently, my cheeks are so warm “can I tell the world how much I love you” he ask, softly “yeah” I reluctantly say, giggling “I LOVE YOU SWAZELIHLE!!” I quickly put my hands on his mouth laughing “Mthunzi, are you crazy! How can you scream like that” imagine, a scratchy voice screaming this early morning, people will think I bewitched him “I’m crazy, crazy in love with you mignonne” he says , no longer smiling. our eyes lock and I can see the fire in his eyes, the love I have for him keeps growing in me “I love you Swazelihle, Cebisa. You are everything I’ve been praying for and more. Since I met you you’ve managed to shift away my demons, brought back hope and happiness in my life, being a mother to my daughter and just being you, the crazy yet warm woman that I love so much” tears glitters in my eyes, his deep gaze is plastered on me and I’m just overwhelmed. “I appreciate you Swazelihle, your presence in my life is like the light of a rising

son. You are my light, my end, my beginning, my everything..” I grab his neck and smash my lips on him, the kiss is filled with strong emotions and our hearts does all the talking that only us can listen to, our heartbeats dancing on the same rhythm that only us enjoy, our heart speaking the only language that can only be understood by us, no one else but us.. “Bhuti Mthunzi!..” he just barged in, I’m embarrassed and in shock. “ You are busy lip locking while that dragon of your father is looking for you” its confirmed, he lacks essential manners. Mthunzi is glued on top of me, not moving at all “Phikelela, will you ever change? This is my house you need to respect that. what if you got in while..” he heaves a sigh , he is angry, I can tell “you need to move” I whisper, luckily I’m not naked. How can he just barge in knowing very well that I’m here “just say it, I know everything no need to treat me like a baby..” he jumps off instantly “what do you know?” “well, I do know that.. that” with that murder look, I’d stutter too. “I’ll teach you a lesson you’ll never forget, I will squash..” he is about to grab him when he runs out and Mthunzi run after him “baba! Mthunzi wants to kill me! I’m so innocent, I haven’t lived my life to the fullest.. bhuti I’m sorry!” yes, he is yelling in the yard. Hai this kid is not okay I swear. Isn't he for school?

Checking my cell phone time is around half one, after breakfast I decided to take a nap. I want to talk to Mthunzi, I need to go back home and start figuring out what to do with my life. As if he reads my mind, he enters looking rather exhausted “are you okay” I ask, scanning his face “I need to be with you. I need you, now” he says, a bit deeper than usual “but I’m here” he is confusing me “ I want to feel you, to touch you, to be buried deep within you and just listen to your soft moans and...” my heartbeat increases “Mthu..” “Let’s get out of here, now”

Mthunzi is strange sometimes but I love him, nonetheless. I keep on stealing glances at him as he drives. We’ve left the Khoza village behind and approaching Eshowe town, I’m glad to be out of the Zulu household, it’s been suffocating really... “what?” he asks “what did you tell your father?” “that there was an emergency at the hospital” I shake my head, naughty bastard “and that emergency is my poor vjay” he laughs, really loud and I find myself smiling “what can I say, I missed my queen cake” queen cake, at least I’ve graduated from fat cookies to a queens cake, congratulate me “I’m hungry and I need food” I blurt out, yes I really feel hungry “What do you need” “KFC wings, and peanut and mayonnaise, something to drink and a piece of bar one cake” he shake his head but keep quite. Good for him. As we reach Town, he stops and gets out. I

close my eyes and take a nap; he will wake me when he comes back.

“Swazelihle, wake up” he is shaking me gently, KFC smell hit my nostrils and I feel my mouth watering. I seat up and start eating wings. He start driving and I muff myself, something is missing though “where is chilli sauce?” I ask, why is staring at me like that “what chilli sauce?” he stares at me briefly with a frown “Chilli sauce, please don’t tell me you forgot Mthunzi” he wouldn’t dare try me, “you never asked for chilli sauce Swazelihle” “I did!” “you didn’t” “I did!” “No you did not! are you losing your mind now Swazelihle?” my heart is heavy, I’m being abused “what are you insinuating Mthunzi? You think I’m crazy, oh God! He said I’m crazy!” “NO! I didn’t say you are crazy..” “you did! I’ve been nothing but a good girlfriend and you thank me with a plate full of nothing..” I shouldn’t be shedding any tear at all, but I cant help it. “okay, I humbly apologise munt wam, you know I love you right” he is cupping my face

I don’t want to blush but.. “I want my sauce, then I will forgive you” he stops the car then turn and we are going back to Eshowe, to get my sauce. Such a gentleman “I love you” I say pinching his cheek, he is so grumpy sometimes, anyway I don’t care.

If looks could kill I'd be six feet under but hey I don't care about haters I love my meal. Wings, chilli sauce, peanut butter and mayonnaise. It tastes so good, I can't get enough.. wait "stop the car!!" I yell suddenly when I feel something moving up in my chest.... "what.." "JUTS STOP THE DAMN CAR!" Just as he stops instantly I get out running, I harshly throw everything up. damn, my throat is burning! When I'm done throwing up he quickly hands me bottle water, I drink it all in one go, perks of having a boyfriend that is a doctor, always water can in his car.

When we reach Ngcebo's house I'm too exhausted to even utter a word. The minute he unlocks the door my first stop is water, I drink two more glasses and put down the cup. I should ask him why we always come here, doesn't he have a house of his own! I head to the bathroom; I need to water my body and relive all the tension and exhaustion. Why is he following me like my shadow? I get in the bathroom and wash my face. Phew! I feel a bit better

I strip naked then hear a gasp behind me, serves you right you psychopath! I get in the tiny shower and check the temperature, I wonder if there is even hot water, ow there is, great. I feel him behind me but I ignore him. For how long though, this man can't keep his hands to himself! his hands are travelling all over my body, my thighs, butt, my back, my breast,

even my sweat vjay. I'm gaping for air, throwing my head on his hard chest. my body is responding too fast as his lips keep on kissing every inch of me. The steam in the shower makes things even more intense!

"Mth..nzi" I say breathlessly "mignonne" he respond, his voice even more scratchy and deeper.. "we ..we should shower" what a long sentence! "aren't we showering" he says turning my body to face his "damn! I love my favourite soft fat cookie" he says grabbing my butt, I'm speechless!

I am sore down down there, Mthunzi had no mercy on my poor vjay, well I enjoyed the sex in the shower. Even thinking about it makes me hot! I'm on my way home, driving my very own baby. Mthunzi is driving behind me, as to why he is following me around I don't know. its almost dark outside, but at least I'll sleep on my bed tonight.

Reaching home, I park my car and wait for Mthunzi in the yard. I stare at him as he charges towards me, he is my man and I love him. "staring is caring" okay, I've never hard if such "doesn't that saying goes like "staring is rude?" I ask , he

shrugs his shoulder. “babe, don’t you have a house of your own? I mean I doubt its wise to be having sex in your brother’s shower” I’ve been meaning to ask him “Ngcebo is hardly there, and beside what he doesn’t know wont hurt him” he is crazy “he is your brother I’m sure he won’t hate you if he ever finds out, but me. he will surely hate me forever; he doesn’t like me as it is. and besides that, you are an old man you must have your own space” “I do have a house” he says, sounding a bit uncomfortable “you do? Is it too far or” “no, its not. Its about 30 minutes from Ngcebos house” okay, this is strange “then why do we keep using Ngcebo’s house, his shower while you have your own. We should be doing all the nasty things in your house not Ngcebo’s” “no! we cant” wait “why?” “because, because Qhamkile used to sleep on that bed, it’ll be disrespectful;” breath in , out “who is Qhamkile” “Ndondo’s mother” I feel my heart dropping to zero “you are still holding onto her memories, what does that make me then, a sidechick over a ghost!”

his face immediately changes, he is angry “don’t you ever shout at me, do we understand each other Swazelihle” “you are a total bullshit Mthunzi!...” “angizwa!” “You are a liar and a hypocrite; you are no different from Fikani. both of you are liars and cheaters, I’m competing with aghost! A ghost” I clap my hands “did you just compare me with that lousy ex! Really Swazi?” “just leave me alone Mthunzi, GO!” “do you ever give

me a chance to explain or you always exaggerate and make everything about you! Not everything is about you woman!" I laugh, "what's there to explain Mthunzi, you just told me that I can't go to your house because you are afraid to disrespect a dead ex! Did she give it to you better than me! is she a better kisser.." "don't talk about her like that!" he roars, staring at me with burning eyes! He is livid. I'm done, I turn and walk away wiping my tears, what am I to him if he is still hanged up on his ex. I don't dare look back. I unlock the door and get in..

as I switch on the light I scream "FIKANI!" he is seating on the sofa with a deadly look on his face "I heard that you've moved on but I didn't think it was serious. So vele vele you've left me, for that dick!" I gulp, his look is unsettling "how did you get in Fikani? How long have you been here?" he stands up, slowly charging towards me "I have my own keys remember, I'm your husband after all" I look at the door and at him, if I can...

"don't even think about running.." he says "what do you want Fikani?" I ask, my voice shaking "oh sweaty, you and I still have a long way to go. But I will fix us, I promise" the way he said it makes me shiver. I try to run but he grabs me by my arm and I bump onto his chest and whimper. Tears are streaming down my face, my heart is pounding hard in my chest, I'm freezing in

fear “you asked what is it that I want, I want you sweetheart”
he says creepily, his fingers running on my face. “Fi.kan I’m
sorry, please.. ” an evil chuckle breaks off from his lips.. “just
answer this one question, just once, tell me do you still love
me? do you still think about me , do you still see me as a
husb..” “let her go!” ...

Swazi

Relief washes all over me as the scratchy voice coldly says,
Slowly he lets go of me and I breathe out

“well well well, if it isn’t the wive’s stealer” says Fikani clapping his hands “go outside Swazi” he orders but I don’t move, I’m about to protest but one look from him sends me out with a quick speed. As I reach my car Fikani comes out in a high speed, he passes me as if I’m not there and off he is gone. Strange, I expected flying fist like the last time.

“pack your bags, we are leaving” he says the minute I enter the house “pardon” I say, he gives me one deep stare and I feel uneasy “I didn’t stutter did I” he says “I’m not going anywhere Mthunzi. This is my home and I won’t allow anyone to make me leave my home, not even you” he chuckles, an angry chuckle “so you think I will just let you sleep here, alone after what just conspired? What do you take me for Swazi?” I’m demoted from Swazelihle to Swazi “sadly this is not about you Mthunzi. Its about me making decisions for myself. this is my home and I’m staying” I say then head towards the kitchen, I need to make something to eat. It’s been long since I felt this comfortable in

my own space, I've been away for far too long..

I start by defrosting drumsticks; I'm craving something meaty. I can feel his intense gaze on me, but I try to concentrate on my cooking. Am I still shaking yes, I'm scared to death and I won't lie, it will take a while to forget today's events. But I can't keep running, I'll get a restraining order against Fikani " I will sleep in mom Thoko's house" I say when I can't take his burning gaze. He finally takes a seat and watch me while I cook.

In a while I'm done with my cooking, I dish up for both of us and seat opposite him. I've been eating for a while when I lift up my eyes, he hasn't touched his food at all. 'what's wrong, is it too salty? I can make something quick...' he holds my hands and start brushing it gently. I stare at him as he stares at me too, his gaze is really cutting and I find myself facing down "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have raised my voice at you" I softly say

"what kills a relationship for me is disrespect and you Swazi don't know how to speak when angry, uyadilika nje as if I'm one your friends! I hate being shouted at, I'm not a cluesles child, I'm not a school boy Swazelihle" tjoh,

I swallow nothingness, I'm naturally loud when I'm angry. I can't help it. "please look at me" I can tell he is still angry but I look

up anyway “I’m not a simple man Swazi I admit that. I was also wrong for bringing up Ndondo’s mother especially in that manner” he says “you made me feel like I don’t matter, as if I’m just an intruder in your life, as if I’m not enough” his hold tightens “I’m really sorry that’s not what I meant...” “you haven’t moved on from her and I can’t , I can’t be your second best Mthunzi..’

“you’re not, I assure you will never be a second best. I told you, you are my light, my everything and I meant that” he looks sincere “then why? Why does it feel like I’m competing to someone who is no longer in the land of the living?” he heaves a sigh and stand up blackfacing me. “I blame myself for her death” he suddenly blurts out, I keep quiet and let him speak “we had a huge fight, I told her to leave. On her way back home she was involved in a car accident and...” my heart sinks “babe, it was not your fault, it was just her time” he doesn’t move. I stand and head towards him. I hold him tightly from behind and rest my head on his back.. “I know, I just can’t help but feel guilty. Had we not fought that day maybe, mayb..” “Mageba, you need to let go of that guilt feeling because if you don’t, you’ll never be fully happy. Accept the past and let the presence consumes you so that we can plan our future together” he turns and our eyes meet “you said we” he says, raising his left eyebrow “you think I’ll let such a fine man slip

my off hands, no ways!” his lips cracks into a warm smile

“ngiyakthanda Swazelihle, always remember that” I throw myself at him, his arms encircles me. Tightly we hold each other, listening to our heartbeat. I feel warm and protected in his strong arms as I lie on his chest, I’m home.

ThembeKa

Wonders shall never end! That’s what’s been in my mind ever since we set foot inside the Zulu homestead. I leave Delani fast asleep on the bed and head out. We were given a Rondavel which is at the far corner. This one is roofed with thatch, unlike the other ones in this yard. Its a beautiful home situated in the deep rural areas. I stand outside and capture my surroundings. Zulu homestead has a huge flat yard with a kraal located in the middle, the big house which I don’t know how many rooms yet is where I’m headed. There are even chickens running around freely. It’s just a warm home, though there is something missing but it’s a home. The neighbours aren’t that far though, but there is so much space in between that would even fit a mall. Reaching the big house, I knock

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the loud brother appears wearing a tie. He is preparing for school I guess. "hello" I say, smiling "come, make yourself comfortable. There is the kitchen you can start by making porridge, for Ndabezitha , he only eats porridge in the morning. The rest, well you are a woman you'll figure it out" he pats my shoulder and disappear in one of the bedrooms. What the!

I head to the so-called kitchen, its clean though and huge, I can move freely with no worries. I can't believe goats and chicken suffered for the sins they never even knew about in the first place. Yes, goat have been slaughtered, chickens and all the essential process that is performed when welcoming a long lost son home. However, I'm glad that he is home, where he belongs and he has been speaking softly though, I'm hoping that by next week Friday he would have improved. That woman! That's why he's been excluding my husband in almost everything, she knew that he wasn't a Mthembu, yet he made us all believe in her lies! Yeer the nerve she has is unbelievable.

Its been a while since I get back from the rondavel, Delani is still sleeping and I let him be. At least when he recovers I'll be able to go back to work. My phone rings bringing me back from my thought

“sister wife! I cant believe you are still my sister wife, I mean you literally followed me” she laughs, so Mthunzi is my brother in law, life is just one crazy episode. “yeah neh, life is crazy these days, how is Delani though?” “he seems to be improving but it’s too early to tell, anyway how are you doing” she sighs “I don’t know, I’m on my way to see that woman from Ndulinde” I’m shocked “I thought you didn’t want to go back there” “with all the recent revelations, I must go back and find out more about what she said” “fair enough, Goodluck babes, I would have gone with you but right now it’s just a bit impossible” “I understand babes. Take care of those people. I’ll talk to you later”

I’m on my way to see that sangoma, she must clarify some things for me. I left home around 8 in the morning, I want to get this over and done with. Mthunzi knows that I’m going somewhere in Ndulinde to consult a sangoma, but I never told him why, even if I wanted to what was I gonna say.

Damn this gravel road, it’s so bumpy and too dry causing a brown smoke. I’ll have to recheck my tyres and pass by the car wash after this journey. I suddenly hit a bump and I flinch; God protect my baby. My first and only car so far, I’m too stingy to

buy another one. And even if I wanted too, its just not the right time at the moment.

The road is not that busy, I can count the cars that have passed me, many of them are very speeding vans, really old vans but full of people inside, I wonder where they are heading to. I haven't seen a single taxi, strange place. my phone rings, my heart swells up in excitement "Mageba" I say, blushing "Mama wabantwana" he says gently, I melt even more "you love children don't you?" I say, we haven't touched the subject of the pregnancy allegations made by his father. On the other hand I also haven't even find time to go to the hospital

"yes I do love children" I'm not surprised "how many do you want?" I ask "ten, 8 boys and 2girls" what! " babe! You are saying it as if its easy to bring children in this world" he is laughing, he finds this whole thing funny. I join and laugh as well "its not, some of u have to sweat our blood out on top of someone" I giggle "you are just dirty, I didn't mean that hawu, I meant labour pains , sleepless nights during pregnancy and being fat and looking like a whale!" sometimes I feel like God created women just to punish them, was there no other way to bring a child except to push them out in a very tiny hole, my body crawl just by thinking about it "you are a strong woman, I'm sure you can handle everything. And besides you have the

die-hard next to you” I laugh “since when are you die ha..” flip!
Where did the kid come from. Scratchy tires are too loud as I
try to avoid her but I suddenly hit something hard. I can’t
control my car, it happening too fast as it flips over and and..

Swazi

My body feel so uncomfortable and drained as I open my eyes "you're awake" I painfully moan, startled of the voice that came unexpectedly "sorry I didn't mean to startle you, let me help you sit up. how do you feel?" she helps me seat. It's a nurse. "I'm in pain" I remember my car rolling but nothing else comes to mind, I might have blacked out "where am I?" I ask "in Ndulinde clinic, your car rolled down few kilometres away. we are still waiting for ambulance to take you to Stanger hospital for thorough check up..." "the kid! There was a kid.. .." I suddnely panick "the girl is alive" I release a sigh of relief, then I remember something ="my baby!" I panick, my hands flying to my tummy.. what if I really was pregnant, I cant lose another baby "you are pregnant?" the nurse ask "I'm not sure but I think I was"

"let's be sure then, I'll have to take your urine. You know the drill. I'll look for a wheelchair then wheel you to the lady's room. You will tell me if you don't feel comfortable okay" she leaves me in total panic, my body feels like it's on fire, but I can move my body as hard as it is..

When the nurse comes back she wheeled me towards the lady's room, and I did the process. She then takes me back to the bed .. "don't think too much, you just had a traumatic experience" she says looking at me. "do you know where my things are, the ones that were in the car. I want to call my family.." she shakes her head , how will I contact Mthunzi now! "if you hear something let me know" I say. She nods then leaves.

I'm dozing off when I suddenly here loud commotion growing with each passing second. It's like they are outside to where I am because I can hear everything .. "WHERE IS SHE? SHE WILL TELL ME WHY SHE TRIED TO KILL MY CHILD! WHERE IS SHE?" a very livid voice of a woman is shouting angrily. I feel myself getting hot, something tells me they are looking for me "ZOLA, WOULD YOU CALM DOWN! ZOLA!" the door burst open and a livid woman get in and just stand still looking shocked, sweat is running all over her face, I can tell she has been running. A man suddenly barges in after her and freeze on the doorway. . "Q.. Qhamkephi!" his shaky voice says

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he is staring at me as if I'm a ghost. This is confusing. I look near me but I realise that he is referring to me. "I'm .. sorry but I'm not.. I'm" I stutter, what's this name again "Qhamkephi" the

lady says. “yeah, that. I’m Swazi, my surname is Hlatshwayo but I was married to Mth.” I stop myself before I give too much information. “we’ve finally found you!” he rushes towards me and crush my bones. I instantly cry out in pain causing him to jump a bit and let me be “ I’m sorry.. I’m sorry I don’t know what came over me” he says still staring at me as if I’m a long lost friend. “I need to make a phone call” then he heads out. I’m left with the lady even more confused.. “I was.. we were at work when I received the call. Here everyone knows everyone so.” She takes a seat at the edge of the bed. Gone is an angry woman.

After a while he returns, still gives me the same dazed look. “maNdlovu is on the way. She will confirm everything, for now we wait” he says then keep quiet. As If I’m supposed to know.

“who is MaNdlovu?” I ask again “my grandmother..”

***** Its Saturday morning, the time reads 05: 50 on the wall. I’m glued on the bed staring into space. It still feels surreal, as if I’m dreaming. God works in mysterious ways indeed. Yesterday I was taken to Stanger hospital and all is well, bruises here and there but I’ll live.

My hands fly to my tummy and I hold it praying silently, yes I am pregnant and miraculously my baby survived. “don’t think too much, its not good for you and the baby” the doctor says while heading towards my bed. I’m in a full ward with other

women “I’m okay “ I say. She smiles and start doing her thing then after a while she leaves. I cant shake this strange feeling in me, my mind is still glued on that strange encounter I had with those people who are the parents of the girl. The ambulance arrived while waiting for the so called maNdlovu..

My body is still in pain. since I’m pregnant I’m not allowed to drink strong painkillers, and the one I was given aren't helping at all. I’m about to close my eyes again when my eyes lands on him standing in the middle of the doorway.. “Swazelihle” my heart skips, he gets in slowly, not removing his eyes from me.

“don’t ever scare me like that” he is now standing next to the bed.... “I’m sorry” I say, blinking away tears in my eyes. I’m so emotional now that I see him. Gently he help me sit up then gives me a long soft hug. His hands playing with my hair. I’m struggling to hold in tears so I let them fall, its all starting to sink in. The fear of almost killing a little gill, fear of losing my child, my life and it’s just overwhelming. As the hug stops he cups my face and stare deep in my eyes “I’m glad you are okay” he gently says. I’m glad he is here. “how is my little warrior in there” he suddenly ask “you knew?” I ask, shocked.

“Ndabezitha planted those ideas and his dreams are mostly

accurate" strange old man with creepy dreams. Mthunzi's hands are already brushing my tummy

"I need you to be strong for my boy" for the first time since this whole thing I smile genuinely

"who said it's a boy?" I ask "me" he is crazy but I love him anyways

Narrated

“you did not cook, again? what the hell Tracy?” Fikani shout angrily as he finds her on the phone, seating on the sofa, her swollen feet resting on top of the coffee table. His mind takes him back to Swazi, she hated this habit. He’d always do it just to annoy her and it would always work “you are back, how was the meeting” she asks, typing a message on Facebook without paying attention to him.. “you are unbelievable!” he roars, standing before her. Its hot outside, Saturday’s meetings are always exhausting, and the only thing that kept him going was to be welcomed with a plate of food with a cold drink, eat, take a cold shower then rest. Finding out that there is no food just infuriates him. But Tracy doesn’t seem to mind “Tracy I’m talking damn it...” “yey! I’m not Swazi, you will direct me with respect not as one of your boardroom sex buddies Fika!” he chuckles, hard to believe that this has become his life. “Swazi’s name popping up again, really Tracy. Didn’t we agree that we won’t bring her up, ever!” “whatever Fika, just let me rest tu, I’m pregnant for Pete’s sake I need stability not stress!”

“so talking to your husband brings stress, you are jus.. Jesus!” he finds himself speechless. Scanning his eyes around it is

obvious, she hasn't cleaned the house either nor does she looked like she bathed

"did you even bath Tracy?" he ask, staring down at her. Instantly she stands up all worked up. nobody wants to be asked such personal sensitive question, especially to pregnant woman with mood swings.

"what the! First you want me food, as if I'm your chef. Secondly you are asking me about cleaning, didn't I tell you to hire a cleaner because I am pregnant , I can not do hard labour in this condition.."

"you are just pregnant, not crippled..." says Mthunzi disturbing her, his hands raising and falling due to being amazed "I'm still talking! listen and stop barking" "wow, so I'm a dog now Tracy..." veins are exploding out, Swazi has never disrespected him in this manner. Sweat is slowly forming on his forehead " I said listen. Thirdly, my body is not your concern. When and where I bath doesn't concern you bhut. It's hot, why can't you just give me some air. You are suffocating" His chest moves up and down hysterically, he is livid but to avoid hurting her he heads to the bedroom and what stares at him makes his head spin.

There are clothes scattered on the floor even underwear's, the windows are closed, bed is unmade and messy "damn this untidy woman" he hiss opening windows then a fan to bring out more fresh air. He then begins collecting everything on the floor and putting it on the washing basket. Not even in his wildest dreams did he ever think that he'd be cleaning after a woman!

His mind is full of thoughts as he moves up and down, what went wrong? everything was fine on their marriage but what went wrong? Yes, he cheated on her with Tracy and got her pregnant, but he was not going to marry her. Tracy knew too much due to her eavesdropping nature, one of the secrets was that of his brother's true identity. Yes, he knew, his mother and I are as close as they come. And she confides in him, as he does with her. He is angry, beyond anything that after all the sacrifices the truth still came out and the Zulu's still took something from him, again. At first it was his father, the money he works hard for day in day out, his beloved wife and now his older brother. They will not know what hit them.. all of them.

As he strips naked, his cell phone rings suddenly, bringing him back from chain of thoughts.

"talk to me" he says as he answered "all is set grootman. Brace yourself, with the way things are she will need a shoulder to cry

on” on the other side the man says.. “what do you mean the way things are?” he ask “she was involved in a car accident. She is at..” “what! And you dint think of telling me sooner. What am I paying you for if you just gonna hold such a crucial information from me!” He shouts, feeling hot due to anger “hadde grootman, I wanted full information first, don’t worry she is not injured. Just bruises here and there” he clicks his tongue “I pay you to tell me everything concerning my wife, not to think what I should and should not know! are we clear” he firmly says.. “hadde grootman, it wont happen again” says the man “damn right it wont! Listen do this one cautiously. Nothing, I mean nothing should lead back to me. we understand each other Beater” “you got it grootman”

He strips naked then swift under the cold shower and let train of thoughts take him anywhere. He misses her, it is true and he would do anything to lure her back into his arms, Mthuzni, his days of playing a hero are over. Mthunzi made things even worse by threatening him that day

“behaving like a hero while there are skeletons in your closet was the bad move Mthunzi. You wont know what hit you”

Swazi

What a great day I had, Ndondo was here today with her granny and they lifted up my spirit. Time is just around Seven in the evening. Mthunzi is gone, he will be back tomorrow though. He is a doctor, I understand how busy his schedule is, he can't be babysitting me day in, day out.

I can't believe tomorrow is my birthday, the 31st of May and I'm gonna be spending it on a hospital bed. By this time tomorrow I'll be 28 years in full. This time last year, my life was not a walk in the park, but I was not a divorcee, pregnant with another man's child. But I'm glad that out of everything that's happening, I have Mthunzi. Wait, what happened to those strange people yesterday, they are the parents of the girl that I hurt. I don't have my phone I would have tried to at least call the clinic and find out more. They can't leave me hanging, I will ask Mthunzi for help because I need to be held responsible as well with the girl's treatment and added expenses..

I'm about to sleep when a woman I've never seen enters the door and comes straight to me. "are you Swazi" she asks, I hesitantly nod. She takes out a bag, a make up bag and tell me to seat up. I do so and she begin making me my face, in my mind I'm waggled up, confused of what's happening.. as she is done, she start fixing my weave .. "now you look more like

human” she says giving me a mirror. And yes, I look gorgeous
“let’s go to the bathroom

you need to change that depressing outfit” I chuckle and follow
after her

“why am I changing, is there an important event I should know
about” she smiles and shake her head

After a short while I’m following this woman, a short yellow off
shoulder Split bell dress is just making me feel like an angel,
black purse in my hand and really stylish black sandals.

Whoever this is surely knew that I cant just walk on heels after
what I’ve been through, my body is still a bit
sore.

“we are here” she says as we reach the parking lot. My heart
melts as I realise who is leaning against the car.. “happy
birthday in advance mignonne” he says softly, his face
plastered with adoration, warmth as if I’m the only beautiful
woman in his eyes. My vision becomes blurry instantly
“Mthunzi..” that’s all I can say, why am I even crying. Slowly he
heads towards me, I take my time to analyse his perfect outfit,
white slim jean, black casual sneakers with a black muscle long
sleeve. I love how clean he looks..

“you are beautiful Swazelihle” he says, caressing my cheeks and my knees weakens, he makes my whole body melts with just one touch. He pecks my lips and lead me to a car.

We’ve been on the road for a while and I keep on stealing glances at him “how did you pull this off?” I ask, blushing senselessly “that’s my secret my love” he says giving me a short glance. I stare at him longer as he drives, how his brown skin suit perfectly with his face. He is just my own butter to lick; I suddenly laugh at my stupid thought ..

“share the joke birthday girl” “ngiyakuthanda Mageba (I love you) ” the car stops and he stares at me longer “I love you, I promise to never leave your side no matter what” I say again holding his hand. “I love you, more than life itself” he says. Our eyes lock and I know that God still exist, this right here proves that he is still in charge of my life. I never thought that id be this happy after what Fikani did to me, as they say you gain more than you lose. In this case, I might have lost the stars but I definitely gained the gold.

Driving through the night with the love of my life has to be the best, exciting thing that I’ve ever done in my entire existence. “where are we going” I ask “the beach” I remember that there is a beach around Stanger, Izinkwazi. We get out after taking off the shoes, the happiness is extreme as my feet come in contact

with the soft sands, my toes sinking deep in the soft sand is just a beautiful thing. my hands on his as he leads me to a whole setup on the sand a bit far from the sea. A white fluffy carpet, two cautions, various nice fejas and all. I feel my heart filling up with different emotions, this is not what I had in mind, I thought that maybe we were going to a certain restaurant not this...We seat down, I lie on his lap and face up the scattered stars in the sky, the Moon is there but not fully which makes the night a bit dark. His hands are playing with my hair. What a memorable night

After eating almost everything, downing it with my fav, peanut butter he starts singing a happy birthday for me.. he has a horrible voice, but I still love him anyway, it's the thought that counts right! Its like I'm the world of my own, a different one from this. Filled with blooming roses, flourishing love and pure joy..

My heartbeat still shoots up to the last number whenever his lips delicately touch with mine. My eyes are closed as we kiss slowly and passionately. Our soul connected as one, gently he lays down my body, his lips never leaving mine. The fire cracking kiss briefly breaks, he takes my clothes off slowly his

eyes never leaving mine making Goosebumps jump all over my body, my heart beat increasing each second..

I lie beneath him completely exposed as he stares at me deeply for a while, no smile, no grin whatsoever just a deep stare that carries more than just hunger or lust. My stomach is in knots as his burning gaze grow thicker with each passing second piercing through every inch of me.

“you are beautiful Swazelihle” he whisper as his hands slowly make contact with my skin making my body shiver, my breathing hinge when his hands draw circles travelling down to my lower abdomen, my waist until he reached in between my thighs, gently he open them a bit wider, up his hands travel until they reach my temple

I release a deep soft cry as his tongue works magic on me, my legs wrapped around his neck pushing him in with my hands, a caution below my waist. My loudest screams are defeating but who cares. It does not take long as an amazingly good orgasm hit me hard unexpectedly leaving me blind for a second...

I almost black out when I feel the tip of him entering me slowly that my hands automatically hold onto his strong shoulders, I missed him inside me, I missed all of him. As always his body is so warm. A minute passes with no single movement from him I

feel like screaming but he hold me still when I try to move
“look at me” he commands deeply as his hand protectively
encircles my body as if carrying a baby . I know, I’m fully under
his control.. in between that hot moment my eyes find his,
nobody says a word our eyes says everything.. “you are mine,
you here me... Swazi" I'm conflicted in bunch of sexual pleasure
and he want me to think. The cruelty

"Swazi" he says hitting my bum

"y. Yes is.. My.. I'm yours" I whimper softly

"don't close your eyes" he says then starts moving very slow
hitting every corner in me making me lose my mind.. Today he
is making love to me, the connection is undeniably strong
between us , both of us sinking deep in the world of ecstasy,
mourning in pleasure, our eyes still locked. I feel a single tear
escaping my eye as he drives me into a world of pure intimacy,
unexplainably splendid pleasure grows thicker, stronger and
deeper with each passing second as my nails digs deep into his
skin..

“I love you Swazelihle” he hoarsely says , his burning gaze still
staring straight in my eyeballs..

I feel it building in every inch of my body, squeezing all of me
and in no time I involuntarily scream aloud as an unexpected
wave of tingles bloom in every inch of my bone. A loud grow

transports me back to reality as his hands are squeezing my body tightly... "happy birthday baby mignonne" he says lazily. "I missed you, I missed my queen cake.. and my fat cookie" it wouldn't be him, nope!

I must have fallen asleep along the way because I'm woken up by strong arms lifting me up. I pretend to be asleep, who doesn't like to be lifted up anyway. After a short while I feel him putting me down, I don't dare open my eyes. My dress is slowly taken off and I guess the hospital gown is being put on. His lips rest on my forehead "sleep well my love, I love you" he whispers. Slowly my eyes open "I love you" I say, his lips cracks into a smile . As he leaves my hands quickly jump to my pumping chest, a warm smile covers my face. I can literally feel the joy deep within me, it's like I can touch it with my own hands. My heart dancing in bliss. I can't explain these feelings exploding all at once, they are just hugging me in every turn and I know, my life is happiness, I am happiness.

I'm dozing off when a soft shake wakes me up... "what?" I ask, a bit irritated as I see the face. Its one of the ladies I share a ward with. "I'm sorry to disturb. This came for you while you were away" she says handing me bunch of flowers with a card and a gift bag. Sleepiness quickly vanish into thin air, Mthunzi is full of surprises tonight. As to how he pulled this off, it beat me but

then he is a doctor I'm sure it wasn't hard to ask for few favours. I don't bother with the gift card because I know who gave me these, I check the gift bag as the suspense is killing me. there is an envelope, who knows maybe this time it's ticket to Paris.. "God...." My shaking hands drops the opened enveloped on my thighs...

Mthunzi

I should be really happy at the moment, but I can't help the guilt eating me up. Her smile is still the same as it was when I first met her, erotic yet innocent. Its hard to take down these pictures

"I'm happy Qhamkile, for the first time after a long one I'm genuinely happy. She is not like you, but she is everything I need and more. I'm in love with her. its time to let you go and allow you to rest in peace." I stare at her pictures on the wall and sigh deeply. How do I even begin to tell Swazi the entire truth?

Swazi

I have no idea when I fell asleep last night but the moment I woke up, I took it in my hands. Its strange ad creepy. she looks exactly like me, but the difference is she has a bigger body than I did in my teen years, not to forget the long black relaxed hair pushed at the back. It's a picture of a teen girl holding a baby covered in a fluffy pink blanket and Mthunzi who looks a bit young in the picture. The envelope had this picture inside, a

note written an address, date and time. it just says **want to know more about the man, meet me on that location**.

I've been cracking my skull trying to understand it. That woman who gave me these, maybe she knows something. She is on the phone, typing something

“hey, did they say who they are, the person who gave me the flowers and the gift bag?” I ask her. she shakes her head “a delivery guy brought them and said we should hand them to you when we told him you were not around” I return to bed feeling down and hopeless. Why would someone send a picture with Mthunzi in it, and a girl that looks like me? I don't know what to do. I might as well do what I'm good at, sleeping.

I'm woken up by a soft shake on my shoulder. “hi” I say brushing my eyes. It's that guy who crushed my bones that day, I think he might be in his thirties. He is with another guy today who looks a bit older than him. He looks really freak out too. “I'm sorry we couldn't come as promised yesterday, how are you feeling” ask the man, he looks a bit proper today. No boots and dirty dungarees, just jeans and a basic white t shirt. “its okay, I'm okay. How is your child? I'm so sorry about what happened.” I say. “she will be fine. I'm Mandlakhe Mthonga by the way, ugazi lona engihamba naye, uQhude(this is my cousin, Qhude” he says. Wait, I've heard that surname before. At the

sangoma “someone once told me that Mthonga ancestors are looking after me” I say, looking at him “is your birthday today?” he suddenly ask, this is strange. I reluctantly nod. He takes two chairs and seat down. The other one also takes a seat. “growing up we were told about my sister who was taken by her father...” ‘and you think I’m that sister” I ask. “yes” the other is still electrified. “why?” its strange. “its along story. But all I know is that my mom gave birth to twin girls and died, leaving twins with maNdlovu, my grandmother. The situation wasn’t great so the other was taken by the father and he never bothered to come back. MaNdlovu is the one who knows the whole story that’s why it’s important for you to come” this is too much “but I’m not a twin, and I have a mother. Well had, she died a month ago” I say. “what makes you think I might be the long lost twin?” I ask again. “you look exactly like my sister. Qhamkile was her name” was? “where is she?” I ask. His face fall “sadly she is no more as well. it’s been three years since she died” I feel my head spinning, what if my mother was not my biological mother? It would make sense because of how she was towards me. but.. “people do look alike though” I say, confused about this whole ordeal “but they don’t share the same birthday, same voice, same look...” I release a long sigh “you said your surname is Hlatshwayo right?” I nod “well, MaNdlovu said the man that took my sister was also a

Hlastwayo, it can't be a coincidence" wow! "lets say I am what you think I am

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why didn't you look for me then?" "no one knew where the father lived..." "so you gave away the poor baby to a man you didn't even know. how careless!" "don't shout at me, I was way too young. As I said, MaNdlovu is the one with a full story" the strange picture suddenly cross my mind. I take it under the pillow and hand it to him "woo! Check this Qhude" the name! tjoh "is that lamthuthu?" that's the first thing he says since he got in. "its him.." now I'm confused "do you know those people" I ask "yes, its Qhamkile, her child and the father of her baby.." , "WHAT!" wait a minute! "where did you get this" he asks? I'm still caught up on the part of Mthunzi 'what do you mean he is the father? Mthunzi is the father of ..." I feel hot suddenly, what's happening?

Two Days later

I'm home. I was discharged at the hospital yesterday. Mthunzi came to get me. I didn't even know how to act around him, he has also been acting strange around me too or I'm reading too much into this.

I fix my weave and then wear my Nike sneakers. In case I need to run, I should be ready. Yes, I'm on my way to meet with a stranger that has information on Mthunzi. I haven't said a thing to him, I want to but I'm afraid of the response I might get. I haven't even contacted those people, hell I don't think I want to know about this anymore. Its just puzzling, overwhelming and leaves me with a lot of questions but zero answers. I'm frustrated, I can't believe he never told me about Ndongos mother who looks exactly like me, who might be my twin, Jesus! The more I think about this, the more I feel like screaming my lungs out. What if he only came to me because I remind him of his dead girlfriend, ie he trying to replace her with me! My heart drops to zero. my life is just a bunch of crazy episodes.

I'm here, in this creepy location, time read 3:30 in the afternoon. I shove my mother's phone deep in the bag, which I'm currently using because I haven't found time to buy mine. It's a big house just few minutes away from the town. I feel uneasy but it's the only way to find out. I knock. No response. I'm about to knock again when some man open the door.. "you came" he says, so he knows me. ofcouse he does "tell me what I need to know" I say standing outside, I'm not getting in. what

if he kills me “you think I might hurt you. Trust me I would have if I wanted to. I want you to meet someone” he says, I look outside checking, there are few people passing by. I’ll scream if they try something.

This is creepy, there is a man seating on a wheelchair, his face looks like it was burnt by, something else. not fire though. “I’m scary, I know” he suddnely says. I gulp and hold my bag tighter. What drove me here again, I should have just asked Mthunzi instead of coming here “here” the other one hands me the juice. I take it and put it on the coffe table “can we get to the point” I say.. “your boyfriend is a killer” owkay! This is stupid “no he is not” I defend him “I understand. He can be soft too. the reason why I’m in this wheelchair , like this is because of him and his stupid crew” this is just crap, I wanted information about Ndondo’s mother, not this.

“if you don’t believe me, ask him about Innocentia, Philps and me, Ndumiso. Ask him about a man called Bruce” he says, looking at me. I'm handed a picture, I feel dizzy,i stand up and rush outside and throw up. It's a disgusting picture of a rotten dead body. What's happening exactly!

I couldn't return back inside after that, I left the picture on the ground and headed to town with a spinning head.

I'm fuming somehow as the taxi drops me off at Ngcebo's house. I don't know where Mthunzi is, I'm hoping he might be here. I knock as I reach the door. THE HELL! "hello, can I help you?" she is practically naked, only wrapped in a very short towel. "hey, can I help you?" she asks, a bit louder this time. Anger just double up, I feel hot "what are you doing here? where is the owner of the house!" her eyes widen I know I'm loud when I'm angry but that's the least of my concern right now. "listen here lady, I'm not your friend either you address me with respect, or we stand here all day" she is full of herself I see. I try to push her aside but she blocks my way " "hey, skeberseh move! I want to see my man.. Mthunzi !.. Mthunz.." "maHlatshwayo" the anger I just had vanish into thin air. He suddenly appears just behind her "bhut Ngcebo" he is eyeing me strangely. My hands are on my chest, I grip the cloth even tighter, I'm nervous. "what's with the noise" he is topless, only a jean on him. God, It's his girl "I'm.. looking.. for Mthunzi" I'm stuttering! who would blame me though Ngcebo is intimidating and I've accepted that I'll never be in his good books. I always mess up. He returns to the house leaving me with the lady. "I'm

sorry” I say, she clicks her tongue then she disappears inside the house. I heave a sigh; I just made a fool out of me! Ngcebo returns while wearing a top. “I don’t know what gave that spineless boyfriend of yours an ownership of my house. I might not be here more often but it’s my property and he should respect it...” I follow like a lost kid as he leads me to a white Kei mini truck with no canop. He opens the passenger door, I stand still confused “get in! I’m taking you to him before you start making another baby in my own house! Who knows where it will be this time because you’ve covered the shower, maybe my kitchen or my couch!” can this earth swallow me up, I’m red with embarrassment

This has to be the longest ride I’ve ever taken with him. Two cars are parked outside as he drives through the gate of this house painted in dark Gray. He gets off and I follow after him. I guess we are here, he has a beautiful single-story house, the front yard has a huge porch decorated with variety of flowers. It’s refreshing, even the grass is perfectly cut. The yard is not that huge but it’s beautiful, the picket fence is not that far. The neighbourhood is a bit quitter compared to Ngcebo’s.

“Mthunzi” he barges in yelling his name. He doesn’t knock. My eyes scan my surroundings as I enter the house, I meet Mthunzi’s eyes and he looks shaken, shocked or nervous I don’t know. He is Infront of me within a blink and I’m led to what I think is a bedroom.. “babe, is everything okay?” he asks the minute the door is closed “who are you? Who is Ndondos mother?” I ask, staring at him straight in his eyes. “where is this coming from Swazi?” he ask “what was her name, her family where was she from!! Am I related to her! I want to hear it from you!” I yell, he doesn’t look pleased but I’m not here to nurse his ego. I want answers and I want them now “will you stop raising your voice at me! I hate shouting you know that!” “Mthunzi am I a fool to you, am I a game? When you look at me you see a stupid woman that you can just toy with whenever you want!” “address me with that tone again, you and I will have a problem Swazi” he says firmly. Where is the damn picture! I open my bag and search for. Yes, finally found it “what’s this?” I shove it on his chest. He looks angry but he takes it anyway. I’m staring at him as his face changes from angry to being all puzzled up. Then he is angry again “where did you get this Swazi?” he deeply asks “someone, they had a lot to say about you. They said I should ask about Innocentia, Bruce and..” “F*CK IT SWAZI!” I freeze affrighted when he suddenly burst in anger “I’m going to ask this once. Once! Who gave you this picture ?” I’ve seen him angry but not like this. I feel my

heart beat increasing as his gaze deepens “Swazi, am I talking alone here?” “I got a delivery.. that night at the hospital when I returned from the beach. It had this picture and a note telling me the location ...” I keep quite as his angry eyes are glued on me “don’t you dare tell me you went on a stupid location” I face down “have you lost your mind? What if those people hurt you? You are pregnant for crying out loud, yet you are acting so stupid and careless! what’s wrong with you?” I slowly move a bit far from him, I don’t like an angry Mthunzi. “but I wanted to know becau..” he gives me one look and I close my poor mouth, pouting.. “what you did was plain stupid

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and I won’t even allow you to act all innocent! If you want to know about my life you ask me! ME!” I thought Ngcebo was intimidating, but Mthunzi is just something else when he is angry.. “what is it that you want to know, I’m listening” he boldly says staring at me deeply, I feel my stomach turning. “but Mthunzi I wanted to know njena” I’m not making any sense I know “know what?” he quickly ask, I gulp and shut my pie hole. “no so long ago you were screaming names you never even knew about in the first place. What I hate about you is that you do not learn Swazi! Someone whisper something in your ear about me you don’t ask, instead you believe it and come here yelling like a lunatic! I’m not a walkover Swazi nor

am I a clueless boy. I'm a man and I deserve some respect!" I shouldn't have come here, he just turned all this on me and I don't even know what to do anymore

"come here.." "mhm... aha!" I move backwards shaking my head.... "you do know that I can reach you whenever I want" "stop scaring me Mthunzi I don't like it.." I half yell "you are impulsive sometimes Swazi but I love you. Now please come to me. we will talk about everything else later. for now, I need you" how does he do this, going from angry to being gentle all at once. I want to stay away but I allow my feet to carry me to him. I can't help it, I'm drawn into this man and its annoying "next time when you hear something, I'm the first person you'll tell are we clear" I nod "don't stand that far, I don't bite" he was biting my head off just a second ago. He takes one step and his tall figure is hovering over me. our eyes lock. As angry as he is I still see him, the man that I love "I will tell you all that you need to know, I'm here" he softly says and I believe him. "I was just angry and confused..." I whisper. "I know.. I know" he says softly. His face lowers closing the gap between us. As our lips touch my eyes close. We kiss slowly and I feel the love burning deeper in my chest...

I wake up alone in bed, its already dark outside but the lights are on. I find a huge robe in the wardrobe and cover myself

with it then head out. This is a beautiful house; I check out the walls as I reach the lounge then my eyes lands on this huge picture. For a moment I think it's me, then it hits me. it's her, she is beautiful I must admit. I don't know how I feel at this moment. this might be the reason why his family acted strangely towards me, why he never wanted me to come to this house.. its just all confusing I know, but I love Mthunzi and I know he loves me too, I just need to allow him to shed some light in my life and stop allowing people to control us.. "I see you've met Ndondo's mother" he suddenly says behind me. "our Family and the Mthembu's have never had a good relationship. Which is why I never paid attention on you before, yes I knew that you were one of the Mthembu brother's wife but I didn't really paid much attention to you until that day when you were at a close length..." he is now standing next to me "that day when you hit my car screaming, that was the day I actually got to see you..." "when was that day?" I ask "that day you lost your job. I was going to Jama Logistics for other reasons, so I parked my car but some crazy woman decided to hit it while screaming" what! "it was you.." my God, I find myself laughing "I thought you were an uber driver!" I say, he shake his head smiling "when I unlocked my car I was ready confront you but you were just in a bad space. I knew you, as one of the Mthembu wives so I just drove you home." now I know why I thought I've seen him when I met him at the

hospital “it feels like a long time, how did you know where I lived then?” I ask “that ex of yours is my enemy, ofcourse I knew where he lived” makes sense “I remember when you woke me up and helping me with my staff” I say looking at him. “I looked at you, sleeping peacefully in my car. There was just something about you, I couldn’t stop thinking about you so I did a follow up and found out that you were arrested for nothing. I made sure to make those stupid charges go away” it was him! he was the first one to tell me that my case was dropped. “Ngcebo was so angry when he realised what I did, I tried to stay away believe me, I couldn’t..” “because I look like her” I blurt out. he doesn’t seem to mind “the resemblance was strong between you two. You reminded me of her but as time went by I realised that it was more than that...” “when did you know that her and I are related” “that time when I gave you some space. Something was just too coincidental, she once told me about a twin she never met so that’s when I started my own investigation...” the world is a small place

...

Narrated

Fikani’s phone rings just as he gets out of his car.. “grootman” says the caller “are you sure you did everything as I said, I know

that girl she when she is angry she overreact. She should be here in her home, but she is not..” “I did, she even came as you anticipated. When she left she was in a bad space, give her a few hours. She’ll be there” he clicks his tongue and end the call. The house is dark, he goes back inside his car and wait inside hoping that she might show up.

I'm here, outside the Mthonga homestead. He drove me here then left me at the gate without being noticed, Mthunzi.

I decided to confront this strange part of me once and for all. I clutch my small handbag on my shoulders then heads towards the open space which is a gate I think. The entire household is fenced with very tall trees.

As I get inside I'm met with a wide-open yard, kids are happily playing around. There are about eight rondavels in this homestead, roofed with thatch, then there is one unpainted two room built with blocks.

I'm sweating, my hands are shaking but hey, I can do this. "sanibonani" their amazed eyes are on me and I feel like an alien "can I talk to the elders" one of them start leaving without saying anything, I follow after him until he stands outside the unpainted rondavel. Smoke is coming out of it "they are in here" I'm about to ask how many of them when he suddenly runs back. My stomach shrinks at the loud voices inside "qo, qo!" I say loudly, I doubt they heard me. even the old wooden door just doesn't budge as I hit it

"qo!!" I yell.. "hhay, there is someone outside mah, Velile go check!" it's a voice of a man "baba I'm still cooking njena..." "go check the door Velile and stop backchatting. This is your father,

what's wrong with this kid" my heart beat increases as I hear the voice of an old woman shouting. "but gogo.." "nka gogo yani! Just because you've opened up your legs for an entire Ndulinde you think you are old! OPEN THAT THAT DOOR BEFORE I SLAP THE RUDENESS OUT OF YOU VELILE!"

I'm anxiously listening out here. The sun doesn't do me any good on my skin. She appears looking sweaty and scowling while brushing her eyes. Then she sees

"GOGO! USEFIKILE!" I'm harshly pulled inside, and I cough instantly, I can't see clearly the smoke is all over and the heat! Why are they seating in such a suffocating house "wooo smakade!!!" I Flinch, the old woman is crying, yelling while touching my whole face. I'm so confused this is not what I expected

"back then I was also raising Ndabezinhle. He was just three months old when you and Qhamkile were born. We couldn't tell you apart so I marked you just above the butt" I'm listening attentively as she tells a story. We are now in a two roomed house seating in these old but very clean couches. "giving you away was hard but it had to be done Qhamkephi mzukulwana wam. I had to take care of Ndabezinhle too, Msawenkosi's son who's mother dumped in the middle of my yard" she says holding my hand tightly. She looks exhausted, life hasn't been

easy on this woman I can tell. It hurting somehow to see her like this “your mother. She had always been a troubling child, being the only girl in my womb ruined her. It all started with visiting Ndlalifa, my oldest son in Durban. She came back with Mandlakhe, when he was Two years she left again and came back pregnant with you and Qhamkile...atleast the father of the her second babies came to check on her. He was a married man but at least he was here. he wanted to take both of you but I refused then he took you and promised to come back but he never did”

“I never knew him, my father. He died before I could even turn one. That’s what my mother said, the woman who raised me” I say.. “your mother, she was trouble. When Qhamkile died a part of me died along with her. now that you are here, I feel alive again” her eyes waters again as she looks at me like I’m some sort of a miracle *****

Its been few days since I came here. It feels odd but good at the same time, it helped to pack a small bag because they didn’t want me to leave. I’m standing by the tiny cabin called ihhokwe, where chickens are kept. This is deep rural areas, its Ndulinde that’s what they said, this area is somehow the valley of thousand hills. Households are scattered far apart, the huge open veld are filled with cattle’s, goats, gardens, sugarcane fields and many many gumtree plantations. “dade (sister”) I

turn, Mandlakhe is behind me, hands buried deep in his blue overall with one leg folded just above his knees. The other arm is also floating revealing leopard vest underneath. I feel like life hasn't been easy on him too, his dark skin is way too dark but nonetheless he is still a strong man. "bhuti (brother)" It's strange to say this, but I'll get used to it. if he was not an intimidating, cultured man I'd be directing him with his name.. "ulale kahle maMthonga?" he asks, looking at me warmly. My heart just warms up "yes I did . thank you" he comes to me and put his arms around my shoulders. I feel so tiny compared to him, he is really tall. "Its still hard to believe that you are here" he says after a long silence, I can't believe it too. I learned that he is my mother's first born, the one she left while he was just two years old. Which makes him my one and only living sibling, apart from other members of this family he is the one I shared the same womb with "I've always wanted to have siblings" I say, he tighten his hold "would you like to meet them" he ask, I look up at him "umama, no Qhamkile" I freeze, I cant. Not now "some other time" he says, he can feel my body tensing I guess. "so you've never met him, your father?" I ask "no. I don't wish to" he means it, I can tell "are you sure Qedile is fine though, I can take her to the doctor for thorough check up" Qedile is his 7 year old bubbly child, the one I almost ran over with my car. Who names a child with such a name anyway! I suspect That woman he came with on that first day I met him, she is his baby

mama. "she is fine I told you. No one was hurt between the two of you. The Mthonga ancestors needed to bring their child home. and you are here, alive." strange ancestors indeed! using a car accident to bring me home. "they are odd, what If I died" I say, he gives me a strange look and then look ahead. "dada, if there is any man warming their way around you tell them to run" he suddenly says

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I laugh, until I realise. He is serious "but I'm old and i'm sure you don't think that I'm single" I argue, one look and I feel like a teenager all over again "yazi I told Qhamkile to focus on her studies and forget about boys but she just didn't listen instead she opened her legs for that stupid lamthuthu nx!" "lamthuthu?" I ask "what was the name, Mthuthzeli, I think its Mthunzi. yes Mthunzi Zulu.." I swallow nothingness, I'm not planning on telling them who Mthunzi is to me. not anytime soon. "look what happened, that lamthuthu of hers took my niece and he doesn't even let her visit" my heart skips, lamthuthu though, I'm hurt was there no other name he could have picked other than this one. "maybe there was a reason. Look how much gogo is struggling, there are many kids already maybe he thought he was doing the right thing" I say defending Mthunzi "the day I see him, he will curse the day he laid his eyes on my sister" he is angry and I already know he hates

Mthunzi. There is a permanent frown in between his eyes, it deepens when he is angry “Aren’t you hungry, porridge might be ready now. Let’s go” he is strange, I’m still caught up on Mthunzi, how do I even begin to tell him that I just opened up my legs for the same man that he hates.

As it turns out, I’m from a huge polygamous family. Gogo said that my grandfather had 3 wives and she is the second. She was blessed with three children, two boys then my mother who was the last born. The older uncle, Ndlalifa lives in Durban, they said it’s been years since he visited. The second uncle is the loud one who is best friend with Mqombothi, Musawenkosi. That one has many kids I heard, but the ones that lives here are four. The first one is Qhude who is a bit older than Mandlakhe, second is Nqabayezwe who is also a bit younger than Mandlakhe, Ndabezinhle who is the same age as me. then the last one is Velile, only 23 but with two kids. I’m not judging, I’m a divorcee, pregnant with another man’s child. It’s all chaos around here, all these children have their own children too so you can imagine. Unfortunately mkhulu is no more but his seeds are all over here, Mthonga’s are the most common surname around here. I haven’t been introduced to all of them, but the family meeting is today

We are all gathered in the huge rondavel, bigger than all of them combined. Its full, I wonder how many kids grandfather has, I doubt I'll memorise them all. All the males are lined up in one right side, with the older ones seating on wooden benches. Women, we are all but flat on the mat. The three old women, mkhuku's wives are at the far end seating next to each other. Children are outside playing "we are happy that you are home, maMthonga" says an old man with grey hair seating at the far front, on a wooden bench. He is the first and the oldest son in all of mkhulu's children. He is scary but I smile anyway. "muhl umzukulu wethu, uyacwebezela, mhlophe qwa! Usunaye umkhwenyana (our granddaughter is beautiful, she is stunning! do you have a husband?)" ask the other granny, it's the last wife if I remember correctly. "I was married but we are divorcing" I say, as to why I let them know it beats me. now all the eyes are on me, a 28 year old divorcee! "that marriage was never going to last. You belong here, in the Mthonga yards therefore everything concerning marriage should be led by us, no one else" uncle Msawenkosi speaks, for the first time since we came in here. he is not drunk today. They all nod in unison "niyambonan kuth muhle umzukulu MaNdlovu?(can you see that she is beautiful!)" the first wife suddenly blurts, emphasising beautiful loudly. I'm about to thank her when there are strange mumbles growing. "hhay maNgema stop! now is not the time. today we are celebrating the return of our

granddaughter” gogo jumps in and the house is quite again.. There’s a sudden knock at the door, Qedile comes in after being ordered. She is carrying my phone. I take it and put it next to me. it vibrates, all eyes on me “answer it, it might be important” someone says. Its Mthunzi, damn it! I haven’t talked to him since yesterday. He might be going crazy wherever he is because I had some cramps in my lower abdomen and I’m sure he wants to know how I am. I’m glad no one can tell that I’m pregnant, my tummy is still invisible. It stops ringing and I release a sigh of relief, there are about Seven missed calls already “its no one important” I say. “now that mzikulu is home, its time to welcome her rightfully, oMthonga, oManqele , oDuyaz’ omhlophe njengezihlabathi zolwandle kmele bazi ukuthi, their child is home” my phone beeps loudly! God! I should have put it on silence. Its message *if you don’t pick up, I’ll budge in there and drag you to the hospital myself! don’t test me Swazelihle***

aagrhhh!

I'm restless, I can't keep still! my eyes are glued straight at the door, what if he really budes in as he said? Mthunzi can be unpredictable at times but would he! Maybe he was bluffing "Mzukulu!" a half yelling voice brings me back to reality, I completely zoned out "yebo gogo" I say, red with embarrassment. "your uncle is asking if you are in your days?" she asks

"days? What days" I ask, puzzled "in your periods?" oh, these people have their own language sometimes, I shake my head then the meeting proceeds. "can I please go to the toilet" I ask, it's been five minutes. I'm counting every minute "you can , don't take long ngane yagogo" I smile. I love this woman. I stand up and tiptoe my way out of the rondavel. Phew! I see no Mthunzi in the yard, just kids playing freely. My phone rings as I reach the pit toilet, I get in, rest on the toilet seat "babe" I say, politely. No response, just hard breathings "Ndabezitha" still no response. God, he is angry "I'm really sorry for not picking up the phone babe..." "why?" he quickly ask "pardon" "why are you apologising Swazelihle?" he ask deeply "Mthunzi I was in a family meeting full of really old scary people and you just had to make me look bad while I'm trying to be the good child. You aren't gonna die by not talking to me for few seconds Mthunzi. if only you'd just wait and stop being impulsive!" I heave a sigh,

my voice raised up but, I can't control it and he know.

"weSwazelihle, are you still talking to me with that tone?" he firmly ask and I know I just made things worse. "but Mthunzi I just said that there is a family meeting today so I couldn't pick up.." "you mean that family meeting started from six in the morning!" he half yell, okay, he is angry for real "cha (No)" I say softly "here I am cracking up my head, worried sick about you while you just don't give a damn! what was so hard for you to call and tell me that you'd be busy today. Was I supposed to guess? must I look like a fool calling you while you are in a meeting just to grab your attention! I must behave like a lunatic because you failed to mention that you have an important meeting today!"

I keep quiet "so now you can't speak, seconds ago you had a lot say about me being impulsive and inconsiderate and now you are suddenly mute!" I clench my teeth supressing the lump growing in my throat.

"Swazelihle, you are carrying my child, I'm bound to worry if there's something wrong. All I ask is for you to keep me on the loop. ' I hear you" I say softly "good, because I'm taking you to the hospital right now" is he crazy! "NO! you can't, it's still busy here Mthunzi" "that busy is more important than your life! Then your child's life. Our child! Are you hearing yourself!" Oh

Jehova, intervene please! “I’m fine now, I haven’t had cramps since yesterday”

“Ohoo!” he chuckles, not a good one I must add “so now you remember that you’re fine and I must just take your word. You couldn’t tell me that since morning, I need to see that for myself” this man is stubborn “what are you saying exactly Mthunzi?” “I’m not going anywhere, not until I see you”

The hell!, he wasn't bluffing, He is really here “but Mthunzi its still busy here I can’t just vanish, they’ll notice that I’m gone” “You are a 28 yea old woman, you’ll figure something out” he says as if it’s the easiest thing. This home is different than the one I grew up in. there are rules here “you’re not being fair” I’m at the verge of crying, when I wanted a man this is not what I had in mind. “If it comes to you and my baby’s health nothing is fair sweetheart, I don’t compromise” I heave a sigh “I can only see you around eight in the evening when everybody is sleeping” not even a week since I came I’m already planning to sneak out, shame on me! “as long as I get to see you, I don’t care how long it takes” I can’t sleep with gogo today. Velile has to come through for me “I need to go” I say “Swazelihle” He suddenly says, gently and my stupid heart softens a bit “Mthunzi” I say. i’m running out of time ‘ngiyakuthanda yezwa (I love you, okay)” he hangs up leaving my cheeks visiting my

ears. My heart swells in excitement that I can't contain. This is it; I'm sneaking out for real

I get out with a smile on my face. As I look up I freeze, Mandlakhe is standing still just a bit far from me, looking at me. "bhuti" I anxiously say as I reach him, he has a thing with keeping hands in his pocket. it's a bit intimidating "uqomile (you're' dating)" it's like a statement rather than a question. But I'm old brother and ..the look he is giving me is just toasting my inside 'no! of course not" what a lame response, I could have done better. Like, hey bro I'm a divorcee which is odd for me to stay single because I've got sexual needs that you obviously cannot satisfy, so I need a man to take... okay enough. "go back inside you are needed" he says after staring at me, I might even confess if he keeps on giving me this look. **I'm hungry

I need my peanut butter, yoghurt, apple juice, mallows and many nice things" I send the message to Mthunzi just before I get inside. He is a man, he'll figure something out

Thembeke

What a sunny day this is, Delani is outside for the first time since forever, chilling under the tree shade with his father. As usual I'm burning myself with pots in the kitchen "one of the reason why I'm grateful to be a man " Phikelela, I know his squeaky voice too well "brother" I say. He shake his head "no no! don't call me that please. I'm too young" he is such a bubbly soul though "so, when can we expect sgidigidi, I need to save money for his toys and many other things baby needs" I'm puzzled for a minute until it hit me "no! you are not going to call my baby with that name, I wont allow it Phikelela" "well, you might be too late because even Ndabezitha and your husband approved the name, I cant wait to name Mthunzi's as well. how about Sbhamu samatshitshi" he is crazy, I can't entertain him..

"Veli, I feel so bad. What if I fall and twist my arm, or worse what if I just crash into something then kill my baby.." oh flip! she looks happy rather than shocked. "oh my! you are pregnant cuz. This is good news!" she is smiling happily. Wait until you know the father Veli... "don't tell anyone please, especially gogo and Mandlakhe" I say staring at her "gogo! That one is an unqualified gynaecologist, when I was pregnant with my first child she saw me before I even knew that I was pregnant, the

second one I tried to hide but she still saw me. and besides even if she didn't notice, uMaNgema no gogo umaZungu would have" my heart skips. Thank God Mkhulu separated them, imagine having 3 old women in one yard. Yes we are in the same area but at least not in the same compound "You mean to tell me these old grannies with sight problems can tell if one is pregnant?" bathong, respect the rural area's technology! these people always need help with airtime and many other things but they can tell if one is pregnant, am I in a different planet. "they are strange like that" My phone suddenly vibrates in my hands *still waiting* damn Mthunzi! "go, before I change my mind about covering for you" she says pushing me towards the door. She sleeps in a rondavel close to the kitchen, with children. I lied to gogo and said I wanted to bond with Veli and she agreed, I felt so awful, God would surely punish me when I die. For now I tiptoe my way through the dark just for a dick! This is not the human God intended to create I swear.

Mthunzi said he will meet me halfway because his car is parked a bit far. I'm grateful to the moon, it's a not too dark I can see clearly, I'm terrified but Mthunzi's face in my head keeps me going. This is hilarious, to think I'm sneaking out just for a man. I'm outside now, heading towards Mthunzi's direction. My phone vibrates again, I'm about to check when someone

suddenly appear “Qhamkephi” oh Lord! “why are you gallivanting like Truck Noah in the dark” “its Chuck Norris dali” the woman he is with corrects him. Jesus! “whatever, she is still wandering in the dark like bhut omdala” he argues, calling Chuck Norris an old brother, since I came about that man was old but... “bhut Qhude I was just.. I’m having a runny stomach and I couldn’t go to the toilet. I’m afraid of the cockroaches” where did he come from anyway! It might be these thin paths that are in between the long, dense glass. Atleast it's not Mandlakhe “okay, I’ll wait for you at the gate” Angels of love, I summon you this instant! don’t leave me please “no, don’t worry, I’ll be fine” I quickly say “are you sure, this area is very dangerous at night. Even Truck Noah with his kungfu are nothing” he is still adamant on this Truck Noah, wait Kungfu! He leaves and I pretend to be heading towards the dens, long glass. If I were to be bitten by a snake here I’ll never forgive Mthunzi. They are out of sight, phew! that was close!

I sigh in relief as I lean against the car seat. “that wasn’t hard now was it” Mthunzi is crazy, I was busy behaving like soldiers of the night and this is what he says to me, moron “give me my things Mthunzi and stop uttering nonsense” “kiss first sweetheart, awuykhumbulangan indoda kant? (didn’t you miss your man)” he says softly, I love his deep Zulu it just drives me insane. "No I didn't miss indoda" I say softly. "oh, is that so" he

says gently turning my body to him. "yes.." I whisper, he is too close I can feel his bit breath on me. "little liar"his lips crash on mine and we fall into a deep lingering kiss that revives every fibre in my body. A soft unexpected moan escape my mouth as he slowly gives me a knee weakling kiss. I missed him. He goes crazier by the day but I love him even more !

Swazi

I'm warm, engulfed in his strong embrace. Listening to his heartbeat as I lay on his hard chest. Mthunzi has become a huge part of me in a short space of time, he has managed to shift away everything that I've been through just by being with me. we've been smooching in the car since when! Sadly, it's time for me to tiptoe my way back home. Its way past midnight I can only hope that Veli will open up for me "I think I should go back now babe, its late" I softly say he drops a wet kiss on my forehead and hold me tightly, he doesn't want me to go I can feel it "Mthunzi" "not now" he murmurs, almost didn't catch him "Mthunzi I must go back" I persist "another minute" he says, I tilt my head and look up at him. His eyes are closed. I nudge him, lazily they shoot open and we stare at each other There's this warmth plastered on his face, its drawing me in and I know, I've fallen deeply in love with this scratchy voiced man. His warm hands are on my face, softly caressing my cheeks "I'm going to marry you Swazelihle" he whispers then kiss me senselessly..

"I need to go" I whisper as we stop kissing "no" he says, sounding serious "Are you saying No?" I ask, a bit jumbled. He let go of me and start the car "What are you doing?" the car start moving to a different direction. "Mthunzi!" the speed

increases. I pat his shoulder, is he losing his mind? “you need to consult a doctor Swazelihle. Did you really think I’d let this go, just like that” the hell! “what doctor, its the middle of the night are you insane!” I’m going crazy here “who said you’ll see the doctor now, you will see him during the day” “NO! NO! YOU TAKE ME BACK MTHUNZI! NOW!” does he listen to me, nope. First time sneaking out and this happens! “forget it sweetheart, if I’m counting correctly you are eight weeks pregnant or more, it’s time for doctor’s visit babe” my goodness! “Mthunzi do you realise that I’ll be in huge trouble at home when everyone realise that I’m gone, just like that! no goodbye no nothing!” he doesn’t get it “you tend to forget many things when you are there. Including the fact that you need to start the monthly pregnancy check-up” I can’t believe this is happening! “Mthunzi listen, I’ll go in the morning. You can come and get me” I’m talking to a rock here “I’m on dayshift for the next few days. If I let you go now, you’ll have no one to take you” “and you think it is wise to just ambush me in the middle of the night! Without my concern, Mthunzi have you lost your mind” I’m fuming but he is just as cool as they come and that just infuriates me even more “Mthunzi bakith, please drive back. You’ll get me into trouble with my family” I say “let me worry about your family” he says, as if he will be the one dealing with them “you don’t know Mandlakhe, he will kill me!” and how is he planning on doing that, he s a secret and I can’t reveal him, not now “that

clown brother of yours behaves like the Prince of England sometimes. I don't like him" he doesn't like you too brother. "I thought you were a decent man; no sane man does this! You can't just take me whenever you feel like it Mthunzi. you don't own me!" I say angrily. He doesn't seem to care. To think I'll ever sneak out again, it was my first and my last time. Mthunzi has a loose screw in his head.

A heavy sigh escapes my mouth, I'm defeated as he joins the tarred road leading to Eshowe. I take my phone and dial Veil's number. It rings for a while until she picks up "hey, Should I open up for you" she says sounding asleep "no, listen I'm not coming back plea.." "aibo! What do you mean by that?" she ask quickly "long story, Veli please make up a lie or something. tell them I woke up early for an interview. Tell them I received the call late that's why I had to leave early" I'm the worst sister ever, already putting her in trouble. I just hope she can do this "I don't know if they'll believe me but I'll try" she hangs up as I'm about to thank her .God! Other people were given good man for a boyfriend but what did I get, a crazy, controlling douchebag! "you are taking me to my father's house Mthunzi, no yours or so help me God!" "how well do you know our culture?" he suddenly asks, Jesus! "well, I'll take that as a 'not well enough". Anyway, in our culture there is something called

ukuthwala. It is particularly done when a man and his girlfriend yearn to be together but banned by certain circumstances. Therefore, the man and his friends, or brothers abduct the girl to endorse marriage negotiations. The following day, abakhongi with cattle are sent to the girl's home, letting their presence known and by so doing, the girl's family get to know that their child has been asked for a hand in marriage .." I just give him a blank stare. he ambushed me just to talk about culture, the nerve of this big headed fool I'm sleepy, why is he even interested in history any way "I don't see how this has to do with me. you forced me to be here, I never wanted to be here Mthunzi" He start connecting something then a song comes through "uma ngingakxoxel indab ongayaz..." agrh! Out of every song, it had to be this one! He starts whistling with the music and I feel my head spinning the part that says "lentombi kmele kube ngeyam' he puts my name like 'uSwazi kmele kube ngowami' I take back my words, I hate this man next to me! I'm so angry I feel like strangling him!

I'm fast asleep when a soft shake wakes me up. I'm met with two set of deep, lazy eyes "I'm leaving, don't switch off your phone please. I love you" he plants a kiss on my forehead then get out. I'm doing the opposite, where's this damn phone, I find

it under my pillow and switch it off then proceed with my beauty sleep. I'm glad he brought me in my father's home. I'll have time to see Fikani and talk about the divorce and my job..

I woke up around Ten and headed for the doctor. My very first check-up. I'm laid on the hospital bed, a young female doctor is performing an ultrasound on me. As the sound of my baby's heartbeat hit my ears I get emotional, I feel a ping of pain in my heart for robbing Mthunzi such a priceless moment. Yes, I'm angry at him but I should have done this for my baby, its his baby too.. . I just wanted to teach him a lesson for ambushing me without my concern

"everything seems to be normal" my eyes can't leave the screen.. "as you can see we still have the strong heartbeat. I know this is an emotional, heart-warming moment. its priceless, can't compare it with anything in this world.." I smile with tears in my eyes. It's staring to feel real now, there is a soul growing inside of me. After praying day in, day out for a baby its finally happening! "can I please the scans of the ultrasound.." I say, she nods her head and smile. "as you wish"

Narrated

“Hadde grootman, I thought this could work but it seems like we underestimated that man. I don’t know what he said to that guy but he doesn’t want to help us anymore” says the caller “you are losing your touch man! I want something else, dig something deeper and juicy this time” he hangs up and look up the ceiling of his office. Its just Monday but everything seems to be going south, what a bad way to start a week! Tracy suddenly budes in without knocking “and then? You don’t knock anymore” he says standing up to meet her halfway “your ex wife is here” she says clicking her tongue “wait, what!” his heart skips “she says she is here to talk to you, are you still seeing her behind my back Fika?” she angrily ask, instead of responding he leave her standing and get out. “Swazi” he says , she turn her head and their eyes meet for a second but she quickly back away..

“Fikani, can we talk” she says standing up from the chair. His eyes can’t get enough of her

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she has gained some wait, she is even more beautiful than she last saw her. its like each day she blossom into something even more beautiful “follow me” he says, leading her to his office. They meet with an angry Tracy but paid no attention to her. “you can seat” he says after closing the door Swazi seat down

and take a deep breath, it took a lot for to be here. In the same room as him. she should be scared of him after how he ambushed her in her house that night but she can't give him power over her "what can I help with?" he ask, staring at her. Its obvious, she is glowing and looks very happy, his heart twist at the thought of Mthunzi, its clear that he is treating her better than he did "divorce papers, I've given you enough time to go over them and sign. As I said, I want nothing from you, I want no house, no shares in the business, no cars nothing. just your signature" it hits him, she really is done with him and it hurts "so we are doing this? For real?" he ask, pain visible in his voice "Fikani let's not pretend to care here, you are the one who led us here. If there is anyone who should be hurt here its me. Not you" she says boldly. She is strong now, Mthunzi is partially the reason why she doesn't feel anything about Fikani. All the feelings, gone "I'm sorry Swazi. I did what I thought was right at the time. Tracy knew about Delani's true identity and I had to marry her so she can shut up" Swazi laughs "you are unbelievable sometimes! if you really cared about me you would have told me and we would have dealt with it together. And don't tell me about that secret shit Fikani because you had already slept with her and made her pregnant, you cannot say Delani's secret also forced you to cheat on me" "I made a huge mistake and I'll spend the rest of my life apologising to you. Please just.. just think about us before throwing everything

away Swazi..” desperation cuts deep in his voice “Fikani, you and I are done. I don’t care about your sorries anymore, I don’t care how many times you say them I just don’t! Maybe before they would have meant something but now. I just don’t care.”

unpleasant silence fills up the office, His hands are on his chest as he hold it tighter, a sharp feelings of sadness hitting him hard. “Oh another thing, I want my money and my job back” His head lifts up, suddenly hope creeps in. The thought of seeing her everyday light up a candle of hope deep within him, maybe, just maybe there might be a chance for him to try and win her back

“I’ll pay back every cent , today. And you can have your job back” he says standing up heading to her direction “oh, that was not hard. I thought you’d fight me” says Swazi sounding a bit amazed “your office is still intact, waiting for its rightful owner” “so you haven’t found my replacement, how strange. Won’t the HR department fight me though, I mean I did spend two nights in jail?” she ask standing up too “I’m the CEO, I call the shots here” he says standing Infront of her “owkay! Still arrogant I see” she says “you know me to well” he says, smiling a bit. Its awkward, he is a bit closer. She clears her throat and move away “ahem.. so the divorce papers” she says His face changes back to being sour “they are not here obviously, I’ll

bring them tomorrow” he says “thank you. So I can start coming to work tomorrow” she ask again “anytime, whenever you ready. Even now” he says “not today. Tomorrow I’ll be here though. I’m gonna take my leave now, goodbye” she says then turn to leave “bye Mrs Mthembu” he says. She quickly comes to stand still, then turn with a straight look on her face “on paper Fikani. don’t get it twisted because the moment those divorce papers are signed I’ll ditch that horrid surname of yours and change back to my own surname” she says then take confident walk towards the door. “f*ck! F*ck!” angrily, he curses softly.

Swazi

I feel a bit light. Everything seems to be going in the right direction for me. I have my job back! I can’t stop smiling as I get inside the taxi. Fikani is going to sign divorce papers and we’ll be over soon, the thought of being free from everything tying me to him is refreshing, I’ll be able to start afresh. Everything is in motion, I’m pregnant, I have an annoying yet loving man, a family, wait a family! I quickly take out my phone and switch it on. This is all Mthunzi’s doing, he makes me angry all the time. I switched off this phone because of him!

Yeap, that beeping sound start annoying other passengers, I need my car back, there is no privay here. Most messages are from the big head, Mthunzi. There are many from Mandlakhe, Veli, and unsaved numbers. I feel like a celeb! It instantly rings as I'm about to call Veli, who else! "baby daddy" I say "Swazi" he warningly call out my name, I know he is angry when he shortens my name. "babe" I say "are you trying to push how long it takes to make me angry" he firmly asks. "nope" I respond. "don't push me Swazelihle, you won't like the outcome.." I hate it when he does this, scaring me while he is the one who pokes me. "Where are you anyway? You can be careless sometimes! Why can't it just sink in that stubborn head of yours that I'm worried sick about you!" why is he shouting anyway? I'm not his child "I'm not a child Mthunzi, I'm a grown woman so start treating me like one and stop controlling my life!" he chortled angrily "Swazi your problem is you think I'm a high School boyfriend, you don't see me, you don't respect me. where the hell are you?" mxm! these passengers are giving me strange looks, they should learn to mind their own business. ... "I don't know where I am, why can't you just guess so that you can come and take me wherever you wanna take me because that's your specialty, you just decide where I should go and I should just follow like a puppy! I'm not one of your patients Mthunzi you can't just order me around jeez!"

the beep soft sound hit my ears; he dropped the call. Good for him. My phone rings again, ARGHH!

“what!” I scream “aibo, dade” my lawt! Its Mandlakhe “ahm.. bh.. bhut Mandlakhe” I’m suddenly edgy “where are you?” he ask, where do I even begin “I got the job! I had an interview” I say, trying to sound happy. Well, I might be lying about the interview but at least got the job. “you aren’t answering my question dade, where are you?” damn, I should have talked to Veli to find out about our plan, now I’m not even sure of what I’m saying. “well, I’m .. I’m in my father’s house” I say “unamanga! We’ve been calling you since morning! There are people here claiming to know you!” okay I’m confused “people?” I say “you heard me” he is angry, I can feel it “what kind of people bhuti, I didn’t send any people mina” this is making my head spin “if you were here right now I would have smacked the lies out f you! When were you going tell us! We are going crazy here cant you see that” “I swear I don’t know those people” what’s happening “there are people here sent by some Zulu man asking for your hand in marriage” my mind stops working for a second “marriage!.. wait what are you talking about” “kunabakhongi screaming at the gate and its annoying! I don’t care how you’ll do it but just get your lying self here! now !” no no no!

!*****

Swazi

Everything is happening all at once and I just don't know how to react anymore. Not so long ago everything was going towards the right direction and now its all just baffling. I'm still in awe as I get off the taxi heading home, my heart drops to zero. He is parked in the middle of the yard; I just know he is inside the car waiting for me. I don't have energy to fight, all I want is a warm bath, food and a beauty sleep. Tomorrow is my first day back at work and I'd like to welcome it with a jubilant spirit. The car door opens, and he gets out, stares at me as I move towards his direction. Do I ever get what I want mara? "Mthunzi" I softly say and pass him, unlock the door and get inside. I can feel his heavy presence behind me, but I choose not to dwell on it.

I'm thirsty, water in the fridge and I drink almost the whole bottle and take a long breath when I'm done. What do I cook? I'm tired though, I head to my bedroom and throw my miserable self on the bed and close my eyes. My phone rings, for the umpteenth time and I do what I've been doing, ignore it. I never sent anyone, they'll see what they do with them..

I'm furious, the loud banging in my chest is evident enough. How dare him, I never said I wanted marriage, its too soon. Way too soon, for Christ sake I'm still fighting a failed marriage trying to get out and he just want to dive me in again, never!

I feel it, the heavy presence that he carries wherever he goes. He is inside my room. I open my eyes slowly and find him standing over me, its creepy. I quickly seat up, he is still standing with a look that I can't explain but it makes my inside turn.... "Mthunzi" I say softly, I'm trying to be as calm as I possibly can.. "mmmm" "what is it that I hear about you sending abakhongi without my knowledge?" I ask, I don't care how intimidating he is, he was wrong, and he should know that. "Mthunzi, I'm asking" "do you expect me to answer that?" "no I expect you to dance in the middle of the road, OFCOURSE I EXPECT YOU TO ANSWERT THAT!!" "there is nothing I despise than a woman with a loudmouth! I am a man and I deserve respect! I'm gonna get tired of your loose tongue woman!" woman! Tjoh "that's all you know Mthunzi, you hate disrespect, you hate being shouted at but guess what! I also hate being controlled like a zombie. You can't just wake up and decide to marry me without me knowing Mthunzi! I won't allow that."

Sticky Silence and heavy breathings

"so, you don't want to marry me?" he painfully ask. "You of all people know what marriage did to me. I don't see myself

getting married, not anytime soon” I say, truthfully. “what are you saying exactly Swazelihle” he asks “I need to be free, to breath and find myself again. Marriage did nothing but broke me, it almost destroyed my life and you stand here telling me about the very same thing that caused me nothing but pain! Marriage is like a jail, it just ties you down and keep you grounded, I cannot allow that to happen to me ever gain, I can’t be tied for the rest of my life ” after spending three years of my life with Fikani, what did I get in the end! Nothing but misery. I admit I love Mthunzi, but marriage is a big step.... “so when you see me all you think of is jail Swazelihle? what’s the purpose of this relationship then if we don’t have any future plans together?” “I don’t know! is it not enough? what we have. marriage complicates things Mthunzi can’t you see” He curses frustrated. “you don’t get it do you, Swazelihle. I need a wife, not a girlfriend” “I’m sorry Mthunzi, but I cant. I just can’t” “why can’t you allow me to show you the true definition of love, let me in Swazi. Allow me to wipe away the tears you’ve cried before I came into your life, allow me to spend the rest of mylife proving how much you mean to me..” he says “All men are the same, one minute you are in love and ready to settle down, then the next you are cheating, marriage suddenly becomes too much for you an where would I be when you turn all Fikani on me” our eyes meet, I know I just hurt him with my

words “is it fair, to punish me for someone else’s crimes Swazi. Is it fair to compare me with that man!”

“you are a man Mthunzi, I wish I can trust you but I can’t put myself through that again”

“wow!” he says softly, slowly turn and take small steps towards the door.

I let them fall as he vanished, why does it hurt so much! I hold my chest and let out a deep cry.

Thembeke

I’m finally back to work, thank God! Though it is a bit far from where we used to live but I’ll adapt. Delani, I find him staring into space as I enter the house. He looks so deep in thoughts, laying on his back while his arms are behind his neck.

“Sthandwa” I say “nkosikazi yam enhle. How are you doing mama ka Sgidi” he says then laugh, I hate it when he says something then laugh first, this is not a joke “this is not funny Delani, you cannot name my child with such a horrid name. NO!” He laughs even harder, much to my annoyance. I click my tongue and stand up but he drags me back and I fall on top of

him .. he doesn't flinch, he is recovering pretty well. "my super super humaaaaaan, you don't know!.." "no no! don't even start..." I stop him laughing, he loves singing this song but he end up messing everything up because he doesn't know the lyrics "you are beautiful, I love you tshali tshali" my heart dances "I love you Sthandwa" "thank you, for standing by me, for not giving up on me.." I kiss him, I feel my body getting hot. God knows how much I miss him. we stop and stare at each other. "are you okay? With everything that has happened?" I ask staring deep in his eyes. He sighs

"I don't know. everything happened quickly and before I know it I'm a son to a man I was taught to hate my whole life. I just, I don't know how to fit in around here. I'm just here, but not here. I feel lost" "its overwhelming I know. but none of this is your fault. Just be grateful that they accepted you, they love you I can see it in their eyes" I say "yeah Bab Zulu looks genuine and that crazy boy, Phikelela. Ngcebo is just, I don't know but we just haven't connected at all. and then there is Mthunzi, he just distance himself from me. Thembi I don't even know how to call myself these days, my ID is written Mthembu

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yet I am a Zulu by blood. You are Mrs Mthembu but who turns out to be mrs Zulu. This is to much, now we must change surnames and .." he sighs. I get him, he is right. One minute I

had no father in law and now I must tread carefully because that man is very much traditional and he is intimidating, you just don't know how to react around him. "the good thing is that you are alive, you are recovering and soon you'll also be back to work" I say "work you say, how do I even go back there after what that woman did to me, she was willing to let me die just to save her secret! She hasn't even bothered to call and check how I'm doing since we came here. I'm tired Thembi, I just want to get away from everything" yah neh

I'm busy preparing supper when Father in law enters the kitchen, I don't know how to react "Makoti" he says, I nod my head. He takes something in the cupboard then leaves. I sigh out of relief then continue with what I was doing. "SO, have you heard?" yeap, he doesn't greet I've gotten used to him "heard what?" he grabs a chair and seat down then claps his hands "apparently Mthunzi sent abomalume to Swazi's home and they were never accepted, as of now they are arguing in one of the rondavels. Better prepare enough food sister because when they are angry, their appetite tend to be bigger than Pacific ocean" wait a minute "are you sure we are talking about the same Swazi here?" "oh yes! Maybe the poor girl finally saw Ndondo's mother and realised that they look together, like pap and stiff pap" okay, this is strange "tell me more" I say grabbing

a chair “promise not to tell a soul about this” he says ,
narrowing his eyes at me “even if I wanted to, who will I tell.
Come on Phikelela just talk already” “well, Mthunzi had this
baby mama, who is no longer alive may her soul rest in peace.
Thing is she looks exactly like Swazi and as it turns out, they are
twins” “shut the front door!” I hit him on the shoulder “eya
wena! I thought Ngcebo was the crazy one but hey, Mthunzi I
give him the up, he deserves it”

“wait, I remember the sangoma saying something to Swazi I
didn't think it was this. Shem, she might be devastated I should
give her a call” I say standing up “seat down! don't call her now,
it will be too obvious. My goodness! This family and drama!”
“tjoh, so about abakhongi, did they really stand them up? this
family though has no unity. How come I never knew about such
mara. Does Delani know? I'll ask him” “things weren't always
this way you know. we were a strong, united family but when
my mother and my siter died, everything just went South.
Mthunzi hardly came home, Ngcebo would be here but
sometimes he'll also leave for days leaving Ndabezitha and I. I
had to nurse my father's feelings, cook, wash for him and do
everything in this house..” I never thought there was such a
deep story “you know what, lets rebuild this family, bring back
love and unity. Starting by setting the table and everyone,
including the grumpy uncles will seat here around the table and
we will all have dinner, like family” I say. His lips forms into a

wide smile “see why I love you, you are the best! Let me go and finish my homework, call me when you’re done” I grab him with his collar “no no! you are helping me with everything. You seem to forget that I don’t know your old-school family, I need guidance and you are going to be my guide” he grunts, but start helping me “shame, I really thought they were our African version of Romeo and Juliet, boy was I wrong! Who turns down umshado these dayz!” clap once, twice . He is back on Mthunzi’s issue “he might be going crazy wherever he is, no man wants to be rejected especially when the family is involved” I say “this is like someone leaving you at the alter, or just not showing up at all! remind me not to mess with girls, they are heartless little devils. I feel sorry for Mthunzi, maybe we should ask Swazi and find out what happened..!” “uMthunzi wenzeni?” I freeze, the plates in my hands almost fell down to the ground “bhuti, we are having dinner at a dinner table tonight just like old times! I cant wait to pray before we start eating. Help us set the table” does he ever seem remorseful, he just walked in while we are talking about him and Phikelela is just being himself . Staring at Mthunzi I can tell that he is dealing with a lot “I’ll be back, now now. I just remembered something” yeap, he run out leaving me with a big elephant in the room “I heard about.. “ wait, what am I even saying! “what I’m saying is I’m here, if you need someone to talk to” I say, he nods then get out as well. Tjoh, I need to get the full story

straight from the horse's mouth! Where is my phone.

Narrated

It's the middle of the night, Fikani wakes up feeling pressed and head towards the bathroom. He does his business but as he gets back, the bed is empty. Tracy's side is empty, and he start to wonder where she is. He worries about her, she is carrying his very first child after all. He heads out searching for her, its been one fight after the other between them, there is no peace at all.

"she is back again" he hears her speaking softly at the kitchen, the fridge is open and she is standing by it with a slice of pizza on her hand, while the other is holding a cell phone "nx! I swear the woman has nine lives like a cat, if only that lady did a great job, I wouldn't be dealing with her at all" he leans against the door listening. "I told you not to worry about that, he believes me. one way or the other we will have everything we ever wanted, this child is our ticket to heaven" she takes a huge bite and laugh, not realising that there is a third person in the room. Even though he cannot overhear the one on the other line, but

he can hear her properly “listen I gotta go before he realise that I’m gone, wena just deal with this woman because she is messing things up for me. If Fika ever finds out that this child I’m carrying is yours., He will ki..” “INI??”

KK Jama Logistics

He is in deep thoughts, playing with a glass of whiskey on his hands. How did he get here? he destroyed everything, his family. Had he remained faithful by now they would be expecting their child, making future plans together but all of that is nothing but a bitter memory

A soft knock at the door pulls him back from miserable thoughts “come in” he orders after putting down an empty glass. “Mthembu” he stands up quickly “what do you want?” he ask “relax, I’m not here to cause havoc. I’m a decent man Mthembu” “this is not a social visit so cut the crap, ufunan Zulu?” he cannot hide resentment he has towards this man, it’s all written on his face “How can you be so cruel? Not even offering me a seat or something to drink?” tongue click, his chest moves hysterically “if you don’t say what you came here for I suggest you leave my office, this instant” “ow! Is that so? You tend to forget that this is family business Mthembu. We are owners of this company just as you are. How about we change the name to Jama and Zulu kamalandela...”

“DAMNI IT!! WHAT DO YOU WANT MTHUNZI” he shouts banging the table A mocking laughter fills up the entire office as

he slowly moves, abruptly he stopped as he reach him , a daunting look resurfaced as if he never shared a laugh just a second ago “I heard you’ve been asking question about me, I’m here now. This is a chance, Ask anything you wanna know” Fikani shake his head angrily “you came all the way to ask me this? Are you bored or what?” “is that the first question?” he ask, his eyes narrowing “listen here Mthunzi and listen good because I won’t say it again, get the f*ck out of my office!” with greeted teeth he says “I have a better idea, how about you stop being a sissy and face me man to man..” “are you hiding something , something that might cause havoc between you and your precious Swazi” says Fikani “stop digging up my past Fikani Mthembu, you’ll get burnt” They glare at each other with nothing but burning rage in their eyes, No words exchanged anymore, just gazing at each other with no hope of backing down until a soft voice disturbs them “Fikani you must see th...” she stands still, her unsteady breathing increasing.

“Mthunzi..” she shockingly says He has back faced Fikani, his gaze thrown at her as she stand still in the doorway “Swazelihle” he never expected what is Infront of him “let’s go outside.. to talk” she quickly says, shaken. The lines on his forehead are noticeable, he is angry “you can talk here, I don’t bite” says Fikani amused, he can tell that Mthunzi never knew that she is back from work and that alone gives him joy that he

fails to hide. “shut the fuck up Mthembu” “trouble in paradise, so soon” he says, offensively causing Mthunzi to click his tongue “Mthunzi” she softly says, pleading with her eyes but he doesn’t move an inch, his head running a marathon of its own “what are you doing here?” he finally ask, allowing anger to end deep within him “let me release you from your misery brother, she works for me now, she is after all Mrs Mthemb..” a mean punch lands on his jaw and he spits blood instantly “Mthunzi, what have you done!” a hard slap lands on Mthunzi’s as fast as lighting. and the fights begins “MTHUNZI!! PLEASE !!” Its chaos, everyone has come to watch, others taking videos until an old man rush in and stop the fight..

It was hard passing all the judgemental eyes but finally they are outside. She is being pulled by a hand as they reach his car and with not much mercy she is thrown in the passenger seat. He drives away faster..

Swazi

Good grief! I’m going insane! First day at work, first day and already I’m in huge drama. Not just with anyone, the CEO I might as well kiss this job goodbye. He’s been grinding steering

wheel since we left, his chest is visibly shaking, and I don't even know how to approach him.

In less than 30 minutes he drives in his house, I can't even fight him because of how angry he is. what was he even doing there in the first place, Is he not supposed to be at work!

I'm in the kitchen, eating a pizza that I found on the fridge and Mthunzi, he disappeared inside the house and I'm very much glad. I'm not ready to face him, not yet. I couldn't even take my handbag, my phone, my lunchbox and everything that was inside my handbag.

I feel full, I head to the lounge and lie down on the sofa allowing my thoughts to go wild..

I'm woken up by my sixth senses, he is seating opposite me watching soccer. My whole body is sore

"when were you going to tell me?" he asks, still staring at the TV. He doesn't waste time "I cant just seat around Mthunzi I need to work" I say "didn't you hear what I asked Swazelihle?" arh! "I was going to tell you.." "when?" I keep my mouth shut, as it is we are diving on thin ice. "Swazelihle, why are you back

there?" why is he even asking, I just told him why "to work Mthunzi" he turns and meet my gaze, I feel my inside shrinking "I'm sorry Mthunzi I was going to tell you I swear just that we were fighting and I couldn't tell you, it slipped my mind.." why am I panicking "you are not going back there" what! "but its my.." the look I scored myself! "that man is using you to get back at me, did you really think he'd just give you your job back so easily! I thought you knew better!" that's so cliché "I'm sorry that I didn't let you know sooner but Mthunzi I need my job back, I need to build my grandmother a beautiful house filled with expensive furniture, jobs are scarce these days you know that" silence "you aren't going back, end of discussion" my goodness! "I doubt I still have that job anyway, after what you did" I murmur, he stares at me intensely and I know he heard me.

"MTHUNZI!!" I cringe of the sudden screaming voice. who the hell does that, barge in someone's house without knocking and scream "Mthunzi what's going on you've been ignoring my calls" doll face! My blood boils instantly, I don't like this woman "what do you want Beauty" oh please! She is not that beautiful "you've been ignoring me, I'm worried" she is plainly disregarding my presence, hey wena spooky doll "our relationship ended, there's nothing left to talk about" Qeh! Tell

me why I refused to marry this man “Mthunzi, not here” she says and give me a bad look

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shem baby girl I’m not going anywhere, you know what, let me do this “Mageba, when are you planning to send abakhongi again?” I say charging towards him. “babe?” he can be slow sometimes. I put my arms around his neck and peck his swollen lips, serves him right for behaving like a hooligan “I mean I’ve talked to gogo and she said your uncles can come this weekend” I softly say, drawing circles on his chest. “oh really! I’m happy, wow!” he gently says caressing my cheeks..

“ngiyakthanda Mageba, I cant wait to be Mrs Zulu ” “ahem! I’m still here..” “just get lost Buhle!” did he just snap at her!

angsamthandi ke

lomntu

“did you mean that?” he asks the minute she gets out. I slowly move away from him, take the remote then change the channel “Swazelihle” he says, Ignore him, role play is over bethuna! I’ve never met such a slow doctor! A strong hold lands on my waist and he grabs me causing to bump on his chest. “I’m really sorry for being such a hard man sweetheart, I mean it” I stare at him, his deep lazy eyes stares back at me, weakening knees. He slowly lowers his face, I want to move but at the same time I don’t want to. I feel his warm breath tickling my face that I

automatically close my eyes standing on my toes. His warm lips meet mine causing Goosebumps all over my stomach, gently he starts moving his lips so do I as I follow at the same pace, my heart beating hard and fast. I missed him, so so much but I was just too furious to admit...

“I found someone to live here with you, I hope you don’t mind” he says “why?” “you don’t expect me to let you live here all alone do you?” he is right , at least this time he did tell me “is it a man?” he laughs “never! it’s a woman, she will also help you around the house while you are here. when you visit your family, she will be here looking after the house” “okay” he looks shocked “just like that? you’re not gonna fight me?” he ask, staring at me “well, I do need to live with someone so I don’t see why I should fight this” a ghost smile of his, I missed it “I miss Ndondo, can we visit her tomorrow” I say, I’m a bad person sometimes “ofcourse, after work though” I nod. As I’m about to get out he hold my hand “not so fast Sweetheart” I laugh and peck his lips but then this man is a bully. I end up kissing him. I don’t know where we stand right now but at least we are no longer screaming at each other

.....

A knock on the door startle me as I’m busy in the kitchen. it might be the woman, I leave everything and head toward the

door.. a dark middle-aged woman is outside with a suitcase next to her... "sawubona mah" I greet her " how are you sisi" she says, she seems really humble. I let her her in "I'm MaZulu, Dorothy Zulu" she extend her hand, I do the same and introduce myself as well "so you know Mthunzi" I ask, seeing that they share the same surname "just a little, I used to work at the hospital as a cleaner . sadly the contract ended, I'm grateful for this job I really needed it.." I smile, what else can I do..

Its been a while since MaZulu came, she is in the lounge watching Dumisa, yeap she just took over my TV but I don't mind because there is really not much to be done in this house. Somehow I feel a bit at ease knowing that I'm no longer alone.

I'm in my mother's bedroom going over her stuff, I do miss her sometimes. Like today, I laugh as I come across an old picture of us, I look so funny yet cute in pink heels and very huge grad gown. She is standing next to me with a smile, I was graduating from grade R and I was so happy. "Swazelihle!" she yells my name. I put it down and head out "he said he is here for you" she says, if I'm right I'll say she looks irked . "Fikani" he is holding my handbag, and some papers. His swollen face reminds me of what went down and I feel ashamed "I brought these" he hands me my handbag "thank you, ma this is my ex

husband” I say, she glares Mthunzi then leaves, tjoh hayike “I brought these too” he says handing me the papers. I hold them tightly “is this what I think it is?” I ask, softly. He nods slowly “oh! Thank you so much” I find myself hugging him but a bad smell suddenly fills up my nostrils and I quickly back away covering my nose.. “whats that smell?” I ask, still covering my nose. He looks offended but I cant help it “my new cologne” aw! God it smells like a rotten egg. “its not that bad, don’t mind me” I say, stupidly removing my hands, I shouldn’t have! The urge to puke fills up my chest instantly, I couldn’t reach the bathroom as I throw up on the floor. Damn it! the sight of it is disgusting I feel like puking again! Did I really eat this! Arh! my throat is burning.. “here, take this?” he says handing me his t shirt, wait did he just took it off “no, I’ll take something else don’t worry” I say, its so awkward, he is practically half naked “I’m the one who caused this, I insist ” well, its his choice. I take the t shirt, hold my nose so I wont inhale the smell then wipe my mouth.. “thank you” I say, reluctantly handing it to him, I mean he cant expect me to wash this, he will have to wash it on his own. Funny enough, he takes it but hold my hand in the process “Fikani don’t ..” I say as I look at his eyes, I know him too well “we’ve divorced, allow me to say goodbye Swazi, please” he says moving closer.. “Swazelihle..” somebody funeral me please!

.....

Swazi

Sharp breathings are the only thing perceptible by the ear. The tension in here is thickening with each second which feels like hours of wretchedness! I've pulled my hand from Fikani, but he still hasn't stopped glaring at him. The enraged petrifying look, I know it too well; I saw it in Fikani's office. His eyes emits fire but he is motionless, daggers thrown at Fikani has my blood running cold, my heart racing faster and my body visibly shaking, I am terrified "you are like an annoying itch, uwutwayi uyaxgambukela nje mfana" like a subdued thunder he rumbles deeply.. "she is still my wife so cut the cra.." within a blink of an eye his hands are clawed on Fikani's neck, strangling the life out of him, I'm frozen as Fikani fight off his strong hold but to no avail "aibo Mthunzi!!!" MaZulu shouts behind me and he quickly let go of him, slowly he succumbs on the floor coughing violently. Tears burns my eyes as he shoot me a murder stare "wena, asambe!" he commands, I'm unable to move, what if he hurt me "Swazelihle.." he warningly say and I shake my head moving backwards . our eyes lock for a brief moment and my insides instantly shrinks "hhay Mthunzi, let the child be, go outside and calm down." His face hardens, I can tell he wants to argue but ends up heading out. I rush to my bedroom and let

them fall off, what have I done, I'm weak, I'm stupid and naïve. I can't believe after everything I offered him a hug, a close length towards me, what the hell is wrong with me...

Three hours later and I'm still battling with my thoughts, sleep deserted me a long time ago. My hands have been clenching my pyjama top that even my fingers hurt, I'm in distraught, addled of what I saw in Mthunzi's eyes. The look of rage he had will probably find a permanent place in my mind, even after letting go of Fikani there was no inch of regret in eyes. They were still filled with burning rage and evident resentment even when glued on me. What if he thinks I was cheating, but I would have stopped Fikani. I would have pushed him. This is the Mthunzi that I dread the most, the cold, spine-chilling Mthunzi.

Opening my eyes, I'm met with a bright room. Its another day already, I don't remember when I fell asleep but then as they say, sleep is like death, it just falls upon you no matter the circumstances. I wake up and rush towards the kitchen, I'm famished. Where is this peanut butter, there! I sigh in relief as I muff it, I feel my taste buds awakening, good staff! The sudden

heaviness on my shoulders, my heart skipping once. He is in here “Swazelihle” my hands quickly drops the spoon and the peanut butter on the floor. I swallow the remaining peanut hard, my skin is quivering that’s how scared I am. I’m afraid to even turn and meet his gaze. My heart races as his hands comes in contact with my shoulders, a gentle hold turns me around, but I don’t dare look up. “look at me please” he begs, gently lifting my chin and I feel my knees weakening the moment our eyes meet, I can't read him, the plain look he has is terrifying on its own.. “I’m sor..” “shh.. not now” I shiver as his cold finger touches my mouth. Though I can tell that anger is still buried deep within, but I give in to the moment and allow him to kiss me, my pounding chest is loud as his pace quickens, battling with my lips giving me a rough kiss. I can feel anger burning in him.. “Knock Knock” I move away as the sudden knock startles me, panting for air. The tension increases overwhelming me and I don't even know what to with my self but end up nervously biting my swollen lips. The knock persist and I lead myself towards the door.. “what are you doing here are you crazy!!” I huff softly

is he applying for death, why is he back here again! “I’m not here for you Swazi, where is that assassin of yours, I want him” flip, heaviness behind me

“that’s him detective, he tried to kill me , right after attacking me at work, everybody saw it. even her” oh God! Oh No! “ I’m detective Sithole and next to me is detective Charles. Mr Zulu, you re under arrest for assaulting Mr Fikani Mthembu and.....” my head is literally spinning!

I’m driving like a maniac to Ngcebo’s house. They took him, after begging them, kneeling down their feet they still took him! I’m losing my mind as I park outside his house and rush inside breathing hard

“Ngcebo!!” I scream until I bump into someone “you again!” God, it’s that woman, I don’t have time for this “I’m sorry to barge in like this, where is Ngcebo. I need to talk to him” I speak faster but she just gives me a bored look, girl I don’t have time! “I’m Penelope Nhleko, nice to meet you” she says extending her hand, can’t she see I’m in a bad space “sis please just tell me where Ngcebo is!’ I half yell impatiently, my whole body quivering “you lack manners little girl, let me tell you something Ngcebo is my man, not our man. Your rotten attitude is starting to annoy me..” “hhaybo wentombazane I don’t care! You know what don’t tell me, I’ll search for myself” I push her but she grabs me harshly that I almost fall “hey, he is not here” the f#ck, I go off the deep end of anger “what was hard to say that in the first place, you’re so useless!” I leave her

shouting and rush out. I'm going straight to the zulu homestead, I can't believe I don't know where Ngcebo works, look at me loosing my mind. At least Mthunzi left his car at my house otherwise I'd be helpless..

It helped because that there's only a single gravel road that is used, otherwise I would have got lost along the way. The smoke flies all around as I take a left turn joining the side dusty road leading to Mthunzi's home. I park quicker then get out running towards the only person I see standing above the kraal, he looks confused as he see me " Mthunzi was taken, they took him right infront of me!! I don't know what to do, it's my fault I should have stopped it but I tried, I swear I tried but they didn't listen but I didn't kno.." the lump surpasses my throat blocking my voice, a loud wail escapes my mouth, what have I done!

"You can talk now, what happened" Delani ask after giving me a glass of water. I'm in the lounge now looking lost and nervous. I can't believe I broke down Infront of Mthunzi's father. He just froze, until Delani came out in one of the houses and led me here. As of now he still look unsettled

“well, Fikani had him arrested” my hoursey voice utters, I’m not about to tell everything that went down. Delani knows Fikani and he knows how impulsive he can get, he is still his brother “why?” he asks, I’m still engulfed in a shuddering breathing but I’ve calmed a bit. “they had a fight and he got him arrested” I quickly say, that’s all I’m giving away. Why are they not panicking like me! “we’ll sort this. You stay here and make yourself comfortable. I’ll call Thembeke in the meantime”

“no don’t stress her she is at work. I’ll stay behind, you go and handle this Ndabezitha, I trust you.” the scary father says deeply. They share a brief staring then he nods and stands up “you can go to my house it’s the one on the left corner roofed with thatch” he says “no I’m okay in here” I say, I’ll go crazy if I stay alone, id rather be here with a scary old man. “go to my house, to wear something presentable” he says giving me a strange look. I’m a bit baffled until I look at my clothes, My Lord, I’m still in my short pyjamas, someone punch me in the face and bury me 10 feet under!! I’m finished!!

Swazi

As to how the day ended I have no idea but the sun has long set outside and there is still no sign of Delani, all I know is that I'm restless I can't keep still "seat down already!!! I'm dizzy as it is" Thembeke screams, for the hundredth time. Whenever I seat its like my head spin, its better if I stand "its June Thembeke, what if he dies due to cold. I've been there I know how freezing it is! oh God what if Fikani send people to kill him, wha.." "aibo! Yehhen can you stop overacting" she doesn't get it! "I'm not overacting, I'm just worried" "its okay to be worried, you love him but stressing this much won't help, it will put you and your baby's health in jeopardy and Mthunzi wouldn't want that" oh my baby, my hands automatically flies down my tummy "what if they kill, my baby will be fatherless Thembeke do you understand that, she will go through the same pain that I went through. It's hard growing up without a father, its leaves a gap that can never be fulfilled, it hurt and.."

my chest tightens for the umpteenth time and I begin crying, I feel her arms hugging me "calm down Swazi please, think of the baby tle. Mthunzi is a grown man, he is strong and can take care of himself. You also need to be strong"

My life feels like an unending nightmare!

I'm rolled like a ball on Mthunzi's bed. Thembeke is still here, Phikelela has joined the party. He is still himself, talking none stop. at least he understands that I cant join in their conversation. A hard knock at the door has me seating up instantly, Delani enters being followed by Ngcebo. I look behind them and there is no sign of Mthunzi, I feel tears crowding my eyelids "Sthandwa" says Thembeke standing up to meet them half way. He shakes his head in disappointment and I feel my hopes flying out the window "here, I passed by your house and figured you might need it" he hands me my cell phone and a bag. Maybe MaZulu packed for me "when.. is he coming ..home.." I ask but only get gloomy, doubtful expression "he will come back soon" says Delani, I lie on my back and sink deep in my world of despair

After a short while I decide to call gogo, I haven't been able to talk to them ever since that saga "gogo" I say, there's no response for a minute I even check if the call is still on "Qhamkephi" she says, she is still here "gogo, Mthunzi was arrested, I'm nervous what if they don't release him .." I'm crying as I speak fast "Mthunzi, uban lowo?" and it hit me, I almost told them who Mthunzi is "ah.. its.. it's the boss, the one I work with. he was arrested" I stutter "we Qhamkephi, do you

want to send me to an early grave! What's wrong with you, one minute you are here, the next you've vanished. What's wrong with you?? why are you stressing me like this" I stiffen my cries, I'm a mess as it is and now she is shouting at me "I'm sorry gogo" I say mutter, my free hand wiping tears on my face "those bad lucks won't stop flowing until you come home so that a proper welcoming ceremony can be done. You are needed here. now stop crying, everything will be alright uyezwa ngane ka gogo" she says gently, she amazes me, she was biting my head off a second ago and now she is so warm "ngiyabonga gogo" I say "now stop dodging our calls, your brother is going insane here. call him" "I will gogo, bye" I feel a bit better, as short as the call was but I really needed it

I call Mandlakhe, it rings once and he picks up "dade" he says, I cant read his voice but I'm happy to hear it "bhuti" I say "talk to me, what's wrong?" he softly ask and I'm about to break down again "it's a long story, I will be fine though" I say and sigh deeply

"you know where to find me when you ready to talk, stay safe" I nod but realise that he can't see me

"I will. Send my regards to everyone at home"

Now everyone at the dinner table is giving me sympathetic looks and I hate it; I'm eating because of the baby I'm carrying. If it was up to me I'd be sleeping, the banging headache is a reminder of how much I've cried since morning.

As the sour dinner ended I headed straight to Mthunzi's rondavel and did something I've never done at all, praying. I kneel down my knees and beg God to protect him and keep him warm. As I say my amen, my phone rings. Its an unsaved number "Qhamu, its Nqaba" ow, while I was at home I never talked to him that much, he is so reserved, he is just like Ndabezinhle. You just don't know how to talk to them "bhutiza, how are you" I say "I'm okay. But you're not" he says and I'm puzzled a bit "Qham, don't question anything that I'm about to tell you right now" he suddenly says, a bit deeper. He is scaring me "I'm listening" I say "wherever you are, do not leave. I can't say much but listen to what I'm saying" this is confusing "okay" I reluctantly say and the beep sound, he just hanged up with no goodbye, he is strange ****what's wrong with Nqaba, is he okay?**** I send the message to Veli on whatap. She replies after a while **** why, what has he done**** I tell her what he said, and her answer is ****He is strange, just listen to him****

Thembeke comes in after a while with a blanket, she tells me to shift and I do so “I’m not about to let you sleep all alone. Delani will just have to deal, it’s his brother who put us in this situation” she says, I share a brief smile and close my eyes hoping that sleeping will be the only escape I need from this gummy reality.

Mandeni, Sundumbili Plaza

Penelope Nhleko

She is endeavouring in an Oreo McFlurry while tapping on her whatap letting her sisters know that everything is going accordingly, by this time next week the construction of the Ndulinde library would have started. She always gets what she wants, which is no mystery that she scored a tender under Mandeni, Ilembe Municipality while she falls under Eshowe

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uMlalazi Municipality. A go getter she is, fearless and business minded. A message comes through, its from the boyfriend, Ngcebo ***I’m sorry I won’t be able to meet your mother,

again. Please apologise on my behalf*** she huffs in annoyance, her expensive nails fidgeting in anger. He has done it again, for the fifth time. every time she is about to introduce him, he always bails out. She should have known, he never put her feelings first. Like yesterday when she told her about that crazy girl that disrespect her in every possible way, as always he said she should understand that she was going through something. As if that is an excuse, we all go through something, what's special about her anyway!

“Ai ai, bafo! Are you sure this is not a TV, maybe it's the baby computer!” she looks up of the sudden deep, low pitched voice speaking closer to her, she has a thing for men with a deep voice.

It's what attracted her to Ngcebo “eish, maybe it's the last cell phone on earth, how do you pick this one up. The world is coming to an end!” her lips cracks into a smile, two men dressed in overalls are glued on the McDonald's self-serve kiosk arguing. They look lost and frustrated that other customers are starting to notice, who wouldn't because their voices alone attract attention.. She is about to go help when someone jumps in and help “hhaykhona, where is usu here, I can't eat these quarter breads, I'm a man . don't you have idombolo atleast!”

He complains again “maybe they sell inyama yenhloko, wena mfana ngfun eyam ibabe kakhulu!” says the other one who’s a bit taller. “no, we don’t sell that here” says the man looking rather annoyed. Their faces are confused “I told you that we must just go to MaNdaba, not here!” “but I thought we might find something, Veli always talks about this store so I thought we might find something..” they follow each other heading towards an exit “inyama ka MaNdaba ishaya khona! awusnik esngaboni!” they stand still trying to push the door to get out, but the door does not budge.. “do you need some help” she says as she reach them, she couldn’t say longer she had to make her presence known. They are not educated and out of her league, its obvious but hey, the girl want what she wants “do they lock you in if you don’t buy from them! white people never loved us, first it was our land and now they are dictating us on how to spend our hard earned money” she shakes her head smiling them pull the door, it opens “magic hands” the other mumbles, she follow them out and the expensive perfume hit them. She smells and breath expensive. “that was not hard, all you had to do was to pull the door towards you” she says staring at them “in MaNdaba’s container there is no pulling, we just enter, this is your doing Qhude! You love things, but things go the other way when they see your face! They round off to the nearest zero! ” "atleast they round off, wena

they are not moving, they are stacked" They keep on arguing until she speaks

"I'm Penelope, Nhleko" she introduces herself. "This is my crazy brother Qhude" he says, they shake hands briefly with Qhude "I'm Mandlakhe, Mandlakhe Mthonga" their eyes lock just as their hands meet. A wave of tingles blooms, they smile as if both of them felt it. He hold tighter, staring deep in her wide set of eyes with big artificial eyelashes blinking rapidly like a doll. His hands are that of a hard working man, warm but tickly "Nyawo zimhlophe, nkosazane yezulu" he says gently staring at her, feeling all emotions overwhelming her she cracks into a warm smile. A man who recites her clan name this sexy has her full attention. The moment is disturbed by Qhude nudging Mandlakhe "hhey bafo, is that Nsizwa?" He asks pointing at a guy passing by. He lets go of her hand and stare at her again

"Nkosazana" he says softly as a form of goodbye then they leave, following the so called Nsizwa.

"Nsizwa usuyacasha, uzifihlaphi ndoda yamadoda (you've been scarce)" Mandlakhe ask as they finally reach him, "I'm around, madoda, impilo le ingbambe ngamaS**nde!(life is holding me by my balls" k.." they crack into a loud laughter "what is it with these documents, are you a principal now " the laughter

proceeds “I can only wish! These are my documents and my CV, I heard they are hiring since they will be building a library ” the smiles instantly vanish, being replaced by shock “I heard about that, but I never knew the applications were open” Mandlakhe says, jumbled

“well madoda now you know, closing date is tomorrow around 4 in the afternoon ” they stand still wondering why would people keep such a crucial information

Swazi

I’m going crazy here, I’ve been staring at my phone hoping that maybe Fikani might contact me so that I can beg him. I hate him, but I’d do anything to get Mthunzi out of jail. My phone rings making me jump, its maZulu. I sigh disappointed “mama” I say “my child, can you please come back. There are people here who just brought your car back. They won’t leave the car until you sign” oh! My car is back, that’s a relief. Where is everyone here anyway, the yard is empty as I get out. Thembeke and Phikelela are obviously not around but Ndabezitha and Delani are nowhere to be seen either. I return to the house and take

Mthunzi's car keys, I'll also have the time to go and see him, they didn't want me to visit but well, what they don't know won't hurt them.

I'm starting the car when a knock on the window startles me "bhut Delani" I say "where are you going?" he ask narrowing his eyes at me "something needs me at my house urgently" he gives me one unsettling look "make sure to comeback in less than 2 hours" he says, ah is he suddenly my father. I nod and drive out in speed, the thought of seeing Mthunzi's face gives me hope. I'll start by my house first. Then I'll pass by the police station on my way back

In less than an hour I'm driving inside the yard, there is no sign of my car. Strange! The door is half opened, I get in and call out for maZulu. Where is she anyway "mam.." "don't move or I shoot!" God please!

Let It Be

Swazi

Life is too short, so they say! When that coldest metal poked behind my neck, my knees literally gave up on me, here I am lying helplessly on the floor. My body is hysterically shaking. MaZulu is at the corner looking frightened. Her hands, knees and mouth tied. He still hasn't tied me maybe he knows I won't even do a thing . I'm a mess, it clicks only now what Nqaba said to me. I took is slightly and here I am at the mercy of this man. I remember his face pretty well, he was among those people who told me really strange things about Mthunzi's past.

"don't look so bad girly, it nothing personal. You are just my ticket to heaven" he says, staring down at me..

"are you.. G.. Going to hurt M.. Me" nothing is funny, but his lips cracks into an annoying smile. I wish I could just wipe it with sjambok

"if you behave, I won't do anything bad" his eyes are suddenly glued on my thighs. There's this look I can't explain but I hate it. My hands automatically push down the dress and I sit up

"damn! Badla Kahl abafweth, now I know why that good for nothing Fikani can't let you go, you're a whole dessert" I cringe as he bite his lower lip, what a freak.

He takes out a cell phone and start typing something

"now that we are all here, let's get this party started shall we!" he adds, smiling at me. This is a lunatic . "Fikani, Fikani" he says on the phone, Is Fikani behind this? "guess what I have here" he says, amused if I may add. I can't hear the one he is speaking to "before I tell you, we must come to an agreement you and I..." "no its simple really, I'm tired of being your puppet. I want more, I want to seat in the boardroom with you.." "are you slow! I want shares, 30% shares in that company or else I kill her!" an unpleasant chuckle escape his mouth and I feel my inside turning "I DON'T CARE! JUST GET THE DAMN PAPERS!" His eyes narrow, he looks like a heartless man as he stands before me. I scream louder when he points the gun at me ... "now you know what I'll do next. You have 20 minutes!" I feel a warm liquid in between my thighs "that is out of the way, let's have fun. I mean what kind of a party with no fun.." I'm beyond nervous, my heart is pumping hard in my chest. "mama, I respect you very very veryyyy much! This party isn't for oldies so how about we let you go Neh" he drags MaZulu out of the lounge to somewhere in the bedrooms. He is out of sight! I quickly stand up rushing ou... "Bhaaa!!" oh God! "How dare you

betray me like that! I thought we had an agreement!! "my head is literally spinning, I'm frozen unable to move. The only time I've heard the solid sound of a gun shot is on movies and now, He is in front of me

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the deadly look on his face makes me regret even trying to escape. "look at what you just made me do princess.." I whimper nervously as his fingers are trailing my face down to my breast... "pl.." tears choke me as I try to plead. He has me against the wall, I feel his leg pushing in between my thighs and I wail loudly. "no please... I'm... preg.." it happened so quickly, one minute he was breathing down my neck, the next he is snatched away as countless fists landed on him... "are you okay?" he asks, wiping his bloody hands with his shirt. Where did Delani come from?

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I don't know where Delani came from but I'm glad he came when I really needed him the most. It's been hours since I came back and all I can say is I feel like the world is on my shoulders. I feel so sad, I miss Mthunzi so bad and I can't take it any longer..

"Swazi, I heard what happened. Are you okay" she says the minute she enters the bedroom. I sit up wiping my teary face. She hugs me tight and I feel the lump growing in my throat, my headache is worse! "I'm so sorry, no one deserves to go through that. He is a monster, a disappointment to male species" she says as the hug breaks "atleast he didn't..." I can't say it. "there is no atleast here Swazi, he violeted you, made you feel like something that he owns. He was wrong and he should answer for his crimes" she is angier than me, I'm just shocked trying to comprehend this whole situation. Its like I'm somehow dreaming, sometimes we watch these things on Television and read about them on social media not realizing that some day it might be you, or someone closer. Phikelela hasn't even showed his face, maybe he is afraid I don't know.. "do you need something to eat?" I nod, I don't feel like it but I'm doing it for my baby. She stands up and leave.

I lie on my side backfacing the door and sink deep into my sorrows. Everything is just going south and I'm just exhausted

I hear the door opening, Thembeke is back so quickly. I expect her to speak but she doesn't, which is weird. A heavy breathing and I feel it, the heavy presence weighing on my shoulders and my body tenses

I turn and there he is, an intense gaze plastered on me, shivers instantly engulfs my entire body "Swazelihle" my heart dances,

how I missed him saying my name so perfectly " Mthunzi" my voice came out as a whisper. "come here " he says opening his arms wider, his voice is a bit scratchy than normal, bit rough, exhaustion visible as daylight on his face...

I rush to him and throw myself on his chest, My hands quickly engulf his body, Taking all of him, his salty smell hitting my nostrils. I feel so warm as his strong arms hugs me protectively. God I thank you

Thirty-Two

It's the middle of the night, Delani parks the car a bit far from the main road and get out, Ngcebo and Mthunzi follow after him. "this is the place, follow me" he says after covering the car with tree branches. They join the narrow walk on the right side heading deep in the woods. Delani got a call from Fikani, panicking and asking for help, fortunately he was already on his way following Swazi. He decided to follow her mainly because Mthunzi begged them to look after her while he wasn't around. It didn't take long to get the charges dropped because Fikani is already at the mercy of Delani, who happens to be a brother to both of them.

After walking for a while they reach a black locked gate, Delani unlocked the gate and they got in. it's a red brick, single family house, fenced with long thick walls. Delani stand still as they reach the door and look at his brothers behind him "I did my part. In here is a man who hurt the mother of your child Mthunzi, his life is in your hands now" he says, staring at him. Their eyes meet for a brief moment, he hasn't reacted ever since he was told what exactly went down.

“Sthuli sika Ndaba” says Mthunzi, holding his hand as a form of gratitude. He never thought he’d ever do something like this for him, considering the bitter history between them. “whats this place, how did you even find this dodgy place” ask Ngcebo scanning his eyes around

“isemphelandaba” he replies, smirking. “Another thing, Fikani is in there, I know how angry you are but for now please behave Mthunzi. the dickhead is still my brother” He knocks, the door opens revealing a beautiful lounge. A man seating on the couch stands up meeting them halfway

“this is Bheka, he looks after the house. Bheka, these are my brothers that I told you about”

After the greetings they leave him heading towards the far end of the house, on the left wing. As they reach the door, Delani opens and Fikani immediately stand still looking at the man behind his brother, he begged Delani not to involved them but as always he never listen to him. This was supposed to be between them. Mthunzi blinks a couple of times trying to control the rage building inside of him and move towards a tied man on the chair bleeding but looking powerless, breathing hard and painfully “who did this” Ngcebo ask realising that the man has already suffered some torture “I did, he was working for me and decided to betray m..” a loud painful growl suddenly feels the entire room as countless fist are thrown. No

one stops him as he takes out all his anger, beating, kicking and strangling the man that wanted to hurt his precious cargo, he is beyond angry, he is breathing fire. In the midst of it all a gun suddenly goes off leaving not only Delani stunned, Fikani too. "what the!!are you crazy" Fikani roars in anger staring at the dead man, Mthunzi's bloody hands holding a gun while breathing hard. " you killed him! I wasn't done with hi.." he immediately shut up as the gun points straight at him

"you .. you did this" Mthunzi hiss in anger, slowly moving towards a shaking Fikani, his eyes all out as if seeing a ghost. "Mthunzi, what are you doing?" Ask Ngcebo baffled "I'm doing what I should have done a long time ago, killing this clown. He is the one who puts Swazihle's life in danger, who put my child in danger, my DAMN CHILD!!" warm liquid cascades down Fikani's legs, his body is shaking visibly. "put that gun down Mthunzi" Says Delani calmly. "pl.. ple.. bh..ti please talk.. talk to hi.." "SHUT UP!!" he jumps up startled even more "Mthunzi, I said put the gun down"-Delani, his voice is firmer, filled with burning authority "ye.s tel him bhut.. .. yes pl.." a loud gunshot suddenly goes off, an ear cracking scream escape Fikani's mouth as he lied on the floor shaking. "next time, I wont miss. Just test me" says Mthunzi clicking his tongue then get out angrily. "go to him, make sure he stay away from Swazi, just until he is cleansed. I can tell he doesn't like following orders" says Delani looking at Ngcebo

Swazi

I'm woken up by the sound of splashing water, checking my cell phone it is after 2 am in the morning. Where is Mthunzi? maybe its him in the bathroom but why would he take a bath at this hour. It doesn't make any sense. I wake up and stretch my body, the lights from outside make everything visible in here so I head towards the bathroom and find him naked, wiping his body with a towel. My heart skips, how I missed his warm body next to me

I miss him inside me that even my body suddenly reacts at the thought of him on top of me. He turns and find me staring, I smile shyly biting my nails. No smile on his face, just a hard-unreadable expression. My heart sinks but I move towards him anyway. I put my hands on his chest, but he instantly stops me and hold them tight on his hands, I look up, what's wrong with him. Maybe he just feel dirty because he was in jail, we are staring deep in each other's eyes, I cant feel any connection between us but I stand on my feet trying to kiss him "don't.." he says, pushes me gently then leaves me standing all alone. Hurt doesn't even describe how I feel right now, I cant even stop the tears that are building in my eyes.. "why are you crying?" I'm startled, he is by the door staring back at me. "I'm

not” I respond softly wiping my teary eyes. His look, it is just cold as he stares at me “do you think I’m blind Swazelihle, or stupid maybe” he half yell and I shrink “I’m talking!” “I’m fine Mthunzi” I say, still glued on the same spot “you amaze me sometimes, you weren’t crying when you were cheating on me with that ex husband of yours. am I a fool to you Swazi?” why did I wake up “I wasn’t cheating Mthunzi, I’d never ever do that to you, to us” I say, feeling tears building up again. Somehow I knew this was not over “so what I saw was just a movie, it wasn’t real?” I hate it when he shout, why cant he just be calm like normal people “you.. you just. I can explain” I sound so guilty and with the way he is staring at me I already know I’m in deep sh*t “explain what! That I caught you kissing that man!” I folds my lips “so now you are mute! Aksakhulumek!” I feel my heart beat increasing “but I didn’t kiss h..” “we Swazi, think twice before giving me an answer” his frown deepens as he narrow his eyes at me, I feel something flip in me, I’m tired of this I want to sleep “how about you nurse your own insecurities and let me be! At least Fikani never hid the fact that he was insecure, unlike you” “Uthini? (what did you just say)” He quickly ask charging towards me that I instantly take a step back only to bump on the wall ... “repeat what you just said” he firmly says, and I know I just made things worse “I’m sorry Mthunzi..” I face down failing to keep up with his burning gaze. after a short while he leaves the bathroom and I breath out the

breath I've been holding... the loud banging of a door follows after a short while, he just left!

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I haven't seen Mthunzi since our worst encounter in the wee hours of the morning. When I returned to bed he was nowhere to be found. Its after 7 am and I've been cooped up in here. How can he just vanish like that leaving me all alone, after what I've been through! I was almost killed, almost raped ad instead of being here with me he is somewhere doing God Knows what. I'm just glad MaZulu is safe, atleast

A knock disturbs me and Thembeke enters carrying a tray of food, I don't feel like eating at all. even Peanut butter doesn't cut it for me right now , I just don't care about anything "you look like crap!" she comments as she put the tray on the bedside table. "I know" I say seating straight, as always she opens the curtains, the window and take down the blanket on me "how do you breath in such a suffocated space" she says with her hands on her waist. She looks a bit funny, her

pregnancy bump is growing “move along and help me make the bed, stop laughing” she says, I cant help myself “aren’t you supposed to be at work” I ask as I help make the bed. “well, the controlling Delani decided to resurface and told me to stay at home until I give birth, imagine!” okay, that’s crazy “how far are you again?” I ask “I’m three, going to four months.. ” “its early mos, why is he being like that” I ask, she shake her shoulders “you don’t seem to mind though” I say as I read her facials, she looks free if I may add “well being a cleaner is no child’s play so I’m just enjoying being home and allowing my man to take care of me in the bedroom” I laugh, lucky bastard “how lucky are you” I say loudly, as she is about to say something a soft knock comes through. Delani comes in after we ordered and take his wife, I’m left all alone with a food I don’t even want. I decide to just take a bath instead, I’m going back to Mthonga household, its time to see my family again.

After taking a bath I wear something presentable and start packing my clothes.. “Where are you going” I get frightened as his scratchy voice unexpectedly blooms in the room. “to Ndulinde” I reply softly, his frightening presence is something I’d never ever get used to. “Swazelihle” he calmly say. I stop what I’m doing and look at him .The second our eyes meet I instantly regretted everything about that night, I wouldn’t be in

a room with a man that looks like he wants kill me just by staring at me had I pushed Fikani sooner... “you cant go home now, stay a little longer”

I feel like he is telling me what to do, this so not the life I want to live!

Thirty-Three

DAYS LATER

Swazi

I'm leaning against the door watching Veli start the fire, its after 7 and everyone is up and about, no one sleep until nine o'clock here, Gogo makes sure of that. I know it's wrong to say but I really miss my home in Eshowe, but this is home too and I'm happy. "don't just stand there, get in" she says, I shake my head. It's still a bit hard to breath in there but I'll adapt soon, just like I've adapted into using a bathing basin rather than a bathtub. "suit yourself then" the smoke start filling up the house and I move a bit far. As to why she is not using the electric kettle to boil water I don't know. well at least we do have electricity otherwise I would have lost my mind I swear. I'm in the middle of the yard when Mandlakhe comes out running

"dade" he says running towards the gate and off he is gone, I think he is late for work. Qhude, yeap he also comes out running carrying a very worn out nike backpack

“sbutubutu” he says running towards the gate, yeap he decided to call me sbutubutu, imagine. I’m not even fat, maybe I’m becoming fat, okay I hate that!

“now we fetch water, take the ten-litre bucket, you’ll carry it with your hands” Says Veli while getting out, rubbing her eyes. another thing I must get used to. There is no running water in this area. Just a tank which is 10 minutes away and only get filled only twice a week. While waiting we use the stream which is not far from home.

As we reach the stream I take a long breath and scan my surroundings, as much as this area is lacking some of the basic needs, it is still the most beautiful, peaceful place I’ve ever seen, it’s my home.

“thinking too much is not good in your condition you know” Veli says, filling up her 20 litre bucket with a jug. “I’m not thinking” I say, as the bucket get full I hand her mine and she fills it up in just minutes “you haven’t been fine ever since you came back, it’s like you are just here but your mind is somewhere else” that day when Mthunzi told me to stay I didn’t. He hasn’t contacted me since, but he claims to love me and this baby I’m carrying, I’m hurting but I’m a strong woman, I’ll get through this

“when are you going back to school” I ask, a scornful laughter follows.

“I can’t imagine myself sharing a desk with a kid that was probably doing grade 8 while I was in matric, never” Veli’s first kid is four years, she had him when she was eighteen and in matric. She failed obviously and never returned. Then the second one is 18 months

“school is important Veli

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why do you even care about a grade 8 kid that doesn’t care about you. This is your life girl, go back to school while you still stand a chance” I can tell she doesn’t like this conversation so I keep quite, but I’ll keep on pestering her until she listen to me. she is too young, life still has a lot to offer

“lets go before your gogo decides to fetch us with a stick” I smile then take the bucket in my hands and start walking, atleast it is not far. The bucket is not heavy either so I’m okay

As we reach home im already panting for air and I’m way to hungry. This pregnancy is messing with me, I do not like peanut

butter anymore, I like oranges. They taste so good! There is a tree here at home, I spend most of my time under it, indulging on them.

Gogo is standing in the middle of the yard scattering some mellies for chickens. “intomazana ka gogo!” I feel my heart jumping in happiness, it’s stupid but it still makes me smile “next time I’ll be carrying 20 litre gogo, you just wait” Veli laughs next to me “why cant I believe that” she says still laughing, she is right though 20 litre is too heavy I cant

As lunch

time hit the clock, everyone throw the tools, exhausted. The buiding of the Ndulinde Library started days ago, Mandlakhe and Qhude applied on last minute but lucky for them they got the job.

“webafana baka Mthonga, you are needed at the boss's office” says the supervior staring at both Qhude and Mandkahe

“what for?” he quickly ask “you think I’m blind and stupid. You were late! Go to that office and explain to the boss why you came to work late” they followed each other mumbling angrily “he thinks he will get bonus for spying! Nx” says Mandlakhe “shouldn’t he be home waiting for pansion” Add Qhude with the same anger “that’s what heappens when you hire an old

man to do a young man's job.." as they reach the office they knocked "come in" a soft female voice ordered "it's a woman!" whispers Qhude amazed. They haven't met the boss since they started working "come in!" the voice orders a bit harsh this time. They get in playing with their knuckles. they are about to greet as they come in contact with her, she looks surprised to see them as well..."nyawo zimhlophe" Says Mandlakhe gently, smiling fondly. Her smile grows, her heart is suddenly pumping hard

Swazi

The sudden ringing of a cellphone disturb me from a deep sleep. I don't even know when I fell asleep, after breakfast I threw my body on gogo's bed. My heart skips as I look at the caller ID

"Mthunzi..."

"Swazelihle.. "

Silence

"I miss you" he says, my heart melt, I miss him too

"you've been ignoring me.." I say softly

"you just left, you never even called me either " I was too angry, he is the man. He should do the chasing not me

"I'm pregnant Mthunzi you can't treat me like this" A tear escape my left eye. I never thought we'll reach this level, it's just too soon.

"did you really wanted to kiss him, do you still love him Swazelihle?" he is still on this "no! Of course not!"

"then why did you leave me? I can't even watch my baby grow because you are pushing me, always comparing me to him. Do you have any idea what that does to me?" I sigh

"I was wrong for allowing him to get close enough but I'd never do that to us Mthunzi. I love you and only you. No one, not even Fikani could ever take your place. I love you more that I've ever loved before..".

The only response I get is a hollow breathing

" I swear Mthunzi. I'm sorry for being impulsive sometimes but you are the one my heart wants, you're the only one that I want"

He still doesn't say a thing and I'm not sure what to say anymore

"ngiyakuthanda Swazelihle.."

All the emotions engulfs me at once, I miss him even more

Thirty-Four

Swazi

I'm at ease finally, I just realized how deeply I love Mthunzi, no matter how hard I try he is always occupying my mind. It's hard to believe that God blessed me with another chance at love and if I'm not careful I might lose him. As much as he can be a control freak but I know it comes from a good place. I just need to show him more respect, control the way I speak to him and For God's sake remove Fikani's name in our relationship permanently.

There's an orange in my hand, I'm muffing myself with it while rushing behind my favorite person in this yard, Gogo. I've been following her around since I spoke to Mthunzi earlier. I want to see him tomorrow, surprise him without him knowing but I'll come back on the same day.

The only issue is to ask gogo and I'm just failing to do that. "Qhamqham" she says, entering her house. "gogo wam omuhle engimthandayo" I say smiling, she smiles wider while seating on her tiny favourite couch. I seat down opposite her "what do you

want ntombazane ka gogo” this woman, why is it so hard though!

“nothing, just wanted to know if I should make you some tea” she loves a strong tea, with no milk.

“you just made me one an hour ago nje Qhamkephi” this name, it makes me feel so ancient. Can't they just call me Swazi like everyone

“well, I can make another one” I say, shoving the last peice of orange in my mouth then wipe my hands on this dress I'm wearing “I'm thirsty anyway, I don't mind another one” I jump up then stand up heading out outside... "Before you go.." I stand by the door and look at her

"Come and sit" she pat the tiny space next to her. I doubt I'll fit so I seat on the sofa arm "are you okay mzikulu wam" she asks, giving me a warm look.

"I'm okay gogo" I respond with a smile.

"you don't have to lie to me. I lost your mother because I was too strict to have a talk with her about boys and heartbreaks. I want to know if anyone is treating you bad Qhamqham" Jesus, what do I say now

"it's not like that gogo" I say, my eyes running around. Here is a thing, this gogo of mine has this heavy aura and strict persona, I can't just discuss boys with her.

"I've seen how you've been since you returned, always checking something on your phone, looking lost and sad. Is the baby daddy giving you problems" if God missed a single screw while creating my face, my eyes would be on the floor right now. That's how amazed I am

"GOGO!" I knew that somehow she might have suspected my pregnancy but.. Its still shocking

"I wasn't born yesterday Qhamkephi I know the signs of pregnancy." I'm pale

"falling pregnant out of wedlock is still a bad thing mzikulu but I'm not angry, you are old now. However what I won't tolerate is some stupid boy treating you bad, tell me is he the one behind your sour mood?" my mouth open, closes and open again

"ah, let me.. Make tea" I rush out with my head spinning, my God! I pass the kids playing outside. Qedile being the leader as always. There are total of five children in this yard, Veli's two kids, Qedile who is 8, then Ndabezinhle's twin boys who are 6 years. I heard Qhude has a whole soccer team, they live with their mothers though but visit once in a while. Nqaba is the only one with no child because I'm also bringing one in a few

months. I should talk to Mthunzi about allowing Ndondo to visit, but not now though how will I explain our relationship.

Reaching the kitchen, luckily no fire this time, I boil the water using an electric kettle then start preparing everything to be needed.

Mandlakhe enters the kitchen and lean against the door

“dade, mtakamama omuhle” okay, this is new “are you okay” I ask, scanning his face “why wouldn’t I be, I mean my sister is home, my daughter is still the smartest kid in her class and I now have a better job, life is soo good!” his face is full of warmth and joy, something I hardly see in Mandlakhe’s face. He is always cold this one, Nqaba and Ndabezinhle are worse. at least Qhude is a breath of fresh air “bhuti, is it a woman?” his smile widens, I knew it “what’s her name, I’m gonna have a sister in law! I can’t wait to meet her. did you tell her about me, when is she planning to visit us..” “hold your horses dade, so much energy” I laugh, I just feel so happy to have someone to call skwiza, “so, are you going to tell me her name, where does she live, is she beautiful. Tell me about her”

“if you'd just stop being too forward, I never said she is my woman..” my heart drops “so she hasn’t agreed to be your girlfriend” “not yet but she will, no one can resist me, ask

Qedi's mother. She knows" he is so full of himself, I feel sorry for the girl " Qedi's mom, wait. Are you no longer together?" "that's none of your business, make those two cups of tea. I'm thirsty" oh no! I hate making tea I was just doing it because I want something

"and lose that sour face while at it, I'll be back in a minute" and he leaves. Ndabezinhle and Nqaba enters after him and seat down on the benches "is that tea you making? Count me in sisi" Says Ndabezinhle killing my energy "me too" somebody help me escape, I cant !

"were you digging that tea mzikulu" says gogo as I enter her house "blame your grand children, they asked me to make them tea as well" as to why almost everyone loves tea in this yard, I don't know. "seat down, we never finished our conversation earlier on" Oh no. I drag myself and seat down "but gogo why are you so persistent" I mumble enough for her to hear me.

"is it wrong to wanna know more about you, I never got the chance to watch you grow into this beautiful woman. I'm old Qhamkephi I might die any moment from now.." .

"hhay gogo, don't talk like that" I can't stomach the thought of losing this woman, I just found her

"it's the reality of life mzukulwana wam. We can't run away from it, Imnyaka ihambile, ilanga lizoshona kngekdala. All I want is to spend my last days getting to know you.." I'm sad. I don't like death talk, it just doesn't sit well with me.

"just like Mthonga, you hate death. That man was something else, I've never seen a man that was fearless when it came to village wars but afraid when death was knocking" there's a ghost smile on her face.

"umkhulu wakho was as fearless as a lion, I remember when my father caught him elawin lam, he stood tall and looked unshaken while I was wetting my self" I laugh, I've never heard her talk about grandpa ever since, I love listening to this

"what happened gogo?"

"story for another day, tell me about that man who seems to be in your mind.."

"Gogo, he is not.." I argue, which is pointless

"tell me, I won't laugh I promise.."

I shake my head smiling

"his name is Mthunzi. He is a doctor and he is very stubborn, very controlling and stupid sometimes.. He hate it when I raise

my voice at him but he loves me. I see it in his eyes everytime he looks at me, sometimes he just stares at me and says nothing at all, just staring. It makes me feel so special as if I'm the only one he sees, like I'm enough for him

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he is enough for me too .."

I might have zoned out while talking, I find gogo's warm face smiling

"I can tell that you love him. When he sent abakhongi why didn't you come back because I can see that he means a lot to you" it feels like a long time now, I can't believe he did that.

"well because I didn't know he was sending his uncles gogo. As I said he is controlling and very stupid" she laughs clapping her hands, I find myself laughing too. Now that I think about it, What Mthunzi did was hilarious

"niwakha kuph lamadoda we Qhamkephi " she says still laughing.

"Mthunzi is unpredictable like that gogo" I say smiling..

"tell him I want to see him.." My smile vanishes

"I must meet this crazy man that drives not only you crazy but the whole Mthonga's. It's gonna be a wedding soon! Liliiii!!!"

yeap, she is ululating, now I'm left with a throbbing heart. She can't meet Mthunzi, unless..

.....

Zulu Homestead

The sun has long vanished deep in the horizon. It's dinner time, they are all gathered at the dinner table eating, laughter burst the roof screws as the head of the house tells old stories. They are laughing senselessly, except for Phikelela. He is the only quite one, which is strange because this one has always been the talkative last born. They used to call him the little devil, the one who snitch on his whole siblings, annoy them every chance but still loved by them all. Today he is just playing with his food...

"Mageba omncane.." Delani calls out for him, he has realized that he has been too quiet. All he does these days hide himself in his bedroom.

"Phikelela!!" he jumps, startled of the loud voice. It's his father, uNdabezitha they call him

"you are not eating, just quite. Are you sick?" he ask,

Silence

Stares directed to him.

"I'm okay Ndabezitha.." he looks at his son, wondering what might be the problem. He once became this way, he said he had failed one of his favourite Subject. He never believed him but he let him be thinking that it was girl's related

"failed your favorite subject again" he persist, Phikelela looks at him and nod his head.

"what subject?" Mthunzi jumps in,

"why do you care? You never cared before, in fact none of you cared about me. None of you love me anymore! You loved me because of mom, when she died you literally forgot about me! Leave me alone and go back to where you disappeared to!!" instantly he stand up and run toward his bedroom, a loud banging of a door follows thereafter.

Sharp breathings

Intense silence

The mood has shifted, it is bitter and dark.

After loosing their mother and sister they all grieved differently, they detached from one another leaving Phikelela all alone with his father who was also a mess on his own. Now that everything is beginning to get better they are slowly

realizing the mistake, failing to console and protect the last born, Phikelela.

"is that so?" Delani asks, laying next to his wife. After that saddest saga all of them disappeared to their designated houses "there is more to this sthandwa, Phikelela was very happy with the new developments in the family. He is the one who suggested that we renew the tradition of eating together at the dinner table. He was happy that his brothers are always around. Maybe something else is bothering him"

Delani shake his head disregarding her comment

"I think these two morons caused this. They left the kid to mourn his dead mother and sister all alone, who does that anyway! Leaving the last born to mourn alone I mean we all know that last borns always suffer the most during the loss of a parent. Bakwaz ukqhub amasende phambili laba abananqondo!! " Thembeke keeps quiet and lie on his hard chest. When he get like this she knows it no longer her place to intervene. When he gets angry all hell break loose, that's how he is

A call comes through as their eyes closes

"ufunan?"he roars on the phone

" I'm sorry to disturb bhuti , I need your help. Someone is trying to steal my father's company again. Beater was not working alone!! "

He instantly get out of bed and grab anything to wear. Anger just doubled in him. Mthembu might have not been his biological father but he raised him, and considering the fact that the company also belongs to his biological father makes him even more eager to fight whoever that wants to get their hands on that company that was built through blood and sweat, betrayal and tears

A loud banging of a door wakes an annoyed Ngcebo up

"Ngcebo!! Open up!" what does Delani want at this time, doesn't he have a wife to keep him warm, he thinks .

Banging persist annoying him even further, out of everything that went down, Penelope is doing something that he loathes the most, ignoring his calls.

"kwenzenjan bafo" he says opening the door

"all you do is sleep! Wear something, we are leaving" he barks angrily. Baffled of what's going on he stand still

"are you going to tell me what's going on or not.."

"did I say talk Ngcebo, did I??" he slowly take his clothes on the floor and put them back on. He might be annoying him but he is still the big brother he never had, in such a short space of time since he became part of the family a lot has changed, he trust him. Ngcebo doesn't like arguments on heated moments, he only express his feelings during a calm situation. Though he can see a lot of his father, Ndabezitha in Delani, a short tempered man when angry but the most loving and supportive man.

They follow each other to Mthunzi's house. Luckily these days he is on day shift. Loud banging on his door, Ngcebo stares in awe. Does he ever knock like a sane person, he thinks

. "this is not a hostel damn it!" roars Mthunzi inside. "Open up Mthunzi" says Ngcebo.

The door opens revealing an angry Mthunzi

"wear something and follow" orders Delani, "follow, what are you, a king?" he says

"do as I say Mthunzi or.."

"Or what!" a quickest fist lands on Mthunzi's jaw, he doesn't think twice as he throws another mean punch back. In no time a fist fight follows which is stopped by Ngcebo.. Mthunzi's nose is bleeding but Delanis face is just fine. "I've seen how you are, you are reckless and stubborn..ngzokbolisa ngenduku ngyabona

awungazi. Get dressed and follow me" says Delani clicking his tounge.

Swazi

I wonder who told him that I'm in his office, I just arrived minutes ago after the help of a nurse who told me where his office is. I asked Thembeka and he told me that he is at work. I wanted to surprise him with dinner like in movies where a wife of a CEO surprise her husband. But the look on his face is just not appealing. though I must admit I feel a sense of joy and relief as I look at his handsome face. Wait "what happened on your face? Did you get into a fight again Mthunzi" the spur paper bag is on the floor as I run towards him at the door. He is still standing still, I run my hand on his face but he takes them on his hands and lead me to an empty couch at the corner after closing the door.

"what happened, who did this to you? Was it Fikani?" he frown
"why do you keep on bringing up that name Swazelihle" he
boldy ask

"I'm sorry.." I cast down my face when I fail to keep up with his
deep gaze. "how did you get here anyway?" I look up

"I took a taxi from Mandeni to EShowe then from there I took a
meter tax" I explain, I finally asked gogo to see this baby daddy.
She agreed because well, she loves the crazy man that sent
abakhongi without me knowing but she said I should come back
today.

"you took public transport! At this state you are in. Are you
crazy?" this is why we always fight, he can be mean for no
reason

"public transsport don't kill Mthunzi and besides I'm pregnant
not crippled. You are a doctor you know that" I add. He still
shake his head dissatisfied

"I don't care, you weren't thinking straight. What if someone
hurt the baby while driving, you know how these long distance
taxi drivers operate! You should have called me to fetch you,
you can't put my baby's life in jeopardy Swazelihle" I didn't
come all this way to be scolded and besides Mandeni and
Showe aren't even that far.

"I just wanted to surprise you.." I say softly "surprise yanj when I just told you that it is unsafe to travel with taxis while pregnant!" God!

"But I'm here Mthunzi and I'm fine"

"you will not take those taxis ever, I won't allow it" and he does it again, controlling. I sigh deeply, I know he won't listen to me anymore but insist that I do as told. I shut my mouth instead, to think I came all the way for this!

"what's the interesting thing that happened after you left, is he kicking?" yeap I knew there was a loose screw on his head, is he not a doctor! "the baby is too young to kick Mthunzi, you know that" a ghost smile, I missed it.

"well miracles can happen baby" he is starting to be less sour as he brush my stomach gently "Tell her my boy, she doesn't know how that Zulu men are strong and unpredictable.." My heart fills up with joy "no miracles will cause the baby to grow in a full form within two months Mageba" I add, his lips grows into a wide smile as he looks up at me. I feel my undies wetting, I'm Inlove

"say it again" he says still smiling..

"No" I say shaking my head, a smile is all over my face. I feel his hands grabbing my face and he plants a wet kiss on my lips..

"please.." he whispers

"Mageba" the kiss deepens

I feel my body coming to life

He flips me over and I find myself underneath him, his hands trailing all over my body making me hot and needy. I can't keep still as he kisses me strongly, I can only hope that he won't let me fall off this sofa.

He stops the kiss leaving me gasping for air and stares down at me, his eyes smaller ..

"may I" he whispers while taking my dress off, his burning gaze still glued on me, I help him. Since when does he ask to take off my dress anyway.

Then he just looks at me, really look at me that I even feel shy so I grab him by the neck and kiss him again... He moves his lips down my neck and kisses the side of my neck that I involuntarily tilted my head to the side and moaned softly. My body is screaming for him, responding quickly to his touch, I want him in me so badly but I can't even form a sentence. Even My clit is painfully throbbing, I need him inside me Lord knows how long it has been.. He kisses every inch of my body causing hot tingles all over me.. "Doctor Zulu you are neeee...Jesu Kristu!! "

I freeze! Angel of forbidden fruit are you turning your back on me!

Thirty-Five

Swazi

I keep on stealing glances at him as he drives through the busy road. He doesn't look worried nor remorseful "babe" I say softly, he turns briefly then continue driving. This man! "aren't you worried about your job; you were suspended Mthunzi" I'm panicking but he is just as cool as they come. Yeap that lady snitched on us and reported him. Such a mean woman, she hasn't tasted some in a while I think, salt is just messing with her that's why she decided to report my man "Mthunzi" "suspended, not fired. I'm still going to undergo a disciplinary hearing" he says, unbothered. When we left the hospital, I felt like everyone was judging me. as if that wasn't enough this stubborn head here insisted that we do an ultra sound and we did "what if you get fired, aren't you worried about your job" I say, still amazed. I'm such a carrier of bad luck, one visit and I've caused such a huge damage "ngiyakthanda yezwa" I blush, he enjoys making me blush randomly "Mthunzi, I'm being serious.." my lips fail me as they decide to visit my ears, he gives me a warm look "have I ever told you how beautiful you

are” okay, my lips are beginning to hurt “I chose well, oMageba were with me when I met you. Umuhle, umuhle Swazelihle lam (You are beautiful, you are beautiful my Swazelihle” my heart instantly fills up with excitement and warmth “I love you, Mageba” his lips cracks into a warm smile, something I haven’t seen in a while. I missed it “I’d catch a grenade for you..” he start singing, his scratchy voice doesn’t do any justice but hey, it’s the thought that count “ throw my hand on a blade for yaa, I’d jump Infront of a train for ya..” “yeah yeah yeah!” I sing with him too “you know I’d do anything for you..” “yeah yeah yeah!”

I’m all smiley as he stops singing. “soze wakhohlwa Swazelihle, you scored yourself a Bruno Mars while others got uPatric mfwethu!” he says jokingly, I can’t help but crack into a loud laughter. “you do realise that you can never sing like Bruno Mars..” I say still laughing, how can he sell himself so high though “jealousy doesn’t look good on you my love..” he says , laughing softly

“how can you jump so high though Mthunzi, maybe if you said you sing like Khuzani or Mzukulu I would believe you” “zinsizwa phela lezo” he says. “you do know that I’d literally kill for you” His face is suddenly serious. why do I believe him “I don’t want you to commit any crime for me Mthunzi, police are there for a reason. You want to leave me and go to jail, never I can’t allow

that” he mumbles something I didn’t catch “don’t commit any crime for me

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I mean it” “just so you know, I killed the man that tried to force himself on you..” my heart stop beating for a second, we’ve never even talked about that subject. He cracks into a loud laughter and I sigh in relief. “you almost drove to an early labour you know that” I say, he is still laughing. This man is strange.

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Ndulinde

Mandlakhe is passing by Penelope’s office when he hears something, her voice singing softly. He stands still listening her melodic voice sending him to the world only know by him. Suddenly she stops singing, he doesn’t think twice, the office is closed but he sends a soft knock. “come in” she says, her eyes glued on the piles of files Infront of her His feet carry him inside after opening the door. The strawberry fragrance hit his

nostrils, the whole room smells fresh and expensive that a ping of diffidence visits him. He can tell that the woman is entirely out of his league but who cares where there is love, a way always comes. She doesn't look up fast, her head is still bowed on the files on top of the table

“Am I interrupting something” his deep voice rumbles gaining her full attention in a heartbeat, her eyes look up and meet his. An Eifel tower of human he is, hands behind his back. Dark skinned in complexion with straight deep eyes staring at her. Her heartbeat begins to increase, how can someone she barely know carry such a huge effect on her, she thinks. damn him!

“I didn't mean to disturb, I can tell you are busy” He says, gently.

“Yes .. I...I mean no. I'm not that busy” i'm such a fool, why am I stuttering all of a sudden, she thought. “unephimbo elicwengekile maNhleko” he says, still staring at her straight in her eyes. Failing to keep up with a strong gaze her eyes cast down to his orange messy overall. “..ngiyabonga”...

“izobonana Nkosazana” he turns and leaves

The sun is slowly sinking below the horizon, my head is rested on his hard chest listening to his strong heartbeat. His hands

are covering me protectively. I don't want to go; I don't want to leave. He is parked a bit far from home, but I can't let him go.. "its gonna get dark Swazelihle" he says, reminding me that its time to go. But I don't want to, I know he doesn't want me to go either "I'll just stay another minute" I softly say, snuggling "do you think I'm going to be a bad mother" I suddenly ask, we drove past Ndondo before he took me here. She cried so much and I just realised that I've been too self-absorbed that I even forget to keep in touch. Mthunzi should have waited a little bit longer before introducing me to her "why do you say that?" "look at how I treat Ndondo, she hates me" he turns my body making me look up at him

"I was a bad father but since you came into my life everything changed. I'm home more often, I'm a better father. I might not say this more often but Swazelihle you are the best thing that ever happened to me" "you can send them.." I blurt out, he looks a bit confused "send who?" "before I wasn't sure, I was just afraid and confused. I think I'm ready to marry you.."

Thirty-Six

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KK Jama Logistics

The clouds are slowly darkening outside, its after twelve during the day. “there is storm coming” Delani utters staring outside the window. It is silence once again in the CEO’s office, one can even here the pin dropping on the floor. They are all seated surrounding the table, Four middle aged men seating opposite the brothers, Mthunzi, Ngcebo, Delani and Fikani. “As I’ve said, we only want 40% shares in the company. Or we release every single dirt we have to the police, including the case of a missing person” says the other one, tapping his foot on the ground.

“you seem to forget that I own no drug business, I only delivered the drugs for you..” Fikani jumps in, feeling angry all over again “and the money was too good that you decided to get greedy and wanted more, guess what. We also want more bhuta!” his tongue clicks. Fikani being the lover for money secretly made a deal with the most dangerous people, using the company’s trucks to deliver illegal goods, including drugs.

“ I thought we were friends” he says with greeted teeth, staring at the man who approached him with an expensive whiskey “In business there are no friends boy, only the fittest ones survive” they are in black suits, they sure mean business. “you seem to forget that I know things that might also land you in jail, for a long time. From where I am this can only go one way, forget about this, we continue the business as usual” adds Fikani gaining himself scornful laughter “oh boy who do you think we are? amateurs. Let me tell you something, we own the streets, we own prison cells, we own everything. Prison is home buta” “if we’d just stop this chit chat and get down to business, what’s next?” Delani says suddenly “ink on paper, we sign” says the other man. “well, let’s not waste time then. Fikani bring the papers!” “but bro..” “papers!” he hands them to him mumbling angrily.. “here is your deal, all you need to do is sign. Before we go down to business, let’s have a toast to our new partners” Ngcebo stands up heading to the fridge and came back with an expensive whiskey. Mthunzi get the glasses “no

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we are good” they simultaneously say Delani laughs “you think we are that naïve to just poison you, if we wanted to kill you we believe me you wouldn’t have even entered this building. Stop being pussies and enjoy this moment” they give him blank stares. “suit yourselves then” he says then start pouring one for

himself. He take a long sip close his eyes in enjoyment. Mthunzi follows, Ngcebo too but Fikani is too angry..

Seeing that they are not dropping dead, the four gentlemen askes for a sip as well “its gonna rain any second” Delani says after a while “no I don’t think so, why is it so hot in here” they complain “is it?”

Its crowded in the storeroom, workers cramped after collecting working equipment in a hurry. The day just became dimmer as dark clouds covered the entire sky. The thunder has started rumbling piercingly, sending every cat and dog into the nearest hiding spot. The quick lightning strikes deep in the clouds, wind blowing harshly in all directions. Slowly, rain start dropping until it gets heavy and heavier by the second. “we were too late, let’s wait until the storm passes then we can all go home” says the supervisor loud enough for everyone to hear.

After a while the storm seems to die down, the rainfall slows down “its time to go, the storm is not over yet so let’s be quick” Everyone grabs their bags and rush out in different ways. However, Mandlakhe remain behind, he couldn’t leave without seeing her. Somehow this woman has been in his mind more often, her angelic voice seems to be the only thing ringing in his

mind. As to how he finds himself attracted to a woman that seems to be way out of his league, it's a mystery.

As he reaches the door the thunder rumbles strongly, a shaking wail hit his ear hence he barges in without knocking.

“MaNhleko” he says, a bit confused. She is leaning against the wall at the corner, shaken. It hit him, she is afraid of thunderstorms and he feels a ping of hurt in his heart. She has been all alone here while they were all cramped in the storeroom He goes to her and take her, take her into his strong warm arms, enclosing her protectively. Tightly he held her. Apart from the deep rumbling of thunder their heartbeats are so loud, A long comfortable silence passes as he engulfs her in his arms. Slowly she starts wiggling realising that their bodies are too pressed. As the hug breaks their eyes meet, for the first time at such close length. She feels her knees weakening, heartbeat sharpening. Heavy breathings! Tension thickens as their eyes are glued. Failing to contain himself Mandlakhe place his right hand on her side of the head, the other sliding on her lower back as he slowly brings her even closer. She whimpers softly feeling her stomach twisting as their lips pressed. A long, lingering yet intimate kiss possess their body, mind and soul taking them to the world only know by them. She finds her hands grabbing his overall feeling all hot and steamy. As different as their worlds are, love has only one language..

Thirty Seven

Ndulinde

“I brought you something” smiling shyly she says “what thing?” Ask Mandlakhe staring at her, eyes full of love “open it, it’s for you honey” he shakes his head amused but confused at the same time, all these words are new to him, munchie, sweaty, sugar pie, she uses them all and it baffles him why there is always a new one. Penelope is a whole new page to him, and each page is always exciting. “ake sibone (lets see)” he says taking the gift bag from her. She holds her breath as he slowly opens it, its been a month since they started dating and she has gathered that Mandlakhe is a very traditional, stubborn man with a huge ego. When she visits she always forced to use public transport because Mandlakhe made it clear that he won't be riding his woman's car, it's just not him. And besides, where would she even park the car considering the fact that their relationship is still a secret. It's always funny when he sneaks her in his house with no one noticing, bringing two plates and spending more time in his house. “what’s this

Zobuhle?" holding a cell phone on his hand he ask, calmly but his voice has changed. That's how he calls her when the mood changes, her second name that's is used by no one but him. He is Mandlakhe and using an English name was never on his mind "its an iPhone 11 Mandla" she replies, her heart picking up it steady pace. "don't I have a phone Zobuhle?" he quickly asks, staring at her. She bites her nails "Zobuhle" he says calmly. Looking at him a permanent frown has deepened "Its just a gift Mandla, I'm sorry if I offended you in any way" she says, softly. Being with him has humbled her in a way she never thought was possible "answer the question Zobuhle" she uncomfortably shifts on the bed "you do have a phone" she says "then what's this?" he ask, staring at it on his hands as if it's the most disgusting thing he ever laid his eyes on. "Mandla I saw how bad your phone is, you can't even download whatap, the battery is always a problem so I thought I should buy you a cell phone.." she finally says causing a soft chuckle "Zobuhle, don't I call you?" "you do" "when you want to talk to me, do you ever find me unavailable?" she shakes her head no "speak and stop shaking that head, uyangcasula Zobuhle" "you're always available" she says "I'm not a ben 10 nor am I cheeses boy Zobuhle uyangizwa. I might not have all the money in the world or carry a phone worth 10 cows but I'm a man and I can take care of myself just fine. This should be the first and last time you buy things for me are we clear?" "yes" Its been a bit steep

being in a relation with a hard headed man like Mandlakhe, a man who has no whatap, who doesn't go on expensive dates or drink expensive wine and take her to vacations. Her sisters have been asking her about this mysterious man that has her heart at the palm of his hand

"this is me maNhleko, I believe that a man should provide, not the other way around" he says, he is a man who doesn't beat around the bush, a man who still believe that a woman must stay at home and take care of his children while a man goes out to work. "take this thing and sell it or something. I don't want it" he put it back to where it was and turn to look at her disappointed face.

Tension visit them

They are seating on his double bed in his rondavel, it's the third time coming here since they started dating even though they haven't been intimate. It might not be the exquisite room but its very neat and smelling fresh, Mandlakhe is a neat man. But pride defines him well "ungidinelwen mama" he suddenly says, taking her round face into his big, strong hands. "no" she replies, gently removing his hands from her face. All she wanted was to give him a proper phone but the Zulu men in

him always win “ngiyakuthanda sponono sam, uyakwazi lokho” he says, staring deeply in her eyes and as always her heart betrays her and melt instantly. Out of all the men in Mzansi God decided to give her Shaka Zulu of a man “I’m not sponono Mandla” she argues “sondela phela ngith manqa, haw yin manje” he says, drawing her closer to him.. she cant help but blush senselessly, feeling tingles filling up her stomach

There is a sudden knock at the door “bhuti” Swazi’s voice utters outside. He stand up swiftly and head out making sure to close the door behind him “dade, what do you want?” it came out a bit harsh then he intended “bhuti!” she says, pouting “sorry, why are you here though. Shouldn’t you be resting for the big day” he ask, still standing outside. They agreed not to involve their family so no one knows her yet, Mandlakhe was planning on introducing her tomorrow after Swazi’s lobola negotiations. Yes, finally the Zulu’s are coming to pay a dowry for their bride . “I’m okay. Gogo asked for you” she says then turn and leave. Mandlakhe opens the door and get inside

“are you sure this is a good idea for me to be here?” she ask, feeling scared suddenly. “stop worrying and kiss me, did you feed me korobela maNhleko?” she giggles

The Zulu Homestead

Everyone is seated in the table. It is full yet quite, the head of the household is speaking “Mthunzi, lelixgathu osulithathile alisinin mahleza, now you grow, you are leaving the stage of being a boy and entering the man stage. It is not easy, but it is very much possible. Love your woman, shower her with lots and lots of love and in return she will respect you. Do not be an angry lion

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be an approachable man to your wife, take time to nurture your relationship, know her weak spot, where to touch her for her to listen, know how to keep her happy and please son, please treat her right. If she gets rude there is only one way to hit her, in the bedroom, don't play around, hit her hard next morning she will be all smiling.. Umfazi akambiswa!” a soft laugh breaks in the table . There are only men present in the meeting, brothers and uncles, Phikelela was also part of it because he is growing and should look up to his brothers. “ubekile bafo” one of the uncles, Ndabezitha's young brother Zubani adds. “never be afraid to love her too much, and please pay more attention to your wife and stop playing around, the time to play is over now. We don't want to be called names because you failed to stay faithful to your wife..” “why do I feel

like you are mistaking lobola negotiations as the wedding itself” Ngcebo says “thula wena sishimane, real man are talking” Zubani says and a table breaks into an ear cracking laughter. But that hit home, Penelope has totally blocked him everywhere. Its been a month and he kept on thinking she might come back as usual but this time she has taken longer “ lobola negotiations are a big step towards marriage, it brings two families together, both dead and the living..”

After the long, tiring meeting the oldies retire to bed leaving Three brothers. “so, you are really doing this?’ ask Ngcebo staring at his young brother. No so long ago they were kids, running around naked but now all that has changed “I love her, she means the world to me bafo” ‘don’t abuse the poor girl, she’s been through hell with my brother” adds Delani “speaking of your brother, how is he? After what happened with his business friends” ask Ngcebo “he never learns that one, I’m hoping this taught him a lesson..” “so we really killed Four men, all of us. Except for your brother because he didn’t know the whole plan” says Mthunzi as the flashes of that day hit his mind “Delani is the one who suggested that we use a poison that will need an antidote, we played that right damn! I felt like a CIA agent that day!” he smiles amused “after Swazelihle, I fear you Delani. You are the worst. Tell me to never mess with you,

ever”

Swazi

The big day is finally here! its so hot and crowded in the Mthonga yard. This family is way too big! I’m so happy, I cant eve explain it in words. Mthunzi has been flooding my phone with countless messages asking if I’m still good, he is nervous I can tell. I’m supposed to be the nervous one as the bride but I’m not “Dear Lawd! There is a truck full of live cows outside! We will be the talk of the village for eternity Qhamu” that’s none other than Veli. She has been moving up and down filling me in on everything. She is squealing in happiness, its cute. I'm cooped up in gogos house “you saying it as if it’s the abnormal thing to happen” I say, brushing my visible tummy “awaz wena yazi, it takes years for a man to pay lobola here. they just send abakhongi with R2000 then they will stay years without paying ilobola. What your man did is just amazing!” another message **still good Swazelihle** I sigh, he is too much “I’m good.” I

reply. After a while we are asked to go in the rondavel. Veli and two of my cousins accompany me.

When we return I instantly take the doek and the scarf covering my shoulder and I'm left with this sishweshwe dress that Thembeka forced down my throat. Its so hot, jeez.

Loud ululation suddenly goes off, as I peak through the window the live cows are just walking around the yard following one another and I smile. It really is a beautiful day, everyone is screaming happily, I spot Mandlakhe doing a zulu dance. This brother of mine is strange, he has been too closed off lately and I suspect that he might be hiding his girlfriend in that house of his.

Another beep! Argh! *its official, Mrs Zulu*** I blush. Now I miss him *I need to see you, make a plan phela babe** he texts me again, I ask which car he is in and he tells me. its way too busy I doubt they'll even notice that I'm gone.

I love rural areas with no fencing, just trees covering the entire household and that just made it easy to sneak out. I find him leaning against it, a wide smile plastered on his face. As I reach him he smash his lips on mine and I feel my knees weeking, to think I've hidden the fact that Mthunzi was my sister's baby

daddy. I'm sure they will know now and well, I don't care anymore

as we are kissing slowly I'm suddenly snatched harshly that I almost fall.. Mandlakhe! I'm red with embarrassment. How did he know I'm here, he might have followed me. "not even a second ulotsholwe Qhamu you already cheating! With him all of people. HIM!" my legs are shaking, my heart beat has to be the loudest. "khuluma man!!" I jump up startled "listen, I'm the.." a quickest fist lands on Mthunzi's face and I scream instantly "Mandlake! I'm not cheating he is my husband..!" Mthunzi is splitting blood while Mandlakhe's eyes are splitting fire. He is livid, I'm so scared right now "repeat what you just said" he deeply say, his frown deepening "I'm the husband.." I scream louder as he slap him again, this time they fight and I don't even know what to do...

Its chaos all around me, everybody has come to watch.

Mandlakhe is being held by Nqaba, he is breathing fire while his bloody face is swollen. Mthunzi on the other hand is groaning on the ground, Delani and Ngcebo next to him. I'm crying, everyone keep on asking wats happing and I don't have the strength... "Mandla!!! whats happening!" I hear a woman crying as I turn my eyes almost fall out.. "PENELOPE!"

Thirty-Eight

Swazi

I'm surrounded by the loudest crowd staring at Penelope who suddenly looks pale and nervous at the same time "what are you doing here?" ask Ngcebo slowly standing up "I'm... uhm..." she is stuttering and its just annoying! "maNhleko, go back to my house, I'll be there in a minute" that's Mandlakhe panting voice ordering! Wait a minute "MaNhleko! Penelope, what's happening?" ask Ngcebo, looking confused "ah.. I.. I can explain" my goodness! She is the girlfriend. Wonders shall never end! To think I was looking forward into meeting her. "Why are you questioning my woman" asks Mandlakhe charging towards Ngcebo, I'm not ready for this. Out of all days, it had to be my day "woman, your woman! Did I hear you right? Or she didn't tell you. Tell her Penelope, tell her that you are my woman. MINE!" Ngcebo roars angrily "oh boy you don't get it, she left you, for me. she is mine now so voestek!" before I even comprehend what's happening Ngcebo suddenly throws a punch causing Mandlakhe to stumble back "yehhenn!! Kwenzenjani kant ka Mthonga!" chaos has begun once again, Delani has joined the fight, I'm just screaming my lungs out for Mandlakhe who keeps on kicking and throwing punches, the

Mthonga brothers are aggressively fighting next to him. The Loud bang suddenly goes off sending everyone on the ground, myself included “bafana baka Zulu, asambe!!” its Ndabezitha himself, holing a gun. Does everyone own a gun in that yard!

I’m trying to make sense of my surroundings, it’s just all baffling and complicated, how can such a beautiful day suddenly turn into such a horrible one in such a short space of time. My teary eyes find Mthunzi’s as he is being held by someone towards the car. I rush to him without thinking twice “Qhamu! Uyaphi!” I stand still, Mandlakhe angry voice bursting my ears, as I turn he is breathing fire

“Hamba Qhamu, go with your husband” Nqaba says softly staring at me. The look on Mandlakhe's face will haunt for eternity..

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It’s in the middle of the night, everyone has gone to sleep in the Mthonga’s except for the brothers and cousins. Breathing fire, they all are, who comes into your home, your village and attack you. The attack wasn’t just directed to one person, it was directed to all of them. Their reputation

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their dignity as the Mthonga's lies on a thin line and they all know what has to be done for the dignity to be restored. It has started, the war that can never be ended by apologies but blood and tears.

Penelope has been tossing and turning since she got in bed. She thought of running but decided against it. How did she get here, it happened so fast she never thought things might get this ugly, so quickly? She hasn't seen Mandlakhe since that awful saga. She is beyond worried about him, she is sad and afraid with the way he was when he left with the bunch of angry males. Everyone in this yard has been giving her strange judging eyes. Though they gave her food, but she still couldn't shake the feeling that they don't like her, probably never will.

The lights are on, she is afraid to be alone here even the blowing wind outside scares her. Taking her phone in her hands there are countless missed calls from unsaved numbers but none from Mandlakhe, why is she even expecting a call he probably lost his cell phone. She sighs regretting everything, had she broke things off with Ngcebo sooner things would be less complicated, she just thought ignoring him would deliver the message, but she was wrong.

Her eyes close as she shoves the cell phone back under the pillow. She's dozing off when the sound of a door handle disturbs her. Her breath quickens, she slowly stands up and unlocked the door. As it opens her eyes landed on him, his bloodshot eyes staring at her that. without thinking twice, she throws herself at him, tears forming slowly in her eyes. As baffled as he but he can't help and hold her even tighter and let the moment sink in.. Yes, he missed her, with everything that's going on he still misses her.

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Swazi

"you need to eat something Mthunzi, please" I beg him for the hundredth time. "Swazelihle, please" he says and close his eyes. I feel my heart sinking as I put the bowl of porridge on the pedestal. I don't know if he hates me for what Mandlakhe did. It's the morning already and he has been bedridden since we arrived yesterday. what a way to start my life as the wife of the

Zulu's. I couldn't even pack, I don't even know where my phone is. I might have lost it during that havoc yesterday. I can only wonder how things are at home.. "how is he doing" ask Delani getting in. "He was groaning the whole night, I don't know when he fell asleep" I say worryingly. Headache is killing me, I'm beyond stressed. This whole thing is just too complicated and draining "tell me about your brothers, how deeply are they into traditional medicine" he ask

"I don't really know, why are you asking" "Ngcebo wasn't bad yesterday but today he is worse. I don't trust those people from what I've heard about them, I think its possible that they were on isihlungu .." Mthunzi suddenly cough and groan painfully, my eyes instantly tears up Mandlakhe, what have you done!

Thirty-Nine

Swazi

The sun is blazingly hot outside, I don't even know what to do with myself This kitchen is just a heater on its own "its done, you will give baba his food and I'll hold the basin for hand washing" my eyes bulge out "no, you give him. I can't Thembeke, you know I can't" She pushes the tray to me "just do as told and stop complaining Swazi, I want to get this over and done with so that I can eat!" "Not today Thembeke, maybe tomorrow, please" I fear that old man, since I came into Mthunzi's life things are just stirring in the wrong direction. And the way he just looks at me blankly just rubs me off badly, come to think of it, I've never seen him smiling, or laughing "just go Swazi, we don't have all day! " she snaps, looking at her I can tell she is tired. She's been helping me with cooking and she hardly said a word.

The moment I step outside the boiling sun burn my poor skin, but I keep moving. They are all seated under the tree shade, there's a 2 litre of an iced water next to them, six pack of

freezing beers and an empty glass. My heart aches at the sight of Mthunzi and Ngcebo laying on the mat looking badly injured.. I kneel next to him as told, Thembeke appears with a basin and a dish cloth behind me. The uncles are all here, about Six of them.

"that was exhausting" I say drinking water, catering is done finally. I'm dizzy with all the walking up and down and I'm craving for my oranges, argh! "as to why I agreed to walk this path of a wife again, I don't know" The men are chilling outside, laughing at silly jokes, probably gossiping about their side chicks yet here we are burning up in the kitchen,*Sigh* Thembeke is eating her food quietly, which is strange because she is never quite this one. Phikelela is somewhere in the house, he'd be keeping me company because right now I feel even more depressed with everything that's going on.

"Thembeke, can you ask bhut Delani to talk to Ngcebo for me. I need Penelope's number".

I know no number by head, she is the only option. I want to contact my family, I'm worried about gogo, about Mandlakhe and everyone. I can't help it "why?" she ask, puzzled "I need to talk to her" I say "why don't you ask him yourself" she is so moody today "it's fine, I'll see what I can do" She continues

stuffing herself with food. Maybe pregnant hormones are messing with her today

Thembeke left me with a mountain of dishes, she said something about taking a nap, as if I'm not sleepy. I'm pregnant too for God's sake, this is abuse. Finishing with all the washing, I want to lie on my bed and sleep for hours. I'm going out when I bump into Phikelela "finally, I get to see you, are you hiding yourself from me.." I say "where is my food?" he asks, ignoring my comment. I tell him and he pass me by. everyone is in a foul mood in this yard, I don't need this negative aura, I'm going through enough already

The yard is empty, there are only bottles under the tree shade. Mthunzi is also not in the house, he knows I worry about him. I heave a sigh then get in bed, maybe they are busy with the men's staff.

Okay, I can't sleep without knowing if he even ate at all. I get up and search for him the entire yard

nothing! where are they

I'm slowly heading back when I hear someone sneezing, it comes from one of the rondavels, there's even smoke coming out of it. I'm tempted to go check but something tells me to let it be so I return to the house and take a nap

I'm woken up by a soft knock at the door, I feel like screaming. "Phikelela" he is not okay now that I look at him closely "someone is here to see you, come to the main house" he says then quickly leave. What's bothering him?

I fix the doek on my head, brush my face then leave. "Nqaba!" I cant hide the shock in my voice, he's got a nerve coming here "MaMthonga, how are you doing?" if they see him here I'd be in huge trouble. "what are you doing here? how did you even know this household" I'm panicking "they will not see me, take this and give them. it will help them heal quickly" I'm handed a small plastic and he stands up "how is everyone at home, how is gogo?" I quickly ask "don't worry about them, they are fine.." "I'm fine too, tell them not to worry" he stares at me "I will. Whatever happens, trust your husband. He'll never lead you astray" he says and I feel there's more to his statement but I don't ask " how is Mandlakhe?" he is still my brother and I worry about him too "he will be fine.. I need to go" "ngiyabonga bhut Nqaba" he nod then goes out. I release a sigh of relief, thank God.

The Zulu's fall under chief Khoza, the most beautiful yet mountainous rural area. However, the Ndulinde rural area where the Mthonga's live is under the Chief Mhlongo. The boundary separating the two villages is the perennial Matigulu River. Both of these villages are big, differentiated by valleys. Since the beginning of time, these two villages have always been in conflict with one another. The village wars still exist and every now and then they break taking away innocent souls.

It is Sunday, the day after an eventful one. Like wind blowing in all directions, the news has travelled around the Ndulinde area of what went down the other day. Amabhungu esigodi (Village young men) are thirst for blood, however not all of them are in support of what happened. Some just have their own scores to settle and this has given them the go ahead they've always wanted. Everyone knows that the Mthonga's are a huge family, you touch one of them and all of them will come after you like bees following their Queen...

MA Ndlovu is seated under the tree shade reading her bible. After yesterday's event she couldn't even go to church today, a devoted Zion she is. It puzzles her how she missed it, the same man that took away her grandchild, Qhamkile is back again and this time he has taken another one. How can it be? She's been

asking herself, wondering why it never clicked that the Mthunzi that Swazi was talking about is the same one that is responsible for the loss of her grandchild. She fixes her glasses and blink tears away, such a respectful, ambitious child she was. “gogo, your tea” Veli says kneeling next to her with a tray. She smiles and thank her. As blazing as it is, her tea will forever be the favorite. “have you talked to her?” she ask, referring to Swazi. Veli shakes her head “When she calls let me know” she says ...

Mandlakhe is resting on the bed, his old plastic pedestal fan blowing wind slowly. Penelope is next to him. She is in her full clothes while he is on his boxers only. “I still can’t believe that she is your sister. She is rude” says Penelope staring at Mandlakhe “and I still can’t believe you dated that dick” he says and click his tongue “why didn’t you tell me about him?” he ask and it dawns on her. The topic she’s been dreading is finally here “there was nothing to tell, he is the past” she says “the past that was calling you his girlfriend, Infront of the whole village. Do you have any idea what that does to my reputation” sigh “I thought ignoring him wound send him a clear message..” she respond. Staring begins, he doesn’t say anything just gazing at her until she looked away “did you get the message” he suddenly ask her “what message?” she ask confused “I just ignored you, did you get the clear message?” she shake her

head “Not everyone understands ignorance, sometimes you need to tell someone how you feel so that they can have a clear picture honey” a soft laugh escape her mouth “did you just say honey?” she says, giggling. “I don’t know, did I, Honey” Mandlakhe responds, playfully. She laughs even more, and He just stares at her warmly. “umuhle mathandana wam” says Mandlakhe, laughter is replaced with a blush he draws her closer and kiss her soft lips making her heart skip a bit, she thought there would be a huge fight between them but Mandlakhe proved her wrong. He is a strange man, a strange man she can’t run away from.

Swazi

I'm in deep sleep when a loud noise wakes me up, I'm still baffled when another breaks off and I let out a scream

"Mthunzi!.."

40

Forty

Penelope

Time reads 4:30 am, she is already wide awake catching up on Skeem saam. She is just passing time, Mandlakhe should be here to accompany her back but he is nowhere in sight, which is strange because it is the wee hours of the morning. Her sister, Siza will fetch her from Mandeni, all she needs it to get into a taxi to Mandeni but she cant do that on her won.

A door handle makes a sound, then the door opens revealing Mandlakhe. "you're awake!" He exclaims, amazed "I've been awake for a while, where do you come from at this time" she ask, slowly getting off the bed. Whenever she is alone, lights are always on "somewhere, why aren't you sleeping" brushing her off he ask, taking her full face in his hands "I woke up alone so I decided to watch skeem saam" she respond, their eyes glued on each other. Spending time with him, she has gotten used to his unsettling aura "what's that" he ask, looking confused "don't tell me you don't know it? everybody knows it" she says, finding this whole thing crazy, who doesn't know skeem saam anyway "I'm not everybody MaNhleko, I'm sure

you've realised that" their bodies are pressed, their faces an inch away "what do you know then? Sgiya ngengoma?" he smiles, amused then nod "and ugubhulwami" she says again, he nods still smiling, staring down at her "and roots.." he adds then peck her soft lips causing a soft giggle "and this" she peck her nose and she giggles even more "wait.. wait. I wanted to ask you about your dreams and visions, where do you see yourself in fi.." he shut her with a kiss, she involuntarily mourn as the kiss deepens

They are now standing by the road, waiting for the earliest morning transport heading to Mandeni. The eventful weekend has finally passed, its time to get back to work "I want to own a farm, sell goats and cows.. for now

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I only have 9 goats but I will get there" says Mandlakhe answering Penelope's question. As much as love conquers all, she is not about to live a life with a man who has no vision.. "that's something to work on. One day you will be owning a big farm. We all know that agriculture is the present and the future so you are in the right path honey" Mandlakhe nod her head in agreement, he might have not been the smartest kid in school but he will never rest until his life is at a better state, especially now that he has a slaying woman by his side, keeping her happy

is his mission and keeping a woman happy needs one to be financially stable..

The car comes and they jump in..

*

*

Swazi

We've been awake since the wee hours of the morning. The smoke is still flying the entire yard, one of the rondavel's was burnt at night by God knows who. As if that was not enough the kraal is empty and I'm still trying to work my head around it. Yes, the whole cattle were stolen and I'm left wondering who would just walk into someone's yard, burn their house then steal the entire cattle. It just doesn't make any sense.

I'm afraid to even show my face, hence I'm glued in my house. Mthunzi has been limping in and out, I've reached a point where I just let him be. His health seems to be improving because he can stand and walk on his own.

After what feels like eternity he limps back in again, exhaustion visible on his face. "nx! bloody thieves, that was my grandmother's house. There were lot of memories in that

house, the photo albums, her wedding casket, everything its all gone!" he shouts, angrily then seat on top of the bed next to me. "I'm sorry.." what else can I say.. "I'll get to the bottom of this, one way or the other" "problems after problems" I remark. He heaves a sigh then stares at me "you can say that again. how are you feeling though Swazelihle, with everything that's happening" he finally ask gently, I shrug my shoulders "I don't know, how are you" I ask him "I'm getting there, Bhengu's herbs really work" I'm confused "it's the traditional healer, he was here yesterday" he says as he reads my confused state. It might be that time when they all vanished, speaking of herbs "Nqaba was here yesterday, he gave me something. he said it will help .." "wait, what do you mean he was here?" he is suddenly alarmed "he was here..." "so we had fallout with your brothers the other day then one of them comes to my home, unannounced and we wake up with missing cattle and..." my heart sinks at the depth of my stomach

"Mthunzi I don't know what's going on but please stop insinuating that my family is behind this" I say, feeling worked a up, the nerve of this man "If the shoe fits my love.." he says then stand up leaving me cracking with anger, how dare he suspecting my family of such an evil deed...

41

Forty One

Swazi

I'm still boiling when the scratching sound of tyres hit my ears. I stand up, head out and only be met with a brown smoke

"who was driving out in such a speed" I ask Thembeka as I reach her in the middle of the yard

"your man and his brothers"

This doesn't sit well with me

"did they say where they are going?"

She gives me a bored look

"hay Swazi, I didn't have time to ask, as you can see I'm as puzzled as you are"

I don't like this at all.

I head towards the main house, the kitchen and begin my wifely duties.

Phikelela is here with a glass of water on his hands, keep on stealing glances at me

"aren't you supposed to be in school?"

I finally ask

"schools are closed for winter holidays"

Oh, might have slipped my mind

"why are you not with your friends ke?"

I ask again

"there's a lot going on, I need to be here"

He responds

"you're just a kid Phikelela, what can you possibly do"

He frown

"no, I'm not a kid, I can fire a slingshot just fine and kill a bird that's kilometers away from me"

I crack into laughter

"Really Phikelela, you think you can fight grown men with a slingshot.."

He shrugs

"I also can fight with sticks, I can throw a mean punch, a quick kick that can send even bhuti Delani out the window.."

He is starting to be himself again

"Have you seen my brothers? Mandlakhe, Qhude. Not to mention the rest of the Mthonga's"

"Have you seen me, my Steven Seagal muscles, my long legs, my arms, my strong iron fist that turn fire into ashes..."

He is on his feet, shaking his whole body as if ready to fight. I laugh even more

"you're something else"

"if my brothers want to win this war, then they'd better take me with them, your brothers won't know what hit them"

"war you say" I heave a sigh, worry slowly creeping in me. I've heard and read about village wars and somehow I always felt like they were being exaggerated, until now

"Phikelela, do you really think there might be a war brewing?"

I ask

"To be honest anything can happen. Village wars are very serious. They start with as little as fighting over a woman then extend into killings. People are always ready for it somehow"

My blood runs cold at the thought of losing any of my family members, the Zulu's included

"This needs to stop, I don't even see why they are fighting. I get that Mandlakhe hates Mthunzi but I would have talked to him and he would have listened. Penelop just had to be there and made things worse.."

My hands find my tummy and I slowly brush it, can my baby stay in my tummy forever, protected from everything

" your brother attacked my brothers, his brothers intervened. This is no longer about you, it's about them settling their own scores as men"

"this is insane, I'll talk to my brothers maybe they'll listen"

If I can just try

"It's too late for that, maybe before but now that we've lost our livestock, things are about to get worse.."

I stare at him

"worse for who? Phikelela don't tell me that you also suspect my family.."

A blank response

"Come on! Why would they steal livestock! For what!"

He opens his mouth to say something but someone knock at the kitchen door

"ibonene bo Ndabezitha!"

Phikelela instantly rush back to his bedroom leaving me stunned, with a middle aged man at the door

"baba" I say, humbling myself

"ntombazane, can I see Ndabezitha?"

I haven't seen him since morning

"he is not around baba, maybe you can come back later"

He nods in agreement

"when he returns tell him Mzobe was here"

"yebo"

"was that Phikelela, greet him for me"

I nod and watch him leave..

I follow after Phikelela, he is staring into space in the middle of the bedroom

"Hey, why did you run like that?"

No response

"Phikelela, I'm asking a question.."

Another knock, Argh!

"Ndondo" I exclaim, amazed and happy but she just continue sucking her thumb in her granny's arms

"she is not feeling well, she's going down with fever" she says, sadly and I feel a ping

"aw mama, since when?"

I lead them in the lounge and seat

"Friday, I told his father"

The hell

"I didn't know, he didn't tell me anything"

I say

"a lot has been going on, maybe it slipped his mind"

"The hell It did! It's his baby, how can he forget something so crucial, he is busy running around chasing after God knows what while hi..."

Ndondo's innocent stare makes me rethink my words so I refrain myself

"she's gonna be fine. I need to leave her here though. Something need me at home"

Now that I notice, there is a bag next to her

"let me take her" I stand up and take her heavy self in my arms

This is not what I expected as a wife, things are just adding up

"did you take her to the clinic"

She nods, frowning a bit. Flip, I'm sure she did I mean she's the one raising her

"The medication is in her bag, you'll see the instructions on them. Let me get going, Ndondo be good to your mother okay"

She nods.

"Wait, you can't leave without having anything. I'll prepare some tea mah"

"No, don't worry my child, I'm in a rush"

"at least let me give you some fruits"

I head to the kitchen, take two apples and wrap them up, if only there were also oranges I'd be thrilled. Mthunzi is too preoccupied to even nurse my cravings

"here" she smiles then thank me

"bye Ndondo" she keeps quite

The moment she disappears Ndondo breaks into a loud wail. My head instantly spins..

Ndulinde, Mthonga homestead

MaNdlovu is busy watering her spinach in her garden outside.

The water finishes in the watering can

as she lifts her eyes for refill she is met by the brown smoke flying all around as the white mini truck speeds towards home...

"hhay imhlola ka Duyaza iNkosi mpela" she exclaims to herself as the car parks furiously in the middle of the yard.

Nqaba gets out in one of the rondavels, followed by Veli.

Mandlakhe, Ndabezinhle and Qhude are nowhere insight

"Madoda"

Says Nqaba, collected. He can tell that these people stinks war but he remain calm

"where are they?"

Roars Mthunzi angrily

"should I ask what brings you in my home, unannounced and looking like barbarians ready to attack or you will tell me"

He says, sternly looking at them

"webafana, nibekwa yin la (boys, what brings you here)"

Ask MaNdlovu as she reaches them

"ask them gogo"

Adds Veli

Nobody likes the sight of the Zulu's after what happened, especially the history between Mthunzi and them

"ziphi inkomo zika baba, where did you hide them?" - Mthunzi

"what?" Veli ask, confused

"didn't you hear what my brother said, inkomo zikababa ziphi"

Ngcebo adds, just as furious. The only person who seems to have it under control is Delani

"zilaph esibayeni, nashesha bo ukuylanda"

Says MaNdlovu clapping her hands

"no, not those one! You know what we want! We won't leave until you tell us where you sold them! Bloody thieves"

"yeyeni! UMthonga must be turning in his grave"

"what exactly are you talking about!" - Nqaba

The stare battle begins, what angers Mthunzi the most is that he knows, he believes that Nqaba knows something and him pretending to be lost just makes him even more angry

"aren't you the one who was in my father's yard just yesterday and boom the next day all the cattle are gone, my grandmother's house burnt to the ground!" Adds Ngcebo

Sharply glaring at Nqaba who seem too calm for the situation at hand

"what are they talking about Nqabayezwe?"

MaNdlovu asks, puzzled. Reason why he never told them is because they'd never understand

"oh! So you didn't tell them, well this man was in my father's yard yesterday and today were woken up by my grandmother's house in flame and an empty kraal! "

Shouts Mthunzi, still breathing fire

"out of every people in this world, your brainless big heads just thought of me, angson isihlupheki Mina bafana baka Zulu, I don't go around stealing people's hard work. What do you take me for!"- with gritted teeth Nqaba states, his voice a bit deeper than usual

"did you just call us boys!"

His body heats up, never in a million years has he been insulted like today. If it wasn't the yard of the women that he loves he would have done more..

People have started to gather outside around

"why don't you go back home, do your research on who actually stole your livestock instead of coming into my grandfather's yard, carrying guns, disrespecting him in his yard and making such big accusations.."

"what's going on here.."

One of the Mthonga brothers, Seluleko, suddenly shout from the gate, running towards them.

The Mthonga households aren't too far from one another. The moment he saw people gathering he knew something was happening

"apparently we stole the livestock from the Zulu's"

Nqaba adds, clicking his tongue

"We are not here to fight, we just want what belongs to us"

Delani tries to control the situation causing laughter from Nqaba and Seluleko

"So you came all this way! Gun blazing just to talk!"

"you are hilarious you know that! Cowards even! Why can't you just face us head on and stop tiptoeing in the dark!"

"if you wanna get out of here with your eyes still intact, I suggest you move quickly"

Utters Seluleko

The village men have joined, they are all gathered and ready to attack shall they try something

"lets go.." says Delani looking at his brothers

"izodibana bafana"

Swazi

Ndondo is fast asleep on my bed, I can only hope she doesn't urinate on her sleep, she is still young.

After crying so loud, I managed to put her to sleep.

I check the time on the wall, it's after 12 already and Mthunzi and his brothers are still no where to be seen.

I get up and search for Phikelela, he needs to tell me why he ran like that when he saw that man

I find him watching some movie in the lounge and I take my seat next to him

"don't ask anything" he says, as if reading my mind

"I won't, if you tell me one thing though

I say " and that is"

"why have you been so grumpy"

He shrug his shoulders "you're strange"

I hear the sound of cars driving in and I stand up heading outside.

They all come out of Ngcebo's mini truck looking gloomy.

I can't even face Mthunzi, My heart sinks so I get inside and prepare something for them.

Thembeke sleeps a lot these days..

After preparing the table I leave their food and head back to the house. Ndondo is still fast asleep, I must take her to Spur tomorrow and buy her something to cheer her up. And buy myself a cellphone. My life is such a triangle, I'm in the Zulu's, yet the Mthonga's are my family while the Hlatshwayo is also

my father's last name. No one should live such a complicated life, it's draining. I get in bed next to Ndondo and close my eyes..

I'm woken up by the loud wailing, I'm going to grow gray her at 28 years!

"Hey, what's wrong?" I ask trying to keep her calm but she just doesn't bulge, I was never ready for this!

"baby, what's wrong, are you in pain?"

Mthunzi budge in and take her. They go out and I heave a long sigh feeling dizzy. Being a mother is no child's play, how am I going to handle her when Mthunzi isn't around.

It's after supper, Ndondo is fast asleep in the lounge and the fever has gone down which is a good thing.

Luckily there was a little one sponge so I just prepared few blankets and put her to sleep.. There is no other free guest room in here, I don't even know why because Mthunzi has had this kid for five years.

I get in bed after changing into PJs and settle next to Mthunzi who is too quiet today

"where were you?" I ask him

He shifts and keep quite. I guess I won't get a response

"when are you going back to work" atleast I know that he was always busy when he was still working

"soon" he says

"how soon?"

No response again, this is not the life I expected

"you didn't tell me that Ndondo was not fine"

"I was going to tell you"

I shut my mouth

"Swazelihle" he utters softly

But I don't dare open my mouth.

I feel his hands as he brings me close to him

"I miss you" he whispers, planting a wet kiss on my neck causing tingles

"I love you so much Swazelihle, don't you love me anymore"

I ignore him but do I ever get what I want, nope. He turns me around to face him..

Then his hand finds my face

"Mthunzi just.." he does this thing of shutting me with a kiss and I feel my body awakening as his hands are trailing all over

my body making me hot. I'm pregnant and he knows that one touch from him will release waterworks for me..

I almost scream as I feel the tip of him in me,

"relax your body sthandwa.. "

His scratchy voice whispers in my ear

He thrust in again, slowly that I release a long deep moan.

I feel my cookie walls clenching as he pushes it further in then a soft groan follows from him

His waist begins moving and I fail to hold it in, I find myself moaning of the unexplainable pleasure engulfing all of me.. He doesn't stop moving as he rubs all my soft spots making me lose my sanity..

"I love you Sweetheart .."

It's hot in here, loud screams have filled the entire bedroom..

I'm a moaning mess when I suddenly I hear a soft unexpected voice.. Oh no!

I'm such a bad mother!!

"F#ck oh shit**" ...

42

Forty Two

Mthonga Household

They are all gathered in Seluleko's house, about 9 of them arguing senselessly. Some of them on their feet while others are seated on the bench

"Those Zulu boys are full of shit! It's time to teach them a lesson"

Qhude utters, angry to the top

"I'm gonna say what I've been saying all this while, I hate those men to the core but we can not attack their home. My sister is there"

Mandlakhe states, arguments erupt and the noise is unbearably high

" just listen, listen!"

Yells Seluleko, the noise dies down a bit

"I know I've been supporting the idea of attacking the brothers and teaching them a lesson but.."

"hhay... hhay.."

The noise erupts again causing Mandlakhe to hit the table and they start listening again, Seluleko continues

"as I was saying before I was rudely interrupted, we have a sister in that home that we must think about, Ndondo our niece. That man is the father of Qhamkile's only child. If we attack, a lot of things can happen and he might even lose his life and that will mean we'll be responsible for the death of our niece's father. We will be responsible for the death of Qhamukephi's husband. Are you ready to face her every single day knowing very well that we'll be behind her pain, knowing very well that we would have killed the only living parent that Ndondo has.. "

" He killed us our sister too! Qhamkile would be alive if that bastard wasn't her boyfriend.. " argues one of the brothers, Scelo. Short tempered, Impulsive, always act on emotions

"it was an accident and you all know it"

Adds Nqaba, for the first time since the meeting begun

"the bottom line is she was coming from him when she died, he is responsible and I hate him"

""As if that was not enough, he comes after Qhamkile's twin, how sick is that!" - Scelo

"Let's not forget about what they just did recently. Attacking us in our home in broad daylight! Insulting us and accusing us of being thieves! What will people think of us"

Adds Qhude, breathing hard

"what they did was wrong and they will cleanse the Mthonga yard when the right time comes.. But let's face it, Those man did what anyone in their shoes could have, I was in their home so that raised questions"

Nqaba calmly states but mumblings escalates

"We've been doing this since the attack, meeting here, arguing, then going our separate ways with no exact division, I have a bed and it is calling me right now. If you don't reach a common ground then from now on wards count me out"

Ndabezinhle says, raising his hands

"Mandlakhe should tell us, he is after all the one who started this whole revolt"

Says Nqaba

"and I won't apologize for that, that clown was wrong for going after my sisters, both of them! And coming into our home calling us thieves was just the last straw. Everyone was watching, as of now people are starting to forget who we are. They are losing respect"

Mandlakhe states

"so now I finally get this straight, this is about us fighting for our reputation, it's about our bruised egos and making sure that everyone always remember who we are. It's about clearing our name"

Seluleko says

"then in that case I have a solution"

Says Nqaba, they all listen to him

"kunodwendwe kwakhoza next week, Sunday(there is a zulu wedding in kwakhoza village"

He says

"that means we can ask for udede and beat the hell out of them, while everyone is watching"

For the first time they all agree, their heads nodding in amuzement

"an open fight it is then"

Says Nqaba staring at his brothers

"kuzophophoz igazi esphongwen sendoda, anghuntuth ihlangu zam, zolala zisuthi ngalolasuku"

Mandlakhe says, hitting the air in amusement

This has to be the best news he's heard since the revolt.
They've been meeting with his brothers at night to find a way
but reached no argument, until today.

It's all safe, her niece and sister

Zulu..

"syabonga ngesidlo saseksen maMthonga"

Ndabezitha says deeply then stands up

"when you're all done, come to me. We need to talk"

He says staring at his sons then leaves

They are all seated in the table, eating breakfast which was
prepared by Swazi

"mama" Ndondo says, balled up in her father's lap

"yes baby"

She says

"are you still in pain?"

Swazi instantly. Luckily Ndondo saw nothing as they were covered in a blanket but she heard her screams hence she lied and said she was in pain

"yes.. Yes baby but I'm a bit better now" Responds Swazi.

"pain, what pain. Is something wrong with the baby?"

Ngcebo suddenly ask, Swazi is being eaten up by embarrassment

"ehhe baba, mama was crying so loud! Loud like a baby. She was in pain, it was so sad baba. We should take her to the doctor, mama would love to go to the doctor"

Strange stares are all directed to Swazi, if only she could just disappear.

Damn this loud mouth of a child

"wait, so she was crying like a baby?"

Phikelela ask, stifling laughter and Swazi stares at him, wishing that the tea could just choke him to death

"Phikelela!"

Mthunzi reprimand him

"bafo I'm just worried, Ndondo yababa, tell me how she was crying..

"ngzokusakaz uyangizwa Phikelela (I'll slap you)"

Mthunzi adds

"No, let Ndondo talk. I'd also love to know, I mean if your wife is experiencing pain we should know, right Delani" - Ngcebo

"Of course. I'd also like to know"

"you're all are being too foward, it's annoying" Adds Mthunzi

Swazi's eyes are glued on the plate, her heart is pumping hard as they are arguing around her.

" if Sisi was crying then that means the pleasure was too strong and unbearable ,. Sorry I mean the.. Pain"

A quick backslap landed on Phikelela's head

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instead of running he just burst out laughing, Thembeke, Ngcebo and Delani followed after him..

Swaz instantly stands up and heads towards the kitchen. Mthunzi clicks his tongue while Ndondo is muffing a fish finger, not even paying attention to her surroundings anymore..

"I can't believe you guys forgot about a child, you need to be baptized with holy water and fast for seven days asking God for forgiveness"

Says Ngcebo as they are approaching their father

"That's exactly what I've been thinking, I mean who forgets a child!"

Delani says and they start laughing annoying Mthunzi even more

"my brother is good!damn she made her scream like a baby"

"whats funny?"

Ndabezitha ask as they reach him

"someone was screaming like a baby.."

Ngcebo receives a mean stare from Mthunzi

"why?" Ask Ndabezitha, puzzled

"it's nothing"

"okay, is there something that you'd like to tell me"

He ask but get confused eyes

"about you ambushing and insulting another man's household"

He deeply says then stares at them as they all brush their hands nervously.

Ndabezitha is a strict man, a traditional man who takes respect seriously

"I'm talking" he half yell and they all gulp

"baba, we got a lead so we thought if we followed it we might find something"

Responds Delani politely

"did you find something then?"

He ask, they shake their heads no

"but I think they are hiding something. They are too much of cowards to admit it"

Mthunzi argues

"seniyagulan nina bafana! Going around shaming me, shaming my name! I taught you better than this! You can not disrespect a man's yard like that, You find evidence, then you can act and by that I don't mean enter someone's yard and scream their names. Negotiate, you negotiate and reach a common ground, if that is not achieved then you can take the next step"

Silence

"what now?"

Ask Ngcebo

"I talked to Bhengu, he said I should give them 3 days. After that they will bring back my cows, all of them"

They nod in respect, Bhengu is a well known traditional healer around the area, what he says goes..

Swazi

To say I'm embarrassed would be an understatement. I feel awful enough that Ndondo heard us yesterday and now everyone knows. I'm sure Qhamkile is turning in her grave for what I did to her child. Am I even ready to be a mother , who forgets a child. I'm such a bad person

I feel his presence before I can even turn my head. I concentrate on wiping the plate that I've been wiping for a while

"Swazelihle" my heart dances, I hate him for making me love him this much

"Mthunzi"

I say turning to look at him

"can we talk. In my house" he says.

I put the plate and dish cloth then follow after him

The moment I get inside I hear the door being locked, I turn and bump on his chest

"I miss you so much" he says then smashes his lips on me, I kiss him just as hard..

God I missed him too

After the hot sessions I couldn't get enough of him, just thinking about earlier makes me wanna get on it now.

We are on our way to town, with the loud mouth herself

When we reach town we start by making a few groceries at Spar then pep for my cell phone. Mthunzi is all grumpy and sour while Ndondo is jumping up and down happily. If she is happy then I'm good, I don't care about an old man with 32 teeth, a man who sexed me while there was a child in the house

"When are we leaving again?"

He ask, for the hundredth time

"soon babe" I say and he shakes his head.

When we are done with my new cell phone we head to Ackermans and I buy some clothes for Ndondo.

"this is the last one"

He says as he pays at the till. I'm exhausted too and way too hungry

"Ndondo baby, where do you want us to eat?"

I ask

"Spur, I love Spur. I want to play"

"Spur it is then"

As I pass by this store I'm taken by some sneakers

"babe wait here, I'll take those for Phikelela" I say and he gives me a dead stare. I leave him and get inside..

After a long, watering meal we are finally ready to go back home. What a day!

We are waiting by the car while waiting for Mthunzi in the toilet

"Swazi" someone suddenly says and I quickly turn

"Fikani" I'm amazed to see his face. How long has it been!

"wow, you look stunning"

I keep a straight face while rubbing my visible tummy. His eyes travel down and his face changes

"ow, you're pregnant" he sounds disappointed.

"who are you talking to my mama" I love Ndondo sometimes

"I'm uncle Fikani" he says, kneeling down to her level

"I'm Ndondo and this is my mama. My father is in the toilet. Would you like to meet him"

She ask

"no, I'm already rushing. Here take this and buy yourself some chips"

I wanna stop him as he hands her R20 note

"no, my teacher said we should not take money from strangers. It's not safe"

I'm left in awe, wow such a great teacher

"your teacher is right but I'm not a stranger. im a friend of your moms"

"is he really your friend mama. You don't look happy to see your friend. Did he hurt you? I'm always happy to see my friends but you're not"

This kid talks too much, even Fikani is amazed

"he is my friend baby, I'm just tired that's all. Take the money we'll buy you lots of stick

Sweets okay"

She nods and take the money then Fikani leaves. He doesn't look good at all, I almost felt sorry for him

The drive back home was short, I fell asleep the minute I sat on the car seat and was woken up when we reached home.

I leave Ndondo, fitting her clothes and look for Phikelela.

I'm in his bedroom, looking for him but he is nowhere.

I wanna give him these kicks and hope that he will like them.

His bed is messy, clothes are just scattered on top with a lap top.

Something catches my attention, he is on Google **Male survivors of sexual assault**

"what are you doing?" he suddenly and I jump up startled. He passes me then slam the laptop hard.

"Phikele.."

"What do you want in my bedroom?"

He is angry, way too angry

"I'm sorry I was just looking for you.."

"Looking for me on my laptop!" he quickly say

"I didn't find you so I.."

"So what? That gave you the right to sniff around my things, is that it?"

I've never seen him this angry

"No, I wasn't sniffing I swear.."

"get out!!".

I'm still baffled when he push me out and a door is slammed on my face

"wow" that's all I manage to say

"nah, maybe he was researching school project"

Mthunzi says after I narrated him what just happened

"schools are closed Mthunzi. What if.."

"no, stop over thinking it's not good for my baby"

He says, touching my tummy

"Mthunzi just concentrate will you!"

I snap and quickly gain his attention

"these things happen and it's hard for men to talk because they are never taken seriously instead they just become a laughing stock"

He look at me thinking

"maybe.. Maybe you're right. If I remember correctly ever since you were almost ra.. ped he's been very moody and always angry"

He says tapping his foot

"that might explain why, because he's been moody even towards me. And come to think of it, he never even came to check how I was after and after that incident he just changed miraculously.."

He stand up and start pacing up and down

"Do you think it's a woman?"

He ask and I shrug my shoulders

"how did we miss this?, how did I? I'm a doctor I should have noticed something. He is my little brother damn it I should have known something was wrong with him "

He is blaming himself and I don't like it

"babe you're human, not God. You can't know everything"

"I need to talk to him"

He says

"No! Allow him to come to you. He will talk when he is ready"

I say standing up to stop him

"but I must do something, find out some leads. Who would do something so cruel!"

His eyes are turning red, he looks hurt, angry at once

"what If it's a man.."

I suddenly say

"why do you say that?"

"maybe it's nothing.."

"Swazelihle"

Okay let me say it

"there was a man here the other day looking for Ndabezitha. The minute he appeared at the door Phikelela rushed out instantly. And he also said I should greet Phikelela.

When I asked he just didn't give me any straight answer.."

"did he say who he was?"

Let me think

"Manz.. Mzob"

"Mzobe" he finishes and I nod

"do you th.."

"Babe,I need to go. I'll be back"

And just like that he is gone leaving me with countless thoughts running through my head..

In less than a minute I hear loud voices arguing outside, there is no dull moment in this yard!

Forty Three

Swazi

Fresh orange slices on the plate, fresh strawberries, popcorn, cranberry juice. I'm ready, we can finally start watching Crazy Rich Asians that we both agreed on. Thembeke and I, we are in my house

"We should be at the funeral, you know, saying goodbye to the old hag, asshole, morroniness!" Utters Thembeke with her mouth full of strawberries.

I doubt such terms exist but I guess they describe the man pretty well

"I don't see the need, he doesn't deserve our presence" I say, chopping the slice of orange with my sharp teeth. I fix the laptop volume and start watching, I never get enough of this romantic movie

"I can't believe such an old man, with kids older than Delani has the nerve to rape a 17 year old boy! This world has turned into something else I tell you. Had he not killed himself I would have cut his worn out dick, cooked it and made him eat it"

She talks too much, I can't even concentrate.

"He shouldn't have died that easily, such a coward," she adds. After the sad revelations, the next day Mr Mzobe was found dead and he is being buried today. Apparently he hanged himself. Somehow I feel like Mthunzi and his brothers know something. They've been very happy this week, Phikelela being the happiest.

" At least he is dead, he won't be hurting anyone anymore" I say but she shakes her head

"he should have died on our terms, not his. He deserves a kick between his stinking balls" she says kicking the air angrily, Lord she looks funny with her huge belly. Mine is big but not as big as hers. It's like she is a hippo or something

"what's funny?" she ask, glaring at me. I laugh even more..

We are in the middle of the movie when Phikelela walks in and seat opposite us with Ndondo in his arms

"bo makoti baka Zulu" he says

"Bhut omncane"

Thembeke says

"What would you like to have for lunch today? Bhut Delani and I are cooking"

We share a look, amazed. Phikelela hasn't touched a pot ever since we walked in the Zulu homestead, let alone Bhut Delani.

"don't look like zombies now, I might change my mind so start talking"

"I'll help babomncane cook, it'd be so much fun!" Nondo exclaims happily

"oh no! That's a recipe for disaster, Delani can't even toast an egg"

Thembeke adds causing me to laugh

"cook anything with meat" I say

"Don't burn down the kitchen please!" she yells as they go out

"We love you too" screams Phikelela.

He is in such a happy mood, it's cute to watch and appealing

My phone rings in the bedroom,

I stand up and rush to it

"Mageba" I say, smiling from ear to ear

"Mama wabantwana bam, how are you feeling now?"

He is such a caring husband sometimes. I had stomach cramps in the morning but they've died down

"the stomach cramps are gone now, I'm okay. We are both okay and we miss you so bad" I say

"I miss you too babes, did you get your present, I woke up early today but I left something underneath the pillow"

I'm a bit confused

"I didn't see anything babe"

I say

"oh, maybe it's under the coffee table then"

I rush there and push the cloth aside

"it's a slip.. " I say, a bit confused

"we booked you and Thembeke in BON Hotel Waterfront, in Richards B.. "

I scream before he can even finish the sentence

my cheeks are burning

"you'll be pampered, do those manicures and pedicures of yours, have a spa day and just eat whatever your heart will desire"

As he finishes I already look like a crazy woman, smiling with my teeth all out

"When are we leaving?"

He release a soft laugh

"this afternoon, Delani and I will take you there"

He says, he is such a sneaky husband

"and you'll spend the weekend with us?"

I say

"No babe we need to take care or something but once it is done we will join you"

He says

I'm a bit sad though

"What about Ndondo then" I quickly ask

"don't worry about her, I'll take her to her granny"

"oh.. Okay then. Why didn't you say that early? It's after eleven, we should have packed already by now"

I say

"Well now is the time Nana, start packing and please, don't forget your meds. I don't want anything bad to happen to you and my baby okay"

He says

"I won't, I love you Mthunzi"

"I love you Swazelihle. Don't ever forget that"

The call drops leaving me booming in happiness.

"And then?"

Says Thembeka looking up at me

"We are going to the BON Hotel!!!"

"You and Mthunzi?"

"No dummy, you and I"

Her piercing screams hurt my eardrum, jeez!

My phone rings again in my hand. My heart almost jumps out, it's Mandlakhe.

I head to the bedroom then pick the call and we talk for a while, he also tells me he loves me and drops the call leaving me concerned.

It's been quite about the brewing war,

And I've been hoping that it stays that way.

On Wednesday Mthunzi was called back to work and he's been working overtime. I have hardly seen him since.

As of now he is working, I'm glad they didn't fire him.

My relationship with my family is a bit sour, the other day I called gogo and she begged me to leave Mthunzi and come home. I didn't expect her to say that, even Veli supported her idea. They hate Mthunzi and it hurts, but it's okay I don't expect them to understand. They've never met the Mthunzi version that I love, the one that makes me feel loved and safe..

"super human!! Don't know what you doing..." who the hell sing in such a horrid voice

"No.. No Delani tle. How many times must I tell you to quit that song!"

Thembeke says, I find myself laughing.

I head out and find them all love dovey staring at each other

"but you are my super human.."

Delani says, did she just blush, it's cute

"not in my house please"

I quickly say, they are way too close to each other

They drag each other out..

Everyone is happy today..

We are ready to go, we standing by the Mthunzi's car. My stomach grumbles for the fifth time and I rush to the toilet and let everything out!

When I return, Thembeke start running as well, what did they put in this food?

She returns looking all grumpy.

"were you trying to kill us? What did you put in that food?"

I ask Phikelela

"nothing unusual"

"Are you sure" Thembeke ask

I'll never ever allow them near the kitchen ever again. The food wasn't bad, something was just off

"Should I talk, or you'll tell them"

He is looking at Delani

"ah.. Well.. I might have sort of put a lot of Epsom Salt. I thought it was th.."

I'm defeated

** **

"Ahh" the intense sensation rushing through all of me has me moaning like crazy, bouncing and failing to keep still. His tongue feels magical on my punani, driving me insane that I suddenly reach an earth crushing orgasm

A throaty moan escapes my mouth as I feel the tip of him on my entrance with My nails sink even deeper while my eyes closes as he slowly enters that I feel my walls expanding..

:

We arrived a while ago and I've been cooped up in Mthunzi's arms ever since, I don't want him to go. Being in his arms, away from everything has been nothing but pure joy and blessing His hands are drawing circles on my naked back..

"I should go" he whispers and I feel my heart dropping to Zero

"do you really have to go?"

I ask and turn to look up at him

"I have to.."

"why?"

His eyes shy away

"Mthunzi, are you hiding something from me?"

He gets of the bed and I watch him as he wears his clothes.
When he is done he comes to me, My eyes are heavy, I don't
want him to leave

His warm lips crashes on mine, and he kisses me hungrily that I
feel like air would leave my lungs any second from now..

My eyes are wet as we stop kissing, I feel sad I don't know
why....

Someone knock at the door

"Bafo, let's go"

It's Delani. He pecks my forehead, wipe my teary eyes stares at
me longer as if he is seeing me for the last time.

"Ngyakthanda Swazelihle"

He says sternly.

When the door closes I heave I heave a heavy sigh wiping away the remaining tears in my eyes..

After a while I head to Thembeke's room and find her looking like she was also crying a second ago

"are they hiding something? Why the sudden hotels?"

She says.

I shrug my shoulders and just admire my surroundings. I might as well enjoy my time here, I didn't think they'd actually leave us here, I thought we'd be spending the weekend together..

BON Hotel Waterfront is on another level of beauty, it's spacious, modern rooms with spectacular views of the ocean front just warms up my soul. I never thought I needed this, until this moment. And yacht Harbour view just makes me wanna live here for the rest of my life. Tomorrow I'd be dangling in the swimming pool, explore the many nearby attractions and do my hair, my nails, go for a spa day and just do what every girl dreams of, shopping!!

44

Bright

I knew Bruce was abusive but never did I think he'd follow me even after I've left him. I'm forever afraid of what might happen next, I'm scared that maybe he might show up and finish what he started.

The last time he beat me up like this was when I lost my baby. I had gone to the police and reported the abuse

It worked for at least a month. However, it never lasted. He came home drunk one day and told me how ungrateful I am. It started as a slap as always, a strong kick followed, before I could comprehend what was happening I was laying hopelessly on the ground

It's been a week since I woke up and it's been the toughest days of my life. However, I'm beyond grateful to the man that saved me, to Rebel for being with me through it all. I'm happy to have people like Javas, Sindy, Gugu and Boitumelo. They make me feel that sense of belonging, that I have people in my corner too

And Sihlangu, he has been nothing but the best thing, his overprotective nature brings me peace and I always feel safe when he is around. He also put a man outside, he is some sort of a bodyguard and that alone makes me feel at ease.

Speak of the devil, he comes in carrying a McDonald's paper bag. The manly cologne fills up the entire ward. He is such a gentleman "Khanya" he says as he reaches me. his untied dreads looks good on him "Shlangu Ndlovu" I say, his lips turn into a smile "You shouldn't smile more often, you look like a monkey" I say softly. A smile turns into a funny grin. I feel a sense of joy and relief as I look at his face. I'm happy he

is here

"how are you feeling today?" he ask, gently

"I'm okay. You're always here. aren't you supposed to be at work?" Instead of responding to my question he looks at me deep in my eyes, I look back at him too. His dark alluring eyes are too heavy to look at but I don't back away. instead I look beyond the naked eye, there is just something about him, something that makes me trust him "you're beautiful you know that" he gently says, slowly caressing my cheeks. I can't help

but blush senselessly. "I want you so bad" he whispers. I almost didn't catch what he said...

My heartbeat increases hysterically like it would jump out of my chest as his face dips slowly with each passing second, is he trying to..

I feel his warm breath tickling my skin causing my eyes to close automatically. The moment his warm lips delicately touched mine, my heart accelerated.

A soft moan escapes and mouth as he slowly gives me a mind-blowing passionate kiss. My hand automatically touches his hairy face as our tongues are dancing in sync. Both of us are lost in the world of ecstasy, our unstable minds unable to remember that we are in a public space, a hospital

We are staring at each other breathlessly, not believing what just conspired.

There's something about his stare, it's like he is staring at something so special, so perfect "your lips are soft, delicious, yummy, smooth" he tenderly says and I feel like hiding away

“God! please stop” I quickly say covering my face, he is making me lose sanity.

He removes my hands on my face and our eyes lock..

He is no longer smiling “you scared me Khanya, I don't ever want to let you out of my sight ever again.. ” “Knock knock, ops sorry if I’m interrupting something I’ll be quick” “its okay doctor” he says, an awkward moment this is “sir, I’m gonna have to ask you to leave the room” “noo he can stay I don’t mind” “okay if you say so, what is he doing here anyway because it's not visiting hours yet” he says, checking at his wrist watch “learn to stick your nose to your business boy, it’ll help you live longer” how can someone be so mean and intimidating ... Shem the poor Indian doctor look frightened. “when am I being discharged? ” I ask

" after a week or two you’ll be free to go” how I hate hospitals, I feel like screaming, two weeks!

The doctor does his thing and leaves

“why are you always mean to people?” I quickly asked him

“I’m not, I just don’t tolerate bullshit”

Owkay! “how are you here anyway” “do you want me to go? ”
“noo, no I’m just curious that’s all” “I have my ways” “owkay”
the way he said that sentence made to ask no more, I have a
feeling I won’t like the whole explanation.

I’ve been with Sihlangu the whole day, he is a stupid, funny guy
with the dumpiest jokes ever. However

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I enjoy his presence more than anything, I like having him
around me, he is no longer the intimidating guy, a big softie
bear is hidden underneath all the scary physique. “It's time for
your bath young lady” says a very loud male nurse walking
inside the ward, Shlangu quickly stands up like something is
burning him. “sorry, did you just say bath” “yes sir” “no you
can’t do that” why am I still surprised. “why not?” asks the
nurse, a a bit puzzled.. “You are a man! don’t you have female
nurses here?” “we do have them sir” “ “then go and get one,
otherwise i'll bath her myself” he just surprised me even more,
who said I want him to bath me wee I can't

The nurse quickly leaves .. “that was unnecessary though” “like
hell it was!” I need saving

I'm fast asleep when a soft pat wakes me.

"Rebel" I say smiling widely, she never spend a day without seeing me this one

"seat up, I must feed you" And she's forever feeding my poor tummy

"I'm still fine, Sihlangu was here a while ago and he fed me so I'm good"

She put the plastic down and take chair then seat near me..

"something is different today, you are in a good space and I can feel it, did something happen?"

She ask, putting her hands on her face "nothing happened"

I say, my lips betray me as my mind takes me back to that lingering kiss

" I'm sure it involves that handsome dreadlocks man so spit it out already" she says "you're so nosey Rebel. the mamgobhozi in you just can't stay hidden " "oh I tried to put her in her place bethuna, I failed she kept on saying no this is not you, this isn't you man"

we let out a loud laugh, it is good to see her letting loose a little. "on a serious note though, Zwelibanzi really helped you, who knows what would have happened if he didn't find you" "yeah, he was a god sent"

her phone rings, she ignores it. "haybo sis, depts already" "no no, its Javas. He kind of sort of kissed me.. "

I let out a scream

" Bright! Keep it down.. " I laugh

" I've always suspected that something was brewing between the two of you.. "

I say "there is something between us, I don't know what it is but... I'm just confused and to be honest I'm carrying a lot of baggage that I'm not ready to share"

She says "oh come on we all have a past Rebel but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be happy.."

She doesn't respond. And I feel the heaviness, she is dealing with a lot. It reflects on her eyes

"Sihlangu kissed me. can you believe that he stopped a male nurse who wanted to bathe me" I add, trying to soften the situation. But she is not as thrilled as I expected

"are you sure you are ready though?"

She suddenly ask, confusing me "what do you mean" "to quickly engage in another relationship, you know from what you've just said I feel like you need to deal with this first" "my relationship with Bruce died a long time ago, what I feel for Shlangu is way different, it's a warm feeling that I fail to explain,

its soothing my soul, its comforting, it just melt my heart, I know that it's too early to say but I prefer healing my stitched heart with him by my side then to be alone and relive those horrible moments alone isn't something I want to do" she heaves a sigh "it's okay I understand you're already in too deep and there nothing I can say or do to change your mind but please be careful, don't be afraid to talk this time if he start behaving differently"

I feel my heart melting, she is such a caring friend.

"and one last thing, do not punish him for Bruce's mistakes, don't make a mistake of comparing them because they are two different individuals,, you just have to be more careful this time around" "thanks friend wam, I'll be careful I promise" "you also need to attend a therapy session"

When did she become so grown and responsible "there is one a doctor suggested here, will begin after recovery" " that's good then, if we don't deal with these things in time they get out of hand, and just become impossible and hard to control, I don't want that to happen to you"

I smile at her

"thank you"

45

Rebel

I'm not sure if God really exists but I'm grateful that my best friend is safe . She's been a blessing to my life. She's sleeping peacefully and I'm softly humming a song. She's recovering pretty well and I'm hoping that she's gonna be out here anytime soon.

It's a bit exhausting to take the back and forth trips from Mandeni to Durban.

I've been avoiding Javas whenever I bump into him here.

Then there is a mysterious, leather wearing, jazz playing taxi driver that I always bump into every day. Lately I've been taking free trips, whenever it's time to pay he never takes my money. If I'm in a different taxi, that driver never takes my money as well, which is a bit strange.

Not to forget that today he said he'll wait for me until I return so that he can drive me home. It's his time, his taxi and his petrol, I don't mind free trips.

And strangely, I kind of enjoy his company

"I come bearing gifts! " Oh God! Javas is poking his head at the door, now I wish I had superpowers to just vanish into thin air
"hey...you've been scarce"

I say, he laughs at my ironic statement

"aren't you the one avoiding me"

I shrug my shoulders

"and why would I do that?"

I ask

"you know why"

He says, looking in my eyes.

"I missed you yaz" "I know, I'm missable, if there's even such a word" I say, he laughs putting a pick n pay plastic on the full cupboard. "wait, what the time" "around 4" he responds, takes the chair and settle next to me..

He's been shooting short glances at me ever since he got in

We've been too occupied with Bright's situation that we even forgot to confront the big elephant

"Rebel.." he finally says

"Jabulani"

"we should talk about what happened".

I stare at him

"There's nothing to talk about Javas. You kissed me and I kissed you back. There is nothing special to talk about"

I firmly say, he stands up push back the chair and settles in front of me.

I look up confused

"You and I know that it was more than that"

I'm staring up at him not knowing how to respond

"I need you.."

He says throwing me off guard

"ahem" I quickly turn my head as someone clears their throat, Zwelibanzi is at the door looking like he is ready to murder someone. Why is he here?

He gets in taking long bouncy strides as always.. "am I interrupting something" his croaky voice unmatching his deadly expression. so calm and unreadable..

"yes, you are interrupting something " Javas resorts

My unsteady breathing increases as I watch these two tall men staring at each other with nothing but burning rage in their eyes. This is not how I planned to end my day “guys,” I doubt they heard me “ufunan la (what is it that you want here)” Javas asks “I could ask you the same question, aren’t you supposed to be running after ill patients or rather running to the nearest bottle store.. ” “knock knock “ this nurse clearly has no perfect timing

“Come on in” I respond quickly, avoiding whatever these two men are trying to cook.

She checks something then quickly head out

"what was all that about" I ask them just as the nurse disappears “What do you mean” asks Zweli. He is stupid too, he just had to be everything. “the stunt you just pulled, does anyone want to tell me something” “what does he want” Javas asks, pointing at Zweli's direction with his eyes, don’t ask stupid question. you still haven’t given me a valid reason not to shoot you this instant” utters Zweli calmly but scary

Okay.. This is getting out of hand.. “What stops you then? Why am I not surprised. Guns are your language Angit?” “haybo!” I say, in a serious tone “please leave both of you, this is a hospital not a wrestling!” they both give me stupid begging eyes, I'm not gonna fall for it, noo. I don't understand why they are even like this “just go, I’m not playing. leave” “I’ll call you

Rebel” Javas says as he tightly hold my hands then leaves the room..

“ntokazi. don’t shout at me, especially In Front of that cheese boy ” Somebody tell me why he is still here again “why are you still here Zweli. didn’t I tell you to leave” I say calmly, he doesn't respond but come to me and stand in front of me “I'm not leaving without you"

He sternly says, staring deeply. I blink then look away, I can't hold his piercing gaze. "where is your bag?"

He ask, I take my hand bag and give him

"say goodbye to your friend. It's late we should get going"

She is still fast asleep after such drama!

I peck her forehead and follow Zwelibanzi..

Why am I even obeying him?

46

Forty Four

Swazi

Kwakhoza Village

The sun is all out, shining brighter.

It's Sunday, the big day is finally here.

The big Zulu wedding in the kwakhoza area. The well known taxi man is getting married to the most humble, beautiful woman.

The loud sound of a trumpet has been bursting in all directions, indicating happiness and joy.

The smoke flies all around, happiness is booming in every way, women ululating proudly as the wedding takes place. This wedding is attended by dozens of people, dancing and singing in harmony.

As the sun started to set, the wedding ended leaving only males to continue with their own culture. Women and children all gone, a dangerous game has begun. The headman is at the center inspecting everything and stops a fight if need be. Everyone knows how dangerous an open battle can get. It never ends with sticks and traditional shields, guns, spilled blood, death and tears always follow.

It's way crowded, a variety of village men from different villages are all gathered in an open space away from homes. jumping up and down, their bloods are hot and the sight of blood amuze them even more. The ear blasting noise just accelerate the ones at the center to fight harder, they loudly chants the battle songs as the stick fighting continues

Mthunzi, Delani, Ngcebo and Phikelela are at far end watching everything unfold.

They've spotted the Mthonga Brothers and shared mean glares with them and they know, it's going down today. Come rain or sunshine they will leave here with bleeding wounds

"you weren't supposed to have sex Mthunzi. You're gonna get us killed"

Ngcebo says, gaining a laugh from Phikelela. he's been complaining about it ever since Mthunzi returned yesterday.

"you don't have a wife Ngcebo so shut up" he shoots back

Ngcebo click his tongue angry

"anisakwaz ukuphila ngaphandle nj kocansi Madoda! Everyday it's a pussy! We were supposed to abstain as Bhengu instructed"

He shouts

"and the same Bhengu gave isihlungu this morning didn't he? "

He argues

"the instruction was to abstain and you failed to do that.."

Phikelela laughs even louder gaining a back slap from Mthunzi

"why is he even here? He shouldn't be here" Mthunzi says

"hhay bhut I want to be here"

He says and they let him be

"the brainless Zulu boys.."

Someone suddenly utters behind them.

Qhude appears, chewing a piece of grass in his mouth

"and the dumpiest chicken appears" Mthunzi says and Mandlakhe becomes even more angry

"so you think I'm a chicken.."

He says

"is it not your name, chicken?"

"it's time to prove to you how strong this chicken is then. Let's go"

He says pushing Mthunzi and everyone start to notice

Avoiding the battle that might erupt in the crowd the headman stops the ongoing fight and calls for Mandlakhe and Mthunzi at the center of attention, centre of action and blood

They begin as soon as possible, crowd chants even louder as the fight get intense. Mthunzi's head is pouring blood, he is losing the fight but he doesn't back down at all. The Mthonga brothers are loudly chanting..

The fight is stopped just as Mthunzi picks up, he leaves with a wounded head while Mandlakhe leaves with just a scratch.

"I told you.." mumbles Ngcebo as he passes Mthunzi along the way.

He fix the stick and his shield on his hands as he watches Mandlakhe coming towards his direction.

Mandlakhe is walking slowly, whistling, hitting the grass with his stick and dance a little. He's been waiting for this day, he wanted Mthunzi more but fighting Ngcebo is also a bonus.

As he finally reach him they begin the fighting.

It's intense! The chanting has died down, both men are violently fighting, stubborn and wounded but they don't stop. As the headman tries to stop the fight, the stick lands on his head and he falls down. Chaos begins! In the midst of it all a gunshot goes off and everyone rush to their waist taking their own pistol

Everyone has scattered in different directions, gunshots are still going off, the Mthonga brothers are too many, running after the Zulu brothers breaking anything in front of them.

Delani keeps on shooting, Mthunzi and Ngcebo are badly wounded, blood blinding their sight but they still fire the shots..

Suddenly the Mthonga brothers stop running after them, all crowded as if concentrating on something else, or someone else. A loud bang goes off suddenly

"Phikelela.. Where is Phikelela?"

.....THE END.....

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