



**This Novel Provide It**

MY LOVE

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## Introduction

I first saw Sidney at Spurs, I was with my friends; she was also with her friends or so I assumed. I saw her first, obviously- well I sort of embarrassed myself in front of her but I don't think she even looked my way or that a girl like her would ever look at me even if I were to bump into her in the streets.

I glared at her (from a distance) watching her laugh and smile. The first thing that caught my attention on her was her smile, I had never seen anyone smile so widely as if they went to school for it. She was that one person you see and instantly fall for them.

She was wearing a blue floral dress that hugged her body as if it was handcrafted for her, the dress settled just about her knees showing a glimpse of her thighs and she was wearing gold sandals that exposed her perfectly done toes. She had her sunglasses on although I wished she could take them off so I could see her eyes.

Unfortunately, I couldn't talk to her because she looked like she was having a great time with her friends and I knew I stood no chance even if I were to approach her: her friends were hovering over her like an evil spirit. My friends tried to convince me to talk to her but I was scared, I felt under-dressed in my summer shorts and a simple vest; she looked like she had just come out of the television. It was an outing with the boys so I didn't bother to change when they invited me to join them.

I wished I could kick myself for letting her go without getting her number, or her name.

A month later, when I had forgotten about her, I saw her at the mall. At first, I thought she looked familiar then it ticked in me that it's the girl of my dreams, yes, I do dream about her and imagine all the things I'd do to her if she were around. Okay, that was meant for my thoughts only.

Luckily, this time around she is alone. I want to greet her and introduce myself but I get tongue-tied. See when I get nervous my tongue fails me. Instead of greeting her, as a normal person would, I secretly follow her.

I follow her into the movie theatre, I see her buying a ticket and I wait to see which theatre number she's going to then buy the same ticket. I looked like a fool looking for her but luckily she is sitting on the second row from the door, her perfume sold her out.

I sit next to her, she looks at me and smiles, my tongue fails me again, I can't even utter 'hi'. I didn't want to watch a movie nor afford to watch one but I used my transport money, she's worth it.

I watch her laugh her lungs out during the whole Jumanji 2 'movie' and for some reason seeing her laugh warms my heart. I want to see more of her gorgeous smile.

"Do you want some popcorn?" she catches me starring at her.

She has a huge grin on her face I could stare at her all day. I want to say simple words as 'no, thank you' but I stammer and make weird sounds.

"Oh my! You don't talk...I'm so sorry," she shifts her attention back to the huge screen.

I just chuckle and continue stealing glances at her; why would she think I can't talk of all the things? I

don't like comedy I just want to be close to her. After the movie, I try to walk close to her so I can maybe greet her or get her name but she is busy talking on the phone until she disappeared into the ladies' room. I wait outside the ladies bathroom trying to look for a way that can make it seem like a coincidence that we bumped into each other again but she takes almost an hour in the bathroom.

I'm now pacing up and down outside the ladies bathroom until the security man questions if I'm waiting for someone so I lie about waiting for my sister who's in the bathroom.

I let out a sigh of relief when I see her walk out, funny she still was on the phone. Again, I follow her like a lost puppy, waiting for an opportunity to speak to her but she is on the phone the whole time. We go into Edgars together and to other shops but she is still on the phone. How much airtime does she have?

"May I help you?" Sydney catches me glaring at her, we are now at Studio and these shoes are the same price as my paycheck. "Are you following me? You are everywhere I go."

I look around and notice I'm the only one in front of her. I point at my chest with my index finger to ask if she's talking to me or on the phone but struggle to speak again.

"Oh you're the guy from the theatre," she says with so much enthusiasm. Yes, it's me but instead of saying that my mouth just hangs open, honestly, I didn't know why I'm behaving like this.

"I forgot you don't talk, do you need help? Money maybe?" she reaches into her pocket and pulls out a R100 note then hands it to me - actually she shoves it in my breast pocket and answers her phone walking away.

"Mum! Mum... I'm on my way," I watch her run towards the exit. 'I can speak.' My inner voice screams.

I chuckle by myself looking at the R100 note. Did she maybe think I'm homeless or worse do I look homeless? On the other hand, I'm glad I now have the money to go back home. I walk to the taxi rank smiling by myself replaying everything that happened in my head. I can't believe that she thinks I can't talk.

I take a taxi home, I live with my grandmother and two siblings. My father died when I was 11 years old, he worked at a mine, I never asked how he died because every time I mention him, my grandmother cries nonstop and my mother doesn't like talking about him. My mother stays in Sunnyside where she works (emakhitshini) but she visits every fortnight.

I'm turning 21 this year and I work at a tuck shop (spaza shop), I started working when I was 16. I work at the spaza shop during the day and then at the tavern, at night. The tavern is near our house, our neighbor got me the job because he owns the place. For the record I'm not a bartender, my job is to clean the tables, mop the floors and make sure there aren't any empty bottles laying around. My mother wasn't happy with me dropping out of school but someone had to take care of things around the house since the money she sends isn't enough to cater for some of my personal needs.

I get home around 3 pm that's when it ticks, I was at the mall because Granny sent me there to collect the money mother sent. I was supposed to go the previous day and I made up an excuse, the

pin expires after 48hours which means I have to go back.

Luckily, I have change from the R100 I earned for looking like I can't talk, it's just R15 to get to town. The mall is still open when I get there so I rush to the automated teller machine and withdraw the R2000 cash-send. It's for the water and electricity bill.

I put the money in my pocket and send my mother a text message telling her that I got the money, while I'm still concentrating on my phone an expensive perfume smell fills my nostrils. My mouth involuntarily curves into a smile when I turn and see the woman of my dreams walking towards me but my smile disappears when I see the worried look on her face.

Her eyes are wandering around as if she is looking for something.

"Hi, you're the guy from earlier, right? ... Uhm see... gosh, how do I say this... a bag... a small bag," she says.

I'm not sure what she's trying to say but she is also using hand gestures.



"I have no idea what you are saying."

"You can talk?" her eyes widen.

"Yes."

"Thank God, did you maybe see a black bag? I was carrying it and I don't know where I left it," she says looking around.

"A bag? No."

I did see her carrying a bag but she didn't have it when she walked out of the movie theatre. I suggest she looks there first, I have a very sharp memory.

"Is this the bag?" the security man asks.

"Yes, thank you!" she holds the bag close to her chest as if the world was going to end if she didn't get it.

That warm feeling in my heart again, maybe it's because she's smiling again.

"Thank you very much, I don't know how to thank you," she says.

"It's okay...thank you for the R100."

"I'm sorry about that, I feel stupid right now," she chuckles with her hands covering her eyes. I feel bad for taking her money too.

"I'm glad you found your bag."

"This bag belonged to my grandmother and it now belongs to my mother, I stole it and she was going to murder me if I had not found it because she warned me not to take it. I'm sorry I talk too much," she chuckles

"It's okay, I love your voice."

Jesus, did I just say that?

"Weird but thanks," she answers. She has the prettiest smile ever.

"Keith! I'm Keith."

"Okay, bye," she says walking away.

"Aren't you going to tell me your name?"

"It's not like we are going to meet again," she answers, still wearing a smile. She walks away.

[#Sydney](#) and Keith's story

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## Chapter 1

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

When I get home, it's already dark and I hate lying to my grandmother but I know she'll start with her 2hour speech if I tell her that I was delayed by a girl. She doesn't want to hear the word 'girlfriend' according to her having a girlfriend leads to unwanted great-grandchildren that she's not ready for so I make sure I keep all my relationships a secret.

After giving Granny the money, I head to my room to prepare for work; I'm not doing much just changing my shoes and grabbing a jacket, I bathed in the morning so I'm still fine. I look at myself in the mirror brushing my hair thinking about the girl of my dreams, the one I met at the mall. I can't seem to get her smile out of my head, how I wish to see her face one more time and maybe get her name this time.

"Why are you smiling by yourself?"

When I look behind me it's my little sister Mbalenhle, she is 6 years younger than me. I have two sisters, the youngest is Sihle she's 9 years younger than me.

"Don't you knock and why are you here?"

“Remember you promised to give me money for my school trip, tomorrow is the last day to make the payment.”

“How much is the school trip again?” I ask.

“R350...”

I open my tiny wardrobe and reach into one of my church blazers. I wanted to buy myself a new pair of shoes (sneakers) with the money but it'll have to wait.

“Thank you, thank you! I promise I will clean your room for a month,” she jumps up and down after I hand her the money.

“And wash my sneakers?”

“Anything you want... thank you very much,” she hugs me.

“Just don't show Sihle the money because that's all I have.”

“I won't... thank you,” she rushes out, I know she's going to tell her and Sihle is also going to want money also.

I put on a jacket and head to work which is next door, the other stuff is already there; the ones that work during the day. I greet them and go to the back to start with Bab'Dlamini's office, he always has empty beer bottles lying around in his office and there's always a bra from one of his girlfriends which I find funny because he is married yet everyone knows about his womanizer side.

I sweep around and toss the pink bra in a box where I put the other bras I always find when cleaning. I wonder why these women never come back for their bras or worse how does one even leave a bra behind?

After a while, the noises start getting louder meaning the place is now packed and people have knocked off from their work. There's nothing as refreshing as a cold beer after a long day at work. I put on my headphones and continue organizing the empty bottles. When I'm done I go outside for a smoke, I can see granny and Mbali in the kitchen from the tavern that's how close it is. After a couple of minutes, I see the lights switching off meaning they are going to bed; they have gotten used to the noises from the tavern.

I quickly turn when I smell an expensive perfume, I don't know why I'm thinking of the girl from the mall. It's a woman who looks like she's in her early thirties, she's wearing heels and I can tell she's struggling to walk on the soil with them.

"Hello!" she stands in front of me, did she bathe with her perfume because that's a little too much perfume.

"Hello ma!"

"I'm not that old," she takes off her sunglasses which I don't see the use of wearing in the dark.

"Is Mr Dlamini in?" she has an English accent.

"He's in his office."

"Thanks," from the looks of it she already knows where Bab'Dlamini's office is, I watch her walk away until she disappears.

I smell myself checking if the woman left some of her perfume on me because I can still smell it but this one is different; still smells expensive but different. I almost faint when someone tabs me on the shoulder.

My eyes widen, I think I'm daydreaming again.

"Are you having a heart attack?" says a voice.

She's ever-smiling only if she knew what her smile does to my insides.

I shake my head, I'm being weird again.

"Are there any lavatories around here?"

What are lavatories before I make a fool of myself again? I don't know why I freeze when around this girl (the girl from the mall)

"What?"

"The toilets!" she adds.

"Yes, the toilets are at the back but trust me you wouldn't want to go there."

"I could use a bathroom right now," she cannot even standstill.

"I live next door you can just use the one at my house if you want."

"Yes, please!" she smiles.

I lead her to my house, granny is sleeping so it shouldn't be a problem and I know the one at my house is cleaner. Granny is very strict about the

toilet and keeping it clean well she's strict about everything.

I switch on the kitchen lights and ask her to walk in first.

"Your house is lovely," she says looking around.

"This way," I show her the bathroom and wait for her in the kitchen debating on whether to offer her something to drink when she comes out.

"Thank you very much," she utters walking into the kitchen.

"You're welcome do you want something to drink?"

"No... but thank you," she smiles.

Before we would walk out granny walks into the kitchen, "Keith! You're bringing your girlfriends in the house now?"

"No, she just needed to use the toilet."

"Don't they have a toilet where she lives? Please don't tell me you two slept together the two minutes I went to bed," she mutters sullenly.

"I just used the bathroom gogo I swear I don't even know his name," the girl who refused to tell me her name answers.

"Do I look stupid to you two, so you just followed someone you don't know? Keith do I look stupid to you," she yells

"It's not what you think... I was just helping her and I have to go back to work before Bab'Dlamini notices I'm not there."

"No one is going anywhere... you two sit down and tell me what you were doing or I'll have to beat it out of you two." she's not joking!

"Gogo like I said she just wanted to use the bathroom," I repeat.

"What's your name little girl?" Gogo asks

"Sydney.... Ziphozenkosi Sydney Nxumalo!" she looks down playing with her hands

"How long have you known Keith?"

"Honestly, I just met him now. I don't even live around here, I came with my mother to see Mr Dlamini and I needed to use the bathroom so your grandson offered I use the one at your house," she answers still looking down.

Gogo shakes her head. "You two think I'm stupid huh! I was once your age you know. Wait here, I'm calling your mother."

Gogo leaves the room to get her phone.

"You can go I'll try and talk to her," I whisper to Sidney.

"Will you be fine though?"

"Yes... I know how to handle her," I answer

"Thanks and I'm sorry for getting you in trouble."

"It's okay, do you live around here because I saw you earlier today?" I ask.

"Saw me where?"

"At the mall," I say and she looks confused.

"At the movies, I was sitting next to you."

I hope she doesn't find me weird anymore.



“Oh, that was you... you look different and you smell like weed.”

Funny gogo never came back; Sidney and I kept talking instead of her leaving because my grandmother was going to beat us up. We exchanged phone numbers although she made it clear that she did not want a relationship but to me, that meant she didn't have a boyfriend and I had a 50% chance to get her if I were to play my cards right.

#KEITH & SYDNEY'S STORY Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

I rub my left sweaty hand against my trousers under the table and hold the menu with my right hand. I don't know why I'm so nervous or maybe it's because I like her- scratch that, I love her and by her I mean Sydney. I managed to contact her via WhatsApp, she had forgotten about me but I made sure I reminded her. It was the most awkward 5 minutes of my life trying to explain to

her that I'm the weird boy she thought was homeless.

I asked to take her out for ice cream since she's hardly online and never picks up her phone. Luckily, she agreed but what I didn't know is that the ice cream would be this expensive. I borrowed R50 from one of my friends, he gave me a R100 note and told me to bring back his R50 change but I doubt there'll be any change. Ice cream shouldn't be this expensive.

"Have you decided what you want to order?" the waitress smiles at us.

I swallow hard and curse under my breath as Sydney orders the most expensive one. I think I'll order water because this R100 isn't enough for the both of us.

"And you sir?" the waitress shifts her attention to me.

A sweat drops from my head. "Uhm..."

"He'll have the same," Sydney rescues me.

I watch as the waitress walks away. "Look Sydney... I don't think I can afford that."



I feel so embarrassed right now.

“My cousin owns the place so I don’t pay here,” she smiles.

“Your cousin owns this place?”

She nods, “So don’t worry about the bill.”

Thank God because it was going to be something trying to explain not having enough money but at the same time I’m very embarrassed I mean I invited her here now I can’t even afford to pay.

Her phone is on the table vibrating nonstop and she’s not even attending to it, she’s focused on me and she’s looking into my eyes making me blush which is so wrong because I should make her blush not the other way around. My palms are sweating like crazy. Are the heaters on? I’m sweating in my pants.

Sydney exhales heavily. “So what do you do?”

“I work at a spaza shop and part-time at the tavern.”

She nods with a smile, “That’s great!”

“What do you do?”

"I don't work," she answers without hesitating.

This girl is staring at me too much so I look at my sweaty hands. She should look away and let me look at her first.

"My eyes are up here Keith," she chuckles

I lift my eyes and glared into hers, my heart is beating rapidly. My eyes shift from her eyes to her lips, I would love to kiss those lips.

"You're being weird again," she snaps me out of my thoughts.

"Sorry."

Luckily the waitress brings our ice cream and we dig in while I'm stealing glances at Sydney. A simple thing as licking her ice cream spoon is having me lose my mind.

"Who do you stay with?" Sydney asks.

"My grandmother and two siblings"

"Where are your parents?" she questions. This is so wrong, I should be the one asking these questions.

"My mother works in Sunnyside and my father died."

"I'm so sorry," she puts down her spoon and gives me a sad look as if she understands what it's like to lose a parent.

"Where are your parents?"

"At home," she sighs and that sigh speaks volumes.

The waitress walks up to up with some black small book and places it next to me. She has a huge smile on her face I don't know if that's her actual smile or it's mandatory. Sydney grabs the book before I could utter a word and fish for something in her bag. She pulls out a maroon clutch bag and takes out a R200 note then puts it in the book and waves it in the air.

The waitress comes running and takes it smiling at Sydney who tells her to keep the change. I feel bad right now, I couldn't even pay for ice cream. Sydney on the other hand is talking as if she did not just pay for us. I just have to accept defeat; I can't afford this girl and she did say she doesn't want a relationship.

“Do you want to watch a movie?”

Kill me!

“I have tickets,” she waves them, at least there’s no paying. I insist on buying the popcorn which is also expensive but at least it didn’t exceed R50.

We are watching a comedy movie again and man does this girl laugh. As I said, I’m not a fan of comedy movies so I’m just staring at her the whole time while my heart does flips whenever she cracks into laughter. After about 2 hours the movie is over and we head out.

“Did you have fun?”

She nods with a smile.

“I have to go to work, I asked one of my sisters to hold in for me,” I say.

“Won’t you get in trouble though?”

“My boss stays far and he usually calls when coming,” I answer.

“I had fun Keith thank you.”

“I had fun too,” I smile.

She hugs me, “Thanks, today was fun.”

When she lets go I smell like her. She requests an uber and insists on dropping me off at my workplace first before going home.

"Thanks Mbali!" I say as soon as I get to the shop.

"You smell amazing."

"Sydney hugged me, no one looked for me right?" I ask.

"No, now can I have my R10?"

She agreed to stand in for me at a price, nothing is for free in the Manzini family. I check if Sydney is online and she's not but I leave her a text message asking if she got home safe. I keep looking at her picture smiling by myself, I want to tell her that I like her but I don't think I can afford her lifestyle of buying ice cream worth R200.

\*\*\*\* Ziphozenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

"You're late!" Mam'Sophia says as soon as I storm into the kitchen.

"Did she look for me?"

"No, but hurry and go change," she answers.

I kiss her on the cheek and rush to my room. I quickly take off the jeans and tank top then put on a black knee-length dress with black block heels, my mother makes me wear them even when at home.

“Zipho!” mother yells. I shove my phone under my pillow. “Hey baby, how are you?”

“I’m fine thanks and yourself?”

“Long day... I was in the township I don’t think I can stand the smell of sweat the whole day,” she rolls her eyes.

“I’m sure it wasn’t that bad.”

She cups my face, “Why don’t you have any makeup on?”

“I wanted to go natural today.”

“No! You have to look beautiful all the time and Cullen is here to see you,” she adds.

“Mum, did you have to bring him?”

“Cullen is your future husband and you shouldn’t give him attitude now put on makeup and go meet him,” she says. Yes, I have a husband at 18.

“Why am I not allowed to choose a man for myself?”

“I’m your mother and I know what’s best for you. I don’t want you to be with a man who won’t afford to give you the life you deserve so it’s my job to make sure you get a rich and handsome man,” she makes me sit in front of the dressing table and starts applying makeup on my face.

“Does it matter what he has? His love should be enough.”

“Love doesn’t bring food to the table keep that in mind. Cullen is rich and handsome, you’ll have the best life and beautiful children,” she jeers.

“Mum please, I’m 18 can we not talk about kids?”

My father enters the room, I quickly stand up to hug him.

“I’m still fixing your makeup Zipho,” mother scolds.

“Dad please tell her I don’t need makeup.”

“She doesn’t need to makeup, she already has a pretty face”- father

“I don’t want you bringing home those broke township boys so come and let me finish your make-up so you can go see Cullen.”

Cullen’s parents and mine are friends so they want us to get married so that we keep the family business going. Arranged marriage in this century! Honestly, I don’t even like Cullen but that’s what my mother wants and I don’t want to disappoint her.

[#SydneyandKeith’sstory](#)

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### Chapter 3

\*\*\*\* Ziphozenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

Many people envy my life, they give me titles like Princess Zipho, daddy’s little girl, spoilt brat. To begin with, I never asked to be born into a rich family. In addition, they don’t have the right to think everything is okay in my life because it’s not. I have a mother who is already planning a wedding for me with a man I don’t even love; a man that doesn’t love me either. My parents and Cullen’s are the ones who pushed us to be together but Cullen



made it clear that he doesn't like me and he's only with me for his parents.

I'm also doing it for my parents, see my parents are respected in our town and I wouldn't want to disrespect their wishes so I do whatever my mother wants. I make sure I stay in shape and pretty as she wants. She wakes me up at 4 in the morning for my workout routine, puts me on diets and makes me wear dresses and heels that I hate

Honestly, I just need a break, I want to be able to do what I want when I want to. I want to be able to eat junk food without being worried about getting fat. I want to go out, go back home late and get grounded like children my age but I can't because I have to think about the family's status in everything I do.

I finished my matric a year ago, I wanted to continue with my studies and maybe become a doctor but my mother wouldn't let me. She says working is for the poor and that I don't need to work since I'll have a rich man who'll take care of me.

"Please change that dress, it makes you look fat," mother utters after applying makeup on my face.

Cullen is here to see me, my mother called him; again.

"I love this dress Mam' Sophie got it for my birthday."

Mam'Sophie is our helper, she's the only person who understands me and I love her. She's been in our family my whole life since my parents love travelling, she practically raised me.

"Sophia has bad fashion sense," Mother says perusing in my wardrobe and picking out a white strapless long dress then hands it to me, I wear it and flush a smile.

"Turn," she waves her index finger in the air in circles.

"Can I go now?"

"You look good you can go," the queen approves.

I grab the phone under the pillow and head to the sitting room. Cullen is talking to my father so I pass by and go to the kitchen to get myself some water.

"Are you okay?" Mam'Sophie asks.

"I'm not but hey I'm not allowed to have feelings in this house."

"Hey, don't talk like that about your mother. She loves you and wants the best for you," she says drying the dishes.

"I just want to be free, pursue my dreams and do what I love I don't want to be with Cullen he's so rude."

"Come on now... Cullen is a very nice boy," she answers.

Nice to them. Cullen is the rudest person I have ever met, I am spoiled but Cullen takes the cup. I take out my phone and send my friend a text message to meet me at the mall before joining my father and Cullen luckily he (Cullen is 23) was now alone.

"Let's go," I say

He stands up and pulls down his shirt before walking out. He doesn't greet, I'm used to it now. When I get into the car he has already started the engine. We drive out and I put on my headsets, he drops me off at the mall and gives me his card before driving away.

That's how we do things, he pretends to be taking me out yet we wouldn't be together again we are doing it for our parents so he drops me off at the mall and goes to do God knows what then comes to pick me up later on. Our parents will be thinking that we are on a date, getting to know each other.

I hate Cullen and he hates me so the sooner our parents accept that, the better. The worst part is that I get to have the best day but not post about it on social media. I have to post my boyfriend whom I love very much; I hate my life.

"Zipho!" my friends' wave from afar.

I rush to them, Cleo already has a bag with a pair of jeans and sneakers for me. We go to the ladies bathroom where I change, these dresses are very uncomfortable I don't know how my mother does it.

"So what do you guys want to do, Cullen gave me his card," I wave it.

"How I wish had a boyfriend that spoils me like yours," Cleo utters

I smile, only if they knew. We do some shopping then watch movies. Keith keeps messaging me, he

seems like a nice person but I already have a boyfriend and my future planned out for me. My mother would die before she even let me have dinner with a township boy.

I love how he gets nervous around me though. I wish to have that feeling, having the butterflies and smiling when thinking about someone the last time I was in love was with Melusi and my mother made sure I broke up with him since he wasn't from a rich family.

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*

I tried to forget about Sydney but I can't, I find myself looking at her profile picture. I find myself texting her although she hardly replies. She's hardly online and it is very hard to strike a conversation with her. I have tried to convince myself that she's out of my league but I can't stop thinking about her brown eyes and how soft her skin will be when I touch it not forgetting how I have kissed her countless times in my dreams.

I've been holding my phone for hours debating on whether I should call her or not. I want to see her face but I know the only way I can see her is when

I invite her for lunch we all know how girls are busy when one wants to see them.

I'm not working today and granny is not around, she went to visit my mother in Sunnyside along with my sisters so it's just me at the house for the next 5 days. I close my eyes and press the dial button with my fingers crossed that she doesn't answer because I don't think I'm ready to talk to her, I know I will stammer and make weird noises.

I don't know why she has so much effect on me I mean I have been in love before but with Sydney, I just make a fool of myself.

"Hello." her voice is soft and low.

I swallow hard thinking about what to say next.

"Keith are you there?"

I feel my blood rushing to my stomach I think I'm coming out with diarrhoea. What do I say? God, why is this happening to me, my mouth is open but nothing is coming out.

"Hi!" my voice is high like someone who just hit the corner of a window with their elbow.

"How are you?"

"I'm good and yourself?" breath Keith you've talked to girls before.

"I'm great...can I help?"

"Uhm... I wanted to ask if you're busy maybe we can grab lunch... if you can't make it; it's okay I mean you're a very busy person I would understand... We can have anything you want I'll pay... so... what do you say?" I silently curse realizing how stupid I sound.

She laughs. I don't know if that's good or bad

"Keith calm down I don't bite."

"I'm sorry, I don't know why I'm like this but would you love to grab lunch?"

She exhales heavily. "I would love to but we can't hang out in public."

"Why not?"

"That's the only way you can see me," she answers.

"I'm home alone you can come if you're comfortable."

“Okay but just for a short time,” she asks for my address then tells me she’ll call me when outside my house. I run around the house putting everything in order. What do I offer her to drink? What if she says she’s hungry? What do I do?

I almost faint when she texts she’s outside my house. When I get out the neighbors are already outside, maybe this was a bad idea. I know they have already called granny, the car she came with my God what have I gotten myself into? I’m expecting her to get out at the back but she comes out from the driver’s side.

“You can drive?”

She chuckles, “Who doesn’t know how to drive in this century?”

I can’t!

[#Keith](#)&Sydney’sstory

Chapter 4

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

“Your grandmother is not around right?” Sydney chuckles entering the house.



“Trust me I wouldn’t have let you in if she was,” I nervously chuckle then offer Sydney a seat. Her phone keeps ringing but she’s ignoring it.

“Aren’t you going to answer that?” I question rubbing my palms against my trousers, they are sweating; I’m also sweating.

“It’s not important... so you wanted to see me, here I am,” she shrugs with a huge smile on her face.

I chuckle looking down, I’m not bold as she is and my heart is beating fast right now not to mention I feel the need to pee. What is this feeling? I have fallen in love with other girls before, so crazy in love that I wanted to marry at 19 but this girl is different. I smile like a retarded person when I think about her. She’s all I think and dream about. No matter how much I try to forget about her I find myself thinking about her.

I stand up and excuse myself to get something to drink for Sydney, maybe I shouldn’t have brought Kingsley (fizzy drink) maybe she only drinks 100% fruit juice. Only if she had let me take her out at least at an eatery there’s a menu to choose from.

"Hey... what is taking so long?" Sydney startles me entering the kitchen and I accidentally spill the juice on the floor

" I am so sorry."

"It's oak, I'm clumsy... what do you want to drink?"- Me

"Water would be fine thank you," she smiles already grabbing a glass from the dishes that are in the sink, I've been meaning to dry them and put them back in the cupboard. She pours herself water from the tap.

I quickly grab the mop and wipe the wet tiles before putting the mop back outside so it can dry. We go back to the sitting room and I offer her some of my grandmother's home made cookies but she turns them down saying she's fine.

"So why did you call me?" she questions as we sit on the couch, she brought her water with her.

"Well.... honestly, I just wanted to see you."

She nods lightly tucking her braids behind her ear.  
"And why do you want to see me?"

Because I very much love her but she scares me;  
okay breath Keith don't start being weird

"I can't stop thinking about you and I think I have feelings for you," I rub my sweating hands together. Why is God punishing me like this, I'm never like this around girls. Is this payback for not paying my tithe last month?

She chuckles. "You think?"

"Okay Sydney, I have feelings for you."

She exhales heavily. "I hear you Keith and you seem like a very nice guy although too shy for my liking but unfortunately I have a boyfriend."

"Of course you have one," I mumble

"Pardon?"

"I'm saying you do I mean look at you... you're gorgeous," I whisper

"Okay! I have to get going before my mother sends a search party but thanks for wanting to see me..." she chuckles already heading towards the door.

"Can we at least be friends?"

"For your safety no... My mother would make your life a living hell so stay away from me," she answers opening the door, it's now raining outside.

"So you came from your place just to tell me to stay away?"

"Yes! I also needed to get out of the house...do you maybe have an umbrella?" she questions.

I shake my head.

"Great! Now I have to wait," she sits back down and I switch on the TV.

"What do you want to watch?"

"I'm not a fan of the television mostly because I don't get the chance to watch it," she answers

"Why not?"

"Trust me you wouldn't understand," she replies.

"Try me."

"My parents think the television is full of lies and that everything is staged so there's no need to watch that." Wow, she's serious.

"Well, the news isn't staged?"

She chuckles. "We do watch that but mostly I read books. Educational books, not magazines."

"But you have the internet right?"

"Like I said it's complicated," she smiles.

I smile back and look at her, more like looking at her lips. How I wish to kiss those lips...

"You're being weird again," she snaps me out of my thoughts.

"I'm sorry."

She checks the time on her phone, "I seriously need to get home but I can't afford to go out in the rain and risk getting a cold my mother would kill me."

"Come on it's not like being sick is something you ask for."

"You haven't met my mother she will blame me for not keeping warm plus tomorrow is Saturday and she needs to show me off to..." she pauses and smiles. I think she realized that she is now sharing too much information.

"Let's watch a movie while we wait for the rain to stop," I suggest and she nods in agreement. We

browse through the TV channels reading the information about the movies until we find one Sydney agrees on.

"Are you cold?" I ask

She nods. I rush to my room and get one of my favorite jackets and give it to her.

"Thanks Keith," she smiles, we watch the movie. More like she was watching the movie and I was watching her.

"Tell me, how old are you" she shifts her attention to me. She is not a fan of television.

\*\*\*\* Ziphozenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

(Still at Keith's house)

"My age... I'm 21 what about you?" Keith says rubbing his hands against his trouser. I don't know why he does that

"I'm 18."

He chokes on his saliva, "You're 18?"

"Yeah, how old did you think I am?"

"Well, you're driving... I thought maybe you were my age or a year younger," he utters.

"Anyone can drive Keith no matter what age."

"Shouldn't you be in school?" he questions

"I should ask you the same."

"I don't have the money, what's your excuse..." he pauses and smiles I'm sure he's replaying his statement in his head.

"Looks like the rain stopped, I should get going," I stand up

He walks me out of the house.

"Thanks for coming Sydney."

"Why do you call me Sydney I hate that?" I say standing by the car door.

"Well, it's your name."

"It's a boy name and I hate me."

Whoever gave it to me must have hated me.

"Sorry I'll try and call you Ziphozenkosi."

"It's okay, you can call me whatever you want....  
bye Keith at least I had the time to get out of the house". I get into the car

"Will I ever see you again?"

"I doubt," I smile starting the car.

I say my goodbyes and drive home. I almost faint when I see my mother's car parked outside our house when I get home. I get out of the trying to think of an excuse to tell her because she will murder me. I quickly call the girls to check if they talked to her and they say she called looking for me and they tried calling me but couldn't reach me.

There wasn't any network where I was. I take a deep breath and walk into the house, I find my mother sitting on the couch with her legs crossed sipping on whiskey, she's never home by this time. She'll be out with her friends talking about what goes down in their bedrooms.

"Mum!" I stand with my back against the door

"Where are you coming from?" she asks calmly.

"For a drive."

"Really... where?" her voice is still calm.

"I just needed to clear my head that's all."

"Why are you wearing that hideous jacket?" she questions.



"I was cold and..."

I pause as she walks up to me with her glass in her hands.

"Take it off," she commands

I quickly do as told

"Are you dating a township boy again?" she holds the jacket as if it's something disgusting

"No! Of course not."

"Do you know that Cullen was here looking for you? You were supposed to go out with him today..." she throws the jacket on the floor.

"I'm sorry, I will make it up to him"

"Cullen is a good boy and you better make sure you keep him interested in you, are we clear?" she utters

"Yes, mum."

"Good now call him and apologize" she hands me her phone she calls Mam'Sophie and tells her to burn Keith's jacket

I call Cullen (using mother's phone) who answers right away.

"Good afternoon Mrs Nxumalo!" he speaks politely.

"It's Zipho."

"You...what do you want?" he's back to his rude self.

"I want to apologize for today and my mother sends her greetings," that's our signal when our parents are listening or we are about to put the phone on speaker.

I put the phone on speaker...

"It's okay my love don't worry about it."- Cullen

"I'll make it up to you... lunch tomorrow? My treat."

"I'll come to pick you up," he says.

"Okay bye."

"Bye, and I can't wait to see your pretty face... I love you," he says before hanging up.

I give my mother her phone back.

"See Cullen loves you and I know you were in the township," she says.

"I'm sorry it won't happen again."

“Go wear something warm,” she commands and I nod before leaving for my room.

[#Sydney](#)&Keith’sstory

Chapter 5

\*\*\*\* Ziphozenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

“Hi Sydney! I hope you got home safe.” I read the message from my phone then block the contact and delete the chat.

I might as well accept that my life has been planned out for me and that I’ll be Mrs Cullen Dube soon. Although I enjoyed being around Keith or maybe I just liked how he got nervous and stammered when around me. He seems like a very nice person, very hard working he just needs a stable job to make my mother’s list of perfect husband.

I would have loved to give him a chance but with my mother, I don’t see it happening. I don’t want to be with Cullen especially when he isn’t afraid to show me that he doesn’t care about me. I remember this one time he came to pick me up with some girl (his girl) and lied to my mother saying it’s his cousin.

I tried exposing him to my mother but she called me a liar and that I'm just looking for a way to break things off. On the other hand, Cullen's mother is a very lovely woman but I can't say the same about the father. It's funny how the opposites attract for example my parents; I have no idea how my father fell for my mother because they are the total opposite.

Sometimes I find myself wishing my father had married Cullen's mother instead.

"Dinner's ready," mother calls standing by my bedroom door.

"One second."

"What's with the long face?" she walks in.

"Nothing just finished watching a sad video online."

Shit! I forgot the internet is fake. "Cullen sent it to me," I add because I know she'll start with the lecture.

"So what do you two talk about when together?"

This conversation would have been fun if we were talking about a man I love.

"We just talk about random stuff you know, the kind of things people in a relationship talk about," I force a smile

"Have he ever tried touch you maybe... you know like people who have been together for more than 6 months now?"

I give her the confused look. "Mum what are you saying?"

"I mean sex... has he ever tried to sleep with you?"

She didn't just ask that, "No! Why would he?"

"Cullen is a man and he has needs."

"Mum I'm 18," I get off the bed

"So? You're going to be his wife soon and if he doesn't get it from you he'll look for it elsewhere."

"Mam'Sophie told me to wait until I'm ready and that if a man loves me he will wait for me," I fold my arms.

"Sophia is a maid she doesn't know anything about men because if she did she'll have one."

"She cares about me and I will wait until I'm ready. Sorry mum but this is very uncomfortable..."

we've already been taught about sex at school and Mam'Sophie told me some of the other stuff so I'm good," I put on my shoes and get ready to head out

"So in other words you love Sophia more than your mother?" she questions. I didn't even say that.

"Zipho I raise you for 18 years and you choose a maid over your mother?"

"Mum I didn't mean it like that. There's something I want to tell you," I smile, I have to try and keep her in a happy mood. My mother has a heart problem that she uses to emotionally blackmail me.

She sighs. "What do you want to tell me?"

"When I was...clearing my head earlier, I couldn't stop thinking about Cullen"

The smile on her face widens. "You have no idea how long I've waited for this moment. Tell me everything."

"I love how he calls me Sidney, I hate being called that but when he does it I get butterflies in my stomach, his voice makes me smile like a retarded person. It has only been a couple of days... I mean

months but I can't stop thinking about him. He gets nervous when he's around me and it's fun to watch although I don't make it obvious that I'm falling for him but I think I am."

The smile on my mother's face is priceless. "My baby is in love," she hugs me

"Mum, I have a question?"

"Yes," she's still holding me in her arms.

"What if Cullen was to wake up broke?"

"What?" she frowns.

"What I'm trying to say is that, does his money and what he has or his background matter. I mean as long as he loves me right?"

She cups my face. "I'll pretend this you didn't say that you will never marry a broke man. Who will pay the bills and give you the life you deserve?"

She kisses my forehead and heads out. I followed her soon after, we have dinner quiet as always. We might have the money but one thing is for sure there's no happiness in this house. My phone buzzes on my lap and it's a text message from a

number I don't recognize. I open the message making sure my mother doesn't notice.

"You blocked me, did I do something wrong? If I did then I'm sorry, I didn't mean to come on too strong. Have a good night."

The message reads.

"It's Keith sorry." another one follows soon after.

"I'll call before I go to bed," I reply.

.....

"So I was talking to Cullen's father and the moment you two get married we are going to put the family company in your names." mother utters.

How great for all of us.

"If we get married mum," I mumble

She gives me the look. I look down and focus on my food. We eat then mum goes to bed first.

"I'm going to bed," I say to my father.

"How are things going with Cullen?"

"Not bad," I sit back down

"Does he treat you right?"



I nod.

"Now is the chance to change your mind remember you're not marrying for us Zipho... I want you to be sure because I want you to be happy, it doesn't matter what your mother says or thinks if you don't like Cullen I can call off this whole thing."

I swallow hard debating on whether to tell him or not. Knowing my father, if I tell him about Cullen's behaviour he'll break off the whole 'combining our businesses' thing. My mother would lose it and I don't want my parents fighting because of me.

"I love Cullen and I'm sure," I smile.

"I hate that boy," he shakes his head and leaves the room.

I hate him (Cullen) too

I pass by Mam'Sophie's room so say good night, I just love her for some reason we have this connection that I can't explain. She's the one who taught me about boys and God.

"See you tomorrow Mam'Sophie," I say, we just finished praying and it's now my queue to leave.

"Here's your jacket."

"Oh my, thank you for not burning it." I don't know how I was going to explain this to Keith

I leave for my room, bath then gets under the covers it's just 8 pm we sleep early around here. I take out my phone and unblock Keith.

"Hey Sydney!" Keith answers the phone and the smile on my face reaches my ears.

"Hi, how are you?"

"I'm okay... I'm sorry if I was too weird today," he says.

"It's okay and that's not the reason why I blocked you; it's just that we can't be friends."

"Why not!" he questions and I could feel the worry in his tone.

"It's complicated and I have a boyfriend."

"I just want us to be friends; just friends," he pleads

"I'm not allowed to..."

He interrupts, "To have friends that are out of your league? Poor friends?"

I don't respond.

"It's okay I understand... it was nice knowing you Sydney," he says in a low tone.

"Keith I..."

"Don't worry about it...bye!" he hangs up

I put my phone on the charger and get under the covers. For some reason I feel bad for Keith, I can't even sleep I can feel his pain. Yes, I might have never been in his situation but I feel bad. I try calling him but he rejects my calls and texted me that he is fine.

I view his status that he has recently updated; "If only I had money..."

[#SydneyandKeith'sstory](#)

\*

Chapter 6

\*\*\*\* Ziphokenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

I sigh and sip on my tea, this is all too much for me. The dresses, the makeup, the fake smiles; I can not do it anymore. I feel like I'm suffocating. All I want is to have my freedom; there I said it MY FREEDOM. I'm not happy because everything I do I do is for my parents and our reputation. What

about me? What about what I want to do? It is my life after all.

Funny how everyone always compliments me on how I'm such a good girl, pretty and have a great body but all this comes at a prize. Diets, pills, workouts and injections.

I let out another loud sigh and my mother looks at me, that look only a mother can pull but I look aside and pretend not to see her.

"Do you want some scones Zipho?" Matilda asks, she's my mother's 'friend' they pretend to like each other but they don't which I don't understand why they still visit each other and have a laugh together as if all is well.

I smile at Matilda then look at my mother who is looking everywhere except at me; when she does that I know it means no.

"No thanks Ma, I'm full" I smile wryly.

"You hardly ate Zipho!"

"I'm full... thank you," I stand up and excuse myself. I have been at Matilda's more than my age and I know this place like the back of my hand.

I head to the bathroom, seems that's the only place I can be free. I take out my phone and look at Keith's contact, his status broke my heart. I debate on whether to call him or not. I end up talking to Cleo on WhatsApp.

I tell her about Keith but make her vow to keep the secret between us. I have never told the girls about my relationship with Cullen being fake. Cullen and I agreed to keep it a secret; the fewer people who know the better and that way when the information leaks we know who did. If it's not me then it means it's him; right?

"Let's be realistic Zipho your mother will never accept your relationship with this guy plus you're going to marry Cullen so spare the poor guy heartbreak and just stick to Cullen," Cleo states (over the phone) I'm still in the bathroom.

"Why does life have to be so unfair?"

"What is it about this guy anyways I mean why the hell would you want to be with a broke man?" she questions.

"I'm not after money Cleo; he's a nice person and I like him."

"Nice won't get your hair done baby girl. At least Cullen spoils you and I thought you love Cullen what happened? Why the sudden change of heart." she sounds very curious but I promised to not tell anyone.

"Maybe I'm just confused..."

"Take my advice friend and forget about this Keith of yours if he's still working at a tuck shop then stick to Cullen. Cullen has money and he can take care of you," she says

"You sound like my mother."

"Think of your children babe, you wouldn't want your kids you grow up suffering don't you?" she adds.

"I don't know what you ate today but you're worsening my situation... bye!"

"Until your Keith person wins a lotto or gets a paying job just stick to Mr Dube," she hangs up.

I leave the bathroom and go sit by the garden, I need some air and this dress my mother made me wear is too tight.

“Only if I had money!” I can see the words in my head. I can’t seem to un-see those words either. Only if he had money maybe things would have been different, maybe we could have given ourselves a try.

Wait! Only if he had money!

I quickly take out my phone and call Cullen;

“Yes, what is it?” he says followed by a sigh.

“Send me a text message asking to see me, I want to go somewhere.”

“Okay,” he hangs up.

I show my mother the message Cullen sent. I don’t know why she agrees to everything Cullen asks for. I rush home to change, we live 2 houses away from Matilda. I wash off my makeup as soon as I get home and change into jeans, a crop top and sneakers then drive to my father’s workplace. He owns an Investment firm.

“Good morning Mr Nxumalo!” I say as I walk into my father’s office; he’s on a call so I wave and sit opposite him waiting for him to get off the phone.

“Is everything okay?” he puts the landline down and gives me all his attention.

“Yes, why?”

“You never come here,” he takes off his glasses and starts wiping them clean although they already are.

“Let’s say I’ve never had a reason to... I’ll go straight to the point, the last time I checked you were looking for an assistant and if I remember correctly you said you wanted someone young and active.”

“What are you on about Zipho?”

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

I never knew having money matters in a relationship until Sydney couldn’t be friends with me because I’m not `rich. I would be lying if I say I’m not bruised. God knows I try to work as hard as I can but nothing seems to be coming out alright. Yes, I’m thankful for what I have but I like Sydney and I’m hurt that I can’t be friends with her because of my status. I know she meant well but still, that had me looking at the man in the mirror.



"Your phone is ringing," Mbali snaps me out of my thoughts. I check my phone and it's a number I don't recognize.

"Hello," I answer slowly.

"Good Afternoon Mr Manzini, how are you?" a sweet woman's voice utters on the other end.

"I'm good thanks and yourself?"

"I'm good, this is Thandeka from Nxumalo Holdings I'm calling to tell you that you got the job. Can you come by our offices today, at noon?" her tone is firm yet sweet.

"I don't know what you're talking about I think you got the wrong number."

"This is Keith Manzini right?" she asks. "If you are Keith then it's the right person. You got the job, I'll email the address to our offices and don't forget to bring a copy of your I.D. Thank you, have a great day!" with that she hangs up.

Is this a joke or worse a scam and I can't go because I'm at work. I'm confused because I have never sent out any of my CVs. Yes, I printed them out but... this has to be a mistake.

"Hello, how much is a bottle of water?" says a lady's voice.

"R7..." I answer without looking at the person, when I lift my eyes its ' Sydney. "Hi! What are you doing here?"

"I was passing by and I thought I could get myself some water."

I grab the water and hand it to her. "It's on me."

"Thanks, but I want to pay."

I sigh and take the R10 bill then give her change.

"How's work going?" she asks.

"Work is great thank you for asking."

"Are you okay you don't seem fine?" she questions.

I exhale heavily. "I received a call from a number I don't recognize; I got a job."

"That's great news you should be happy."

"But I didn't even apply for it," I answer.

"You know God works in mysterious ways... why don't you just go and check it out who knows

maybe you sent the CV a long time ago and you have forgotten.”

“But I’m working...” I say

“I can hold in for you if you want,” she smiles.

I laugh as if she can handle a tuck shop. “No, you can’t do that.”

“Then what are you going to do?”

“I don’t know, I won’t go... the address is far,” I say after checking my phone; the Thandeka lady sent the address.

“Who’s that behind you?” she points at Mbali

“My little sister, Mbali.”

“Hey Mbali come here,” she calls Mbali who rolls her eyes before asking what Sydney wants.

“Do you know how to serve customers?” Sydney asks her.

“I can but I’m not holding in for Keith if that’s what you’re asking.”- Mbali

“Not even for R100?”

Mbali smiles. “Only if he comes back early.”

"Let's go Keith. I won't let you miss this opportunity, I'll be your uber lady today," Sydney tells.

"I can't go to an interview like this and I didn't even do laundry." I'm not prepared.

"Please come this side," I go out the back and meet Sydney in her car. "What's wrong?"

"I don't trust this job thing, it could be a scam even if it was legit I think they got the wrong person."

"Just give it a try you can never know maybe this is God working miracles," she responds.

"Won't you get in trouble with your mother for being with me now?"

"I was buying my water and I bumped into it's not a crime," she says sounding irritated.

"I have to rush home and get my ID."

"And change," she emphasizes.

"Yes, and change."

Although I don't trust this whole job thing I take a leap of faith. This could be a scam but there's only

one way to find out. Sydney drives me to the place and insists on waiting for me.

"Thanks Sydney but why are you doing this?" I ask.

"Doing what?"

"Driving me like when that would get in trouble with your mother like you said," I ask.

"I can handle my mother and this is my way of apologising for the other day, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings."

"Does that mean we can be friends now?" I cross my fingers and hope she says yes.

"We'll talk after your interview."

"Okay." I take a deep breath and walk into the building. Here goes nothing...

[#Keith](#)&Sydney's story

Chapter 7

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

The elevator door yawns open and I walk into the fifth floor as the message states and I'm met by a brown-skinned woman with a huge grin on her

face. She has short tinted her and loads of make-up on her face, not that I don't like women that wear makeup but she applied a little too much and the way she was chewing gum. Lord!

She is pretty though. I do not need any introduction to know that is Thandeka; I recognise her voice. I rub my sweaty hands against my trousers and hold on to my CV, I brought it just in case they ask for it; along with a copy of my I.D as instructed.

I clear my throat, "Good afternoon! I'm Keith Manzini..."

The moment I said my name she quickly stands up, "Mr Manzini... this way please Mr Nxumalo is waiting for you."

She leads the way while I quietly follow behind her, she's wearing a black leather skirt and a white long-sleeved formal shirt perfectly tucked on her tiny waist and very long heels that are making her taller than me.

As for me, I'm in my best church outfit although I look like a rainbow, Sydney said I look fine and I trust her fashion sense. The Thandeka lady leads

me to the elevator and presses the number 8, this is one huge building.

I clear my throat before uttering, "Does the whole building belong to the Nxumalo Holdings?"

She nods. "All 16 floors. The Nxumalo's are very rich people."

"So... how long have you been working here?"

"4 years now and you shouldn't be nervous you already got the job Mr Nxumalo just wants to see you," she replies wearing a smile.

I might have already gotten the job but I didn't apply for it and worse I'm not experienced for whatever job I got. We get to the eighth floor, Thandeka walks out first and leads me to some office that is labelled C.E.O by the door. I swallow hard as we enter the office. There's a very intimidating man sitting on a chair busy with his work.

He smiles as soon as he looks up to us, "Is this thee Mr Manzini?"

"Yes sir!" Thandeka answers.

I smile and shake his hands, I don't know how to begin to explain myself and this mistake. Mr Nxumalo seems like a very chilled out man, he asks Thandeka to bring me something to drink and I settle for water.

"You're 21," Mr Nxumalo say looking at my ID.

"Yes sir!"

"Shouldn't you be in school?" he asks.

"I should be but I had to drop out because of money problems."

He nods. "Where are your parents?"

"My father died when I was 11 years old and my mother stays in Sunnyside."

"Okay... does your mother work where she stays?" these are not the questions I was hoping to be asked.

"Yes sir."

"So what do you do? I'm sure you have a job," he utters.

"I work at a tuck-shop and part-time at the tavern."



"That's good," he keeps staring at my I.D and I don't know why he hasn't mentioned the job yet.

"So if your mother stays in Sunnyside who do you stay with?" he still has a smile on his face.

"I stay with my grandmother and two younger siblings."

He nods again. "Can you work as an assistant?"

"I'm going to be honest with you sir, I did not apply for this job. As much as I want it, I think you got the wrong person I don't even know what an assistant does."

He chuckles. "I know you didn't apply for it but thank you for the honesty son. Being an assistant is very easy and you will learn. I believe you're a fast learner"

"Yes sir, I am."

"Good then come in tomorrow at 8 am," he smiles.

"Thank you sir for the opportunity sir."

"Aren't you going to ask about your salary?" he laughs. I got a job, the salary is the last thing on my mind.

"I was waiting for you to mention it."

"We are going to start at R8 000 and we'll see as time goes on," he tells.

8K is a lot of money he Lord is good, I can't believe I got a job I didn't apply for. I can't wait to call my mother and tell her the good news and if all goes well she won't have to work as a cleaner anymore.

\*\*\*\* Ziphozenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

"How did it go" I ask Keith as he joins me in the car. He looks a little sad for someone who just got a job.

He shakes his head.

I take his hand "Don't be sad, there will be other opportunities, at least you came you would have regretted it if you didn't."

His lips curved into a smile "I got the job!"

"Congratulations Keith I'm so happy for you," I hug him.

"Thank you for convincing me to come here."

"Don't thank me, you were going to come I know it," I answer.

"I wasn't, thank you for driving me here. It means a lot."

"Stop thanking me and put on your seat belt, I need your help with something. I want to buy clothes for my cousin and he's the same size as you. Can you help me?" I request.

"Okay... what kind of clothes?"

"We'll see when we get to the mall,"

We drive to the mall, we start with jeans, followed by t-shirts then suits. I was taking photos of Keith trying on the clothes, he looks good in a suit. "Do you still want to buy more?" Keith asks, he must be tired.

"We still have to buy ties and formal shoes."

"Do you know his size?" he asks.

"Uhm... what's yours?"

"There's no way we can wear the same shoe size. Call and ask him," he suggests.

We buy ties and I run into two, three dresses I like and buy them. "What's your bank limit?" Keith chuckles, I have spent a lot of money in just 2 hours.

"It's my cousin's card and he told me to go wild on it," I lie I don't want him to feel out of place. We go to the shoe store...

"These are very expensive shoes" – Keith

"Please try these on? I want to see something."

He puts them on and tries on five more pairs, it's easier to see the beauty of a cloth when someone is wearing it.

"Are you tired?"

"Aren't you?" Keith chuckles.

"Shopping is my life. I can do this all day."

"I see why your cousin sent you and you have great fashion sense," he points out.

"Thanks, let's go get something to eat I'm hungry."

We get burgers then I drive him home. My mother has been blowing up my phone as if I ran away with her lung.

"Thanks again Sydney for convincing me to go to that interview," Keith says getting out of the car and I do the same.

“It’s a pleasure!” I open the boot and take out the clothes we bought then hand them to Keith. “I’ll come to pick you up tomorrow morning okay.”

“Syd.... what... I don’t understand?”

“See you tomorrow,” I get into the car and drive away.

[#SydneyandKeith](#)’s story

## Chapter 8

\*\*\*\* Ziphokenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

From Keith’s house, I rush home. My mother is calling me as if the house is on fire and I won’t answer her calls. I have to first confirm if she’s at home or not that way I know what lie to cook up. I would have checked with Mam’Sophie but her phone isn’t reachable.

I hold on to my shopping bags and say a short prayer, asking God to make my mother just let this one slide. This time I do deserve a beating, I spent R6 320 on clothes.

I walk into the house with my fingers crossed and ‘the queen’ is sitting on the couch with a glass of wine in her hands.

“Ziphozenkosi Sydney Nxumalo!” she places her glass on the table and stands up, she still looks flawless even when angry. Her makeup is on point, knee-length dress that is showing her curves perfectly, that’s where I got the good looks from.

“I can explain.”

“R6 000! What were you buying that could cost that much? You never spend that much in one day,” she yells.

I look down and play with my hands trying to cook up a lie but nothing is coming to mind. “I’m sorry!”

“I don’t want your apology I want to know what you were buying that cost so much,” she’s furious.

The bank card is in her name, I started using it when I was 17 so she sees all the notifications.

“I’m talking to you Charles’s daughter,” she takes off one of her heels.

Here’s a thing with my mother, when angry she picks up the nearest thing she can get hold of and uses it as a weapon.

“Nikiwe why are you yelling? Do you know I could hear you from the gate?” Father walks into the house.

“Please talk to your daughter before I kill her, do you know that she spent 6 000 in just 2 hours. Worse she was buying male clothes, a man is supposed to spend money on her on the other way around,” she puts her heels back on, picks up her glass of wine and exits the room calling Mam’Sophie.

My father sighs and sits on the couch. “Don’t tell me you were buying clothes for that Cullen boy?”

“No!”

He looks at me suspiciously, “Then who were you buying for clothes worth 6K?”

I sit on the same couch with him, unlike my mother I know he’s not going to beat me up and my father listens to me.

“You spent 6 thousand Zipho at least tell me who you were buying them for.” his tone is calm meaning we’re still in good books.

“They were for Keith,”

“The same Keith you offered to help me with the typing if I hired him?”

I nod.

“What is your relation with this Keith?” he questions.

“We are just friends.”

“Just friends? You bought clothes for him and you say you’re just friends,” he says.

“I met him at the mall and we have been talking. I hated that he felt a little out of my league so I thought maybe I would level things that way he doesn’t feel out of place when around me. He’s a great friend I was just helping out since he got a new job and he’ll probably need new suits at the office. I was just helping dad. Things are tough on his side at the moment,” I say playing with my hands waiting to be scolded.

He smiles. “It’s nice to see you helping a friend, that’s a good thing.”

“You’re not mad?”



He nods, "You and your mother buy unnecessary things that you don't even wear so it's nice that you used the money to help someone,"

"Mum will kill me."

"She'll calm down don't worry about her," he stands up and grabs his briefcase leaving the room.

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

I can't believe it, Sydney took me shopping and here I was thinking I was selecting clothes for her cousin when they were for me. Why would she buy me clothes, especially expensive ones? I am very grateful though because everyone at NH seemed very fancy, I felt out of place when I entered their offices.

I have been standing outside my house for 20 minutes now. A part of me still thinks it is all a joke and Sydney is going to drive back, tell me she is just kidding and wanted to see my reaction.

With the heavy shopping bags in my hands, I finally manage to get into the house. I put everything on the couch and rush back to work. I also get the chance to tell my boss that I got a

new job. He asked me to find my replacement and since there are many unemployed people in our country it wasn't hard to find someone.

Mbali and I go back home around 7 pm after handing over the shop keys to my boss and introducing him to Snenhlanhla; the girl that is going to be replacing me. Sne and I are childhood friends

"Whose bags are these?" granny asks when I get home.

"They are mine."

She looks at me confused, "Where did you get the money?"

"Granny a miracle happened today, I got a call from a company saying I got a job and at first I thought it was a scam but it's wasn't. I went there and I'm going to be the C.E.O's assistance. A whole me, no matric whatsoever ain't the Lord good? And these clothes I don't even know where to start," I say excitedly.

"Oh my, the Lord is good my child."

"All the time gogo," I reply.

“I’m so happy for you my child, did you tell your mother?”

“Not yet but I’ll go call her now,” I answer

I take the bags to my room, with Mbali’s help who now wishes she was a boy just so she can wear my clothes. I call Sydney...

“Hey, I’m a little busy I can’t talk now I’ll see you tomorrow morning,” she says after answering her phone

“Thank you very much for the clothes, words can’t describe how grateful I am.”

“It’s nothing... don’t worry about it,” she answers

“I will make it up to you for doing this for me.”

“Didn’t do it to get something in return,” she replies

“Thanks Sydney!”

I can feel the tears threatening to come out of my eyes. No one has ever done something like this for me, especially a girl.

[#SydneyandKeith](#)’s story

Chapter 9

\*\*\*\* Ziphokenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

I didn't get the chance to talk to Keith since my mother was still shouting about the 6K; she believes it makes a woman look desperate if they spend money on a man. I think it doesn't matter who spends on who as long as you want to even my father seemed to be agreeing to that.

Enough about my bitter mother, the following day I made sure I was at Keith's house exactly 7:15 am that way I don't delay him on his first day at work. I think he should learn how to drive that way they can give him the company car. I don't know how long it takes for them to make someone a permanent employee but I'm sure my tears can make my father change his mind.

I'm waiting outside Keith's house I turned him down when he invited me in. I don't want to get in trouble with his grandmother not after what happened last time. As for how I left home; I had to lie to my mother that I wanted to drive Cleopatra somewhere and I asked Cleo's sister to pretend to be her mother when my mother called to confirm if I wasn't lying.

"My mum didn't call right?"

I'm talking to Cleo on the phone while I wait for Keith.

"No, but Zipho this will not end well I tell you," says Cleo.

"What do you mean? It's not like Keith and I are together which means I'm not cheating on Cullen."

"I know but you know how your mother is this time she's surely killing you if she finds out that you're lying to her," she replies.

"My mother doesn't have to know about anything. If I can fake..." I pause realizing that I', about to spill the beans.

"Fake what?"

"Nothing Keith is here I gotta go," I quickly hang up and toss my phone in my bag.

I glare at Keith who's walking towards the car. Wow! He looks amazing my mouth is even hanging open, he's wearing a royal blue suit, white shirt and black tie that matches his shoes. His hair is neatly brushed and he looks like he got a new cut.

I get out of the car and just glare at him smiling like a crazy person. He smiles back at me and my stomach turns a little, gosh the butterflies.

“Wow!”

He laughs. “Hey Sydney! What do you think?”

He twirls.

“You look amazing.”

“All thanks to you and your great fashion sense,” he says biting his lower lip.

“Man, you look great.”

He laughs. “Stop you’ll make me blush.”

“Let’s get going,” I open the passengers’ door for him.

“Thanks Sydney!”

“Anytime,” I smile closing the door.

I drive him to his workplace then rushed home. To my surprise, Cleo is at my house and that could only mean my mother knows that I lied.

“I’m sorry,” Cleo mouths.

“It is okay, where is she?”

I bet she's looking for a weapon to kill me with.

"She was talking on the phone and she's angry Sydney. Your mum scares me," Cleo answers.

"How did she know?" I whisper

"After you hung up, I went to the kitchen to make breakfast and your mother was in our house talking to my mother."

"What the hell was she doing at your house that early... never mind, where did you say I was?" I ask.

"I said you cancelled and I haven't talked to you, I was still in my pajamas Zipho if I had lied my mother would have killed me as we speak."

I scratch my head and sit on the couch biting my nails. I'm dead!

"Ziphozenkosi! How are you my child?" Nikiwe walks in with her high heel, she's already in heels so early in the morning.

"Mama I can explain."

"I wanted the both of you in the same room that way I won't have to repeat these words," she exhales. "Cleopatra I would appreciate it if you and

Zipho stop being friends not that you're a bad friend but Zipho has become a liar I can't recognize her anymore. I think the going out is messing her up so it's best if she cuts ties with everyone."

Cleo looks down playing with her hands.

"No more seeing each other and I want you two to cut ties completely meaning no phone calls whatsoever. Are we clear?" Nikiwe adds.

"Yes ma'am," Cleo replies, still looking down

"Thank you... There's an uber waiting for you outside that will take you home."

"Okay and thank you," Cleo picks up her phone and heads out

"Mum that wasn't necessary."

"Give me your phone," she commands.

I take it out of my bag and hand it to her, without hesitating she harshly throws it at the wall causing the screen to shatter.

"Where were you?"

I shake my head.



"You better tell me while I'm still asking nicely."

I don't respond

"Okay, you don't want to talk. So you're lying to me now?" she kicks off her heels and grabs me by my wrist dragging me to my bedroom. She throws me on the bed and grabs the belt.

"Zipho where were you?"

I'm not telling her where I was because I know she's going to lock me up until I die if she found out that I was with a boy. I let her hit me until she's satisfied and I think the metal on the belt hit my head because I was now bleeding but that is not enough to make her stop, she stops when I start struggling to breathe; I have Asthma. She tosses the belt on the floor next to me and walks to my wardrobe to get my inhaler.

"Don't die yet I'm still not done with you," she throws the inhaler at me.

"Only if you listen to me mama, only if you gave me a chance to be myself I wouldn't have to hide things from you like this," I sob

“Maybe if you were an obedient child all this wouldn’t have happened. I will not be disrespected especially by a child I raised.”

She unlocks the door and calls Mam’Sophie who comes in running as if she was standing by the door.

“Ma’am!” – Mam’Sophie

“Help clean her up so I can take her to the doctor,” she instructs then leaves the room, I don’t need a doctor I need some freedom.

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

Everyone at work is complimenting my suit, talking about how I look different compared to the previous day, even Thandeka didn’t recognize me when I got to the reception. I tried calling Sydney on my lunch break but her phone is not reachable and after work, the boss; Mr Nxumalo insists on driving me home. Honestly, I don’t know why he’s nice to me but again we know how God works wonders

I try Sydney’s number again when I get home and it’s still not reachable. The following morning, I get ready for work and put on a maroon chino with a

white shirt and black shoes. I try calling Sydney once more but this time her number didn't exist. I guess I'm going to the taxi rank today but to my surprise, I find an uber car waiting for me outside my house.

The driver states that Sydney hired him to drive me to and from work for the next 60 days and that he's been paid. That girl never ceases to amaze me but how come her phone is not reachable.

Days go by and still no sign of Sydney. Days turn into weeks and month-ends comes, I receive my first salary at NH. Sadly, I can't even celebrate with the one person I care about. I owe Syd a treat.

"Hey you!" Snehlanhla waves from outside the gate. Our house has a fence everything is just out in the open, one can see people walking on the road. I'm washing my sneakers since it's Saturday and I'm not working.

"Hey Sne how are you? Please come in."

"I see you're busy, do you need help?" she says already grabbing the brush.

"I got it don't worry."

"I insist," she smiles.

After we were done I invite her into the house for juice. My grandmother and siblings aren't around today.

"Here!" I hand Snehlanhla a glass of juice.

"Thanks... tell me, are you still single?"

I chuckle. "Are there any potential candidates?"

"Just asking, I'm also single you know."

"And you expect me to believe that?"

"I am," she moves from where she is sitting and sits close to me, on the single couch.

"That's great"

"Since you are single and I'm single how about we date," she bites her lower lip.

"Look Sne..."

She stands up and sits on my lap. "What, you don't want me?"

"No! I mean yes you're very pretty but we are friends and this will be very awkward."

“Nothing has to be awkward and I can give you anything that you want, just name it.” she shifts her dress down leaving her bra-free breasts exposed. “I mean anything!”

[#KeithandSydney](#)'s story.

## Chapter 10

\*\*\*\* Ziphozenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

“Why are you looking at me like that?” Nikiwe asks, I have been staring at her for a couple of minutes now trying to figure why she’s like this. Why won’t she let me live my life in peace? Other parents force their children to go to school and she’s forcing me to get married.

It’s been 3 weeks since my mother almost killed me, Mam’Sophie cried that day. I didn’t know Mam’Sophie cared about me so much. I was all bruised and not to mention the cut on my head. My mother got me a new phone to apologise but she wouldn’t let me renew my old sim card meaning I lost all my contacts including Keith’s. I did ask my dad how he is and he seems very fond of him.

“Zipho stop glaring at me,” mother yells.

"I'm sorry."

"What is wrong with you today?" she asks.

"I want to move out, have my apartment."

She claps once. "Are you on drugs?"

"If I'm old enough to get married then I'm old enough to live by myself, right?"

"You're sick that's what you are," she stands up and leaves the room. I follow her to her bedroom.

"What do you want?"

"May I please go to the mall?"

"No," she opens her magazine and focuses on it.

"Why not?"

"Because I say so now stop annoying me," she retorts.

"I will annoy you until you let me go."

"I'm warning you Sydney... I don't have time for your games." She warns and I quickly get off the bed, I know she's pissed when she calls me Sydney.

\*\*\*\* Snehlanhla Bongo \*\*\*\*

My heart rejoices when I open my eyes and find myself in Keith's arms. He tried resisting me but eventually, he gave in, I was already naked in front of him and we all know how weak all men are when it comes to sex. It's funny how he was saying he doesn't want to yet his manhood telling a different story. I get out of bed and get dressed.

"Sne we need to talk," Keith gets out of bed and starts getting dressed.

I smile and sit on the bed, "That was amazing."

"Look Sne you're pretty and well built but this was a mistake," he says.

"A mistake that made you cum Keith?"

He exhales heavily. "I like somebody else."

"I thought you said you're single."

"I am... It's complicated, she comes from a very rich family and I'm out of her league," he lies on his back with his arm covering his eyes.

"You're my league and you know we've always had a connection since we were kids. Are you even sure this girl likes you back?"

"She did say she has a boyfriend," he mumbles.

"I don't have a boyfriend and you don't have a girlfriend, we can give us a try and maybe it might help you get over the girl that is out of your league."

"Maybe," he answers.

I smile and sit on his lap, "Sometimes we just have to stick to what we have and if you feel she's not of your level then believe it's true."

\*\*\*\* Ziphozenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

"We've decided to shift the wedding to this year," Nikiwe announces, causing Cullen to choke on his food.

My mother and I are at the Dubes; for dinner. My father couldn't make it, he would do anything for me except seeing the Dubes. I thought maybe the diner will be postponed since my father couldn't attend but Nikiwe cares about her reputation and what people will think.

"This year?" Cullen asks still coughing. "What happened to wait until Zipho turns 20?"

"Two years is a lot of time and we don't want you doing things that unmarried people are not



supposed to be doing. To avoid mistakes you two can just get married," Cullen's father winks.

"Mum I'm 18! I'm not ready," I voice out but she squeezes my hand under the table.

"Don't you think we're rushing them?" -Cullen's mother.

"Zipho one is never ready for marriage plus you and Cullen love each other getting married is just legalizing things," Nikiwe smiles.

I kick Cullen under the table so he can say something. I don't want to get married to him and I know he doesn't want to get married to me either. Cullen is quiet, I push back the chair and stand up...

"With all respect... I think it's up to Cullen and me to decide when we want to get married," I say firmly but inside I'm shaking I know my mother is going to beat the hell out of me when we get home.

"Zipho sits down," Nikiwe warns and I know that eye. She wants to strangle me badly.

"I think Zipho is right, they should choose for themselves."- Cullen's mother

“Zipho sit down,” Cullen lightly pulls my hand making me sit down.

I can’t believe he’s not even backing me up. Well, today I’m not in the pretending mood.

“Mr and Mrs Dube there’s something I want to tell you, it’s about Cullen and me.” I blurt out and Cullen shoots a warning stare at me.

“What do you want to tell us dear?” Cullen’s mother asks with the warmest smile. I don’t know why she married such a bitter man like Mr Dube. Maybe their marriage was also arranged.

“Nothing... she doesn’t have anything to say. Zipho hasn’t been feeling well lately,” Cullen answers then whispers to me. “Don’t you dare.”

“Zipho sit down,” Mother warns.

Cullen shifts closer and whispers in my ear. “Please don’t ruin this for me.”

“Cullen and I don’t want to get married,” I announce then feel my cheek sting followed by Mrs Dube gasping. For a second I thought that smack came from my mother but no, it is my future husband- Cullen.

“Is this what you want mum? Is this the kind of man you want me to get married to?” I yell.

“This is your fault Sydney,” Mother sips on her wine.

I grab the car keys and storm out.

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

Snenhlanhla and I concluded that we are going to give us a try and date. Snenhlanhla is pretty and maybe if I got with someone it'll help me forget about Sydney. It's been three weeks and I haven't heard from Sydney, maybe they moved to another town we all know how rich people pack up and leave when they feel like it.

My grandmother called and said she ended up in Sunnyside as to how a trip to town landed them there I don't even want to know. I'm alone at the house replaying the images of Snenhlanhla and me in my head. She knew what she was doing, she's not just good in bed but also in the kitchen- she made us lunch before leaving.

While I'm still lost in my head I'm disturbed by a knock on the door. I check the time and it's past 9 pm.

"Who is it?" I stand by the door waiting for the person to answer but they don't instead they knock again. I opened the door and I'm met by Sydney, she's crying.

"I'm sorry to just show up unannounced, I didn't know where to go," she throws herself in my arms.

"What's wrong?"

She doesn't answer, she just cries. I Invite her into the house and hold her in my arms until she stops crying. She ends up falling asleep with her head rested on my lap, her phone keeps ringing. Her parents are calling and someone named Cullen.

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"Don't tell me I fell asleep, what time is it?"

Sydney asks soon after she wakes up.

We were still in the dining I just covered her with a fleece.

"It is past 11," I answer

"Will the car be safe outside?"

"You're sleeping here?" I question. Sydney makes me nervous, I don't think I will be able to be with her the whole time. I don't trust myself with her.

“Please!”

“Park the car in the yard first,” I can already see myself being the talk of the town of how I’m now inviting girls to our house when my grandmother is not around. These people know everything, even something that happens at 2 am behind closed doors somehow they always know.

“Are you hungry?” I ask Sydney as we walk back into the house.

She nods

“Please make yourself something to eat while I figure where you’re going to sleep.”

She shakes her head, “I can’t cook.”

Since it’s too late to cook, I make her a peanut butter sandwich, it’s cold tonight so I make her some tea. She’s really cannot cook, she cannot even switch on the stove. I thought she was joking about not knowing how to cook.

“What happened?” I sit on the kitchen chair opposite Sydney.

“My mother happened.”

“Do you want to talk about it?” I ask.

"My mother loves controlling me and I hate it. She's always forcing me into doing things I don't like. I know she's my mother but sometimes I feel like she's not."

"She just wants the best for you, that's just how mothers are," I respond.

"Wait till you meet her."

"You disappeared on me," I say. "I tried calling you and your number no longer existed."

"My phone died and I lost all my contacts."

"I'm sleepy, do you want to go to bed?"

She nods. I lead her to my room, she was going to sleep in granny's room but she locked it and I'm sure something died in Mbali's room so the only option left is sharing a bed with me.

"May I have a t-shirt or something to wear, I don't think I'll be able to sleep in this dress," Sydney requests. I hand her my favourite Nike t-shirt.

We get under the covers and may I say it's very awkward, I keep tossing and turning. I like Sydney and right now she's in my room, in my bed. I can't handle the heat. She turns to face me.

"Hi," I whisper and she smiles flapping her eye lashes. She's very beautiful, I run my hands on her soft arms. I have always dreamed of the day I get to touch her.

"I wish things were different," she murmurs. "I wish to spend more time with you but I can't."

I don't respond, I lean over and kiss her lips. Her lips taste good I just want to freeze this moment and forever have her in my arms. I also wish to spend more time with her. I get on top of her and help her out of my t-shirt. If I'm being honest the reason why I wasn't scared to do all this is because I assumed she's not a virgin. I found out too late and it was too late to stop. She also permitted me to proceed.

"I'm sorry! I know your first time was supposed to be special but I just assumed..."

She interrupts me, "You shouldn't judge people by how they look you know. Please remind me to get you a morning-after pill." She faces the other side. I don't understand her sudden mood switch, she wanted to do this.

[#SydneyandKeith](#)'s story

## Chapter 11

\*\*\*\* Ziphozenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

I wake up at dawn and leave before Keith wakes up but I made sure I left a goodbye note; on his phone since I couldn't find a pen and paper. On the note, I thanked him for letting me sleepover at his house although I might never see him again and I'm glad he is my first and not Cullen.

On my way home I pass by the pharmacy buying the morning-after pill. Still ignoring my ringing phone, I also pass by McDonald's to get something to eat, luckily I have money in my FNB e-wallet, I left my purse at Cullen's house.

When I get home there are two extra cars parked outside the house. I get into the house and everyone is in the sitting room, my parents and the Dubes even the man himself who decided to slap me in front of my mother. He doesn't respect me at all.

"Zipho! Oh, thank God you're safe. Where did you sleep baby I was worried sick?" mother says hugging me.

"I'm fine, I slept in the car."



"Are you okay, did you eat?" she hold me in her arms. This is all her fault.

"Are you okay princess?" –my father

I nod and ask to go to my room after the apologizing and interrogations on where I slept. I get to my room and bath then wear my pajamas and get under the covers.

"Hey, did you get home safe?" a text message comes in from Keith.

"Yes and I'm sorry for leaving without saying goodbye."

"It's okay... are you okay though? You know after last night," he asks

"I'm fine just a little sleepy."

"Okay I'll check on you later... please don't forget the pill," he attaches smiley faces.

"I bought it, I'm going to take it now."

"Okay take care and last night was great," he sends red hearts

I send a smiley face. "Too bad I might never see you again."

“Your mother again?”

“Yeah... but don’t worry we’ll still talk on the phone and if you need anything I’m here,” I reply.

“Thanks Syd and if you also need anything don’t hesitate to call.”

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

Have you noticed how no one ever wants you when you’re single? But once you get into a relationship suddenly everyone wants to be with you. I don’t know what I did to get a job at NH but it came with extra blessings even Thandeka was sending signals.

A month went by, Snehlanhla would come by my place and for some reason, I was starting to have mixed feelings. Sydney and I would stay up late talking on the phone and I enjoyed talking to her. Snehlanhla who would give me the best sex not forgetting her delicious cupcakes she always bakes for me.

“How was your day?” I text Sydney.

“Not bad, today the ice queen wasn’t around.”

“Don’t talk like that about your mother,” I send laughing emoji(s)

“Keith you’ve never met my mum.”

“I have and she’s very pretty,” I reply.

“Don’t tell me you’re crushing on her?”

“I’m crushing on you,” I attach those monkey emoji(s) covering their eyes.

Sydney instantly calls.

(On the phone)

Syd: You have a crush on me?

Me: I’ve always liked you Sydney, from the moment I laid eyes on you.

Syd: Do you have a girlfriend?

Me: No!

Syd: (exhales heavily) Too bad I have a boyfriend.

Me: I know I should have told you sooner but I have been looking for the right opportunity

Syd: Right opportunity for what?

Me: The opportunity to take you out on a real date and tell you how I feel about you. I can afford to

be your boyfriend now I'm sure even your mother won't mind

Syd: (laughing) Look Keith, I like you for you please don't change that. Don't try to be on my level or anything. Yes, maybe things would have been different but if it's meant to be then it'll be.

Me: Just between me and you, know that I love you and I can't stop thinking about the night we spent together. I can't get your beautiful body out of my head.

Syd: What happened to you?

Me: What do you mean?

Syd: You used to be humble and respected women or should I say respected me...now you're... I don't even know how to define your character.

Me: It's still me let's just say I've gathered the courage to talk to you and I love you Syd.

Syd: Like I said before I'm with someone. Look I gotta go someone's knocking

Me: Bye my love!

Syd: What did you call me?

Me: My love!

Syd: Why?

Me: Because I love you, take care of yourself for me.

I hang up and log into my WhatsApp.

"Babe is your grandmother around? I'm coming over." a text message comes through from Snenhlanhla.

"She's on one of her stokvel meetings, you can come... Can't wait to see you." I respond to her message.

\*\*\*\* Ziphokenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

"May I come in?" Cullen says standing by my bedroom door. I haven't talked to him since he slapped me.

"Come in," I sit up and fold my arms.

He walks in with flowers and hands them to me.

"I'm sorry Ziph... I don't know why I slapped you and I'm sorry."

"You wanted to please your parents that's why. Why didn't you just tell them the truth?"

“Do you think I also enjoy this? I also want to live my life in peace but my parents threatened to cut me off if I didn’t marry you,” he explains.

“Cullen you’re 23, look for a job.”

“And work for someone? No ways!. Let’s just get married as they want then we can divorce afterwards.” he adds

“I’m only doing this for my mother... 3 months and we divorce.”

“Fine,” his eyes are staring straight at my bare thighs, I’m wearing shorts. “Your mother told me you are a virgin,” he runs his hand on my thigh but I push him off.

“Don’t touch me Cullen.”

“Why? After all, soon we are going to do it, isn’t that’s the whole point of this marriage. To keep the legacy going?”

“Cullen I’m warning you” I push his hand off me but he doesn’t stop touching me.

“You’re mine Sydney and I can have you whenever I feel like it.”

“Mum!” I try to run out of the room but he pulls me back throwing me on the bed causing me to hit hard on the headboard.

“Mu..,” he covers my mouth with his hands while the other one pulls down my shorts.

Cullen is five years older than me and he has a huge body. Even with one hand on my mouth, I couldn't fight him off so he had his way with me. And the painful part is that he doesn't care that my mother is in the house. When he is done he leaves me lying on the bed he doesn't even say a word, he just leaves.

This was the kind of man my mother wants me to spend my life with. After about half an hour, my mother walks into my room and finds me crying.

“Zipho are you okay?” she asks.

“No!”

“What happened?” she sits on the bed and cups my face.

“He forced himself on me,” I cry

“What do you mean?”

"Cullen forced himself on me," I cover my head with the bed linen. I feel violated.

"Are you sure that's what happened? You and Cullen are in a relationship it doesn't count as rape."

I shake my head in disbelief. "Mum he pinned me down and had his way with me."

"Stop being a baby Zipho, you two slept together what's the big deal?" she snaps.

"Mum!"

"Go and bath... I'll send Sophie to come and change the bed linen."

"Mum he ra..." a slap lands on my face.

"I know you hate Cullen but accusing him of rape is just petty," she walks out of the room.

I stand up and slam the door causing my bag that is hanging at the back of the door to fall along with the things inside.

I pick up the things on the floor and my eyes widen when I pick up the morning-after pill. I forgot to take it.



## [#KeithandSydney's](#) story

### Chapter 13

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

I might have been a little harsh to Sydney but we don't know who the father of the child is. It could be her boyfriend's for all we know, there's no way that they just date without her letting him hit it. I'm not ready to be a father, I'm just 21 what will I do with a child.

Yes, I like Sydney but I'm not ready for kids and marriage because that's what my grandmother was going to make me do; marry her. I can't marry Sydney, she doesn't even know how to switch on the stove. I just can't, I like her but a baby; she better just abort it.

I get into the house, my grandmother is already sleeping so I go straight to bed since Thandeka and I had something to eat back at the standup comedy thingy.

"Today was lovely, we should go out more often," a text message from Thandeka.

Thandeka is six years older and her wanting to hang out meant she has feelings for me. After

talking with Thandeka, I text Snenhlanhla who's complaining about how she's tired of working at the tuck shop. She better work because I will not pay any of her bills, until the day I put a ring on her finger she pays her bills.

While I'm still on WhatsApp I decide to check on Sydney, she is online so I send a 'Hey Syd!' message. I find myself viewing her status.

"I'm not made of stone, it hurts!" her status reads.

I highlight the status, ready to comment but stop myself, it probably has something to do with her being pregnant. My phone reflects that she is typing. She types for a whole 5 minutes and I'm curious to know what exactly she is typing.

"Firstly, don't call me Sydney and I'm going to block you after this. As for the baby don't worry I'll figure something out. Please note that if you miss the chance of making things right don't think about coming in the future. I loved you Keith and I thought you felt the same way but I guess I was wrong. I know I sound selfish since I said I had a boyfriend but why would I say I'm pregnant for you when I'm not?"

I remember my mother used to tell me that people change and I never believed it until I witnessed it with my own eyes. I never knew money was going to change you like this.

But it's okay, they say everything happens for a reason and I have learnt my lesson. Oh, not forgetting your 'night out' with Thandeka, if you think she likes you then you're fooling yourself she loves the zeros on your payslip. Some people will only love you when it's beneficial- choose your friends wisely."

\*\*\*

Right there her last seen and profile picture disappear meaning she just blocked my number. I dial her phone number but the number but doesn't go through.

As much as I don't want to dwell in Sydney's words, they cut deep. Sydney has always had my back but honestly, I can't be a father, yet, I'm not ready. I couldn't sleep that night, I kept tossing and turning and I would try calling Sydney even though I had no idea what to say to her if she was to answer her phone.

The following morning...

"Are you okay?" grandmother asks, I'm pocking my porridge with a spoon as Sydney's words replayed in my head,

"I'm fine gogo."

"You're not, you can talk to me," she sits opposite me.

"Gogo what kind of a daughter in law do you want?"

She laughs. "Don't tell me you want to marry...you're too young for that."

"No, I'm just asking so when I choose I meet your limits I wouldn't want to get a wife that won't be able to cook for you."

She takes my hand and cups it with hers; "Keith you don't marry for the family you marry for yourself remember you're the one who's going to spend the rest of your life with the person so our opinions don't matter. You just marry the one your heart chooses."

"What if she can't cook or clean, how does one marry someone like that?"

“Are you marrying her because of what she can and can’t do or you marrying her because you love her? As long as she loves you and you love her, note that a person can be taught how to cook and clean but you can’t teach someone to love you when they don’t. Be careful when choosing for the eye deceives, do not fall for the outside looks fall in love with the inner person because that’s the real person.” she says.

“You might get a woman that knows how to cook and clean but yet you married a knife, not a wife. A knife that will only cut and bring you pain every day,” she adds

A car hoots outside, Thandeka said she will pick me up. “Thanks gogo. I will see you later.” I pick up my laptop bag and rush out

\*\*\*\* Ziphozenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

“Are you gaining weight?” mother says trying to zip up my dress, we are having visitors today. My mother’s friend from Nigeria so I’m trying on the dress I’m going to wear at supper.

“I just had a big lunch.”

"I warned you not to eat too much," she forces the zipper up, it's hurting my stomach

"I'm sorry."

"What is happening to your stomach Zipho are you still exercising," she pocks it with her finger but I shift away.

"I am."

She cups my face. "I don't know if it's me but you are glowing that face cream must be working I'll call Cindy to send more," she smiles leaving the room.

I take off the dress and slip into my sweat pants then get under the bed covers. It hurts! It hurts that I have no one to talk to, it hurts that I have to put on a smile and pretend I'm fine when I'm not.

"Zipho!" my father knocks on the door.

I quickly wipe off the tears. "Come in!"

"There's my baby."

"Dad I'm 18 geez," I create space for him to sit on the bed.

“You’ll always be my little girl... how are you today?”

“I’m not sick dad but I’m fine thank you,” I smile.

“How about we go out for ice cream just me and you.”

“Is it okay if I go in sweat pants?” I ask.

“Even if you go in pajamas.”

I get my shoes and tie my braids up.

“And where are you two going?” mother asks as we pass her by the sitting room.

“For ice cream,” I answer waiting for the don’t eat this or that speech.

She frowns. “Charles!”

“It’s one ice cream honey it won’t do anything,” he kisses her on the lips then we head out.

Some air is exactly what I need, someplace where I get to be myself, wear and eat what I want. My father and I go for fries and we eat all the junk food my mother forbids me to eat. We go back home around 5 pm to prepare for dinner after all we have to look good in front of Nikiwe’s friends.

Mrs Okoye my mother's friend joins us around 6 pm along with her are her daughters, 9 years old and very naughty.

"How old did you say your daughter is?" Mrs Okoye asks Nikiwe.

"I'm 18," I answer.

"Why do you look pregnant?" she asks causing my father to choke on his food.

"I'm not pregnant," I chuckle not taking my eyes off the ice queen. I should write my goodbye letter.

"I'm a nurse and it's one of my superpowers. I know a pregnant person when I see one," she laughs.

My mother gives me the look. We have dinner and my parents drive Mrs Okoye and her children to her hotel. While my parents are away I say a short prayer and cross my fingers that my mother doesn't mention the pregnancy when they come back. The door flies open and I feel like crying. Nikiwe storms in I wonder where she left father.

"Go pee in this," mother throws a small bag at me, inside is a pregnancy test.



"I can explain."

"I said go pee in it," she yells.

"Yes, I'm pregnant mum."

"You and Cullen will be the death of me, didn't I tell you to at least use protection," she clicks her tongue picking up her phone.

"It's not his," I whisper.

"Lord have mercy so you going out opening your legs to everyone now?"

"No, that's not it."

"Nikiwe why are you yelling now? Can't we have one peaceful night in this house?" Father walks into the sitting room.

"Your daughter is pregnant."

"Ziphozenkosi!" – Charles

"I thought I raised you right, now you going around opening legs for men," mother looks at me with so much disappointment.

"I apologise, it was a mistake I wasn't in the right state of mind."

"Nikiwe did you know about this?" Charles asks.

"I'm just as shocked as you, I just found out."

"Mum you knew, and you chose to ignore it. You saw that I was gaining weight you just ignored it because you thought it was Cullen's and I needed you. I needed my mum, I was so scared of what you'd do if you found out. Instead of being there for me, you pushed it aside like we do every problem in this house. No one cares how I feel in this house."

"Don't blame this on us Zipho you are the disappointment here," Nikiwe shouts.

"Because I made a mistake?"

"Get out of my sight, I'm very disappointed in you right now," Nikiwe clicks her tongue "And leave my house. Leave and don't come back until you bring the father of that bastard in your stomach," she walks out.

I turn to my father, "I'm very disappointed Zipho!" he follows Nikiwe.

I sit on the couch and cry my eyes out. My mother wants me out of the house, Keith doesn't want the baby. I go out of the house and start walking not even knowing where I'm going; not to mention it's

dark. Of all the people I thought my mother was going to understand. I stand in the middle of the road I'm sick of this life.

I hear a car horn followed by car tires screaming, when I look to my left there comes a speeding car, instead of moving out of the way I just looked at it as the car lights blinded my visions and the loud sound of the car horn blocked my ears.

[#KeithandSydney](#)'s story

Don't miss the special;

Chapter 14

\*\*\*\* Ziphozenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

"Are you trying to get killed?" a male voice shouts.

I don't answer I just cry with my head between my legs causing traffic but I don't care. What do I do with a baby? Where do I go? I can't go to Keith because I will get him fired if my father finds out that the baby is his.

"Are you okay?" I feel a hand on my shoulder but I don't answer, I cry more.

"You need to get off the road you're blocking the road," the person utters.

"I just want to die."

"We all want to die but right now you're blocking cars please get off the road," he says politely.

"Why didn't you run me over?"

"Because I don't want to go to jail," he answers.

I stand up and wipe the tears off my face. "Sorry."

"Are you okay?" he looks concerned. I shake my head.

"Get in the I'll drop you off home," he gives me his hand then leads me to the car. His hand is soft and he smells great, I can't help but notice he has a nose ring and a tattoo on his neck.

He's wearing white jeans, a very colourful shirt that is unbuttoned at the top with a brown long coat and black vans. He's wearing rings on all his fingers, the streets lights are making it easier to see his face and he's a little pretty for a guy. He opens the car door for me then also gets into the car and turns on the car heaters.

"Where do you live?" he asks wearing a warm smile.

"My mother kicked me out of the house."

"Maybe she was just angry, go back I'm sure she's calm now," he replies.

"I doubt."

"So where am I taking you?" he asks.

"Anywhere where there's a railway line so I can jump in front of a train and end my life."

"Come on don't give up on life yet... go home and talk to your mother," he says.

"I know my mother and she won't let me stay in her house until I bring the father of the child I'm carrying."

"Wait, you're pregnant?" he sounds shocked.

"Two months!"

"And how old are you?" he stops the car on the side of the road.

"I'm 18! It's a long story, my mother wanted me to marry someone I didn't even like not to mention how I always have to please her and her friends when I'm miserable. God knows I didn't want to disappoint her, this wasn't planned it just happened. My mother wants me to be something I'm not, she wants me to be her perfect little girl

and act like a lady but that is not me. I want to wear jeans and eat junk food, I want to go to school and do what children my age do," I wipe the tears off my face.

"Do you know how hard it is to pretend to be something you're not just to make your parents happy and no matter how much you try to meet their standards you're just never good enough," I cry.

He gently rubs my back. "Trust me I understand... we hurt ourselves trying not to ruin the family reputation."

"Why can't we just be what we want to be?"

"So where is the father of the baby?" he asks sounding interested in knowing my story.

"He wants me to abort it."

"That's cold! So where to from here?" he asks.

"I don't know, my mother said I shouldn't come home until I bring the father of the baby."

"Does your mother know the baby father?" he kills the engine.

"No, why?"

He sits facing me "See I come from a rich family and my parents have been on my case about having a child. My parents want to step down in the family business but they won't let me take over unless I have a child."

"You lost me after you said you come from a rich family."

"Let me introduce myself. My name is Nkanyiso Gxaba!" he stretches his hand to me.

"Ziphozenkosi Sydney Nxumalo."

"Cute names! Sydney what if I said I can marry you and raise your child as my own," he offers.

"You don't even know me and why would you want to raise a child that is not yours?"

He scratches his head. "See I'm gay! And my parents don't know they are against things like that. I can marry you just to get them off my back. Your child takes my surname but we'll be living our separate lives. You get to do what you want and I'll take care of you like your husband but we get to be with whoever we want to be with."

I look at him for a second, I did say he's too pretty for a man.

“So this is just to please our parents?”

He nods. “Yes but no one can know this is fake and when you meet someone you introduce them to me and make sure you don’t meet in public places because you’ll be my wife then after 4 or 3 years we divorce and go our separate ways. I’m sure by then you’d have figured something out with your life.”

“That’s a great idea.” Stupid me trusting a man.

“Are you sure the father of the baby won’t be a problem?” he asks.

“He told me to abort it I doubt he cares.”

“Good then,” he smiles. I should stop thinking everyone has a good heart or maybe Nkanyiso is one of the good guys.

“How old are you?”

“I’m 27... did you eat?” he asks bringing the engine back to life. “Let’s get you something to eat.”

He drives us to some eatery where we get to know each other and cook up a story of how we met and how I ended up pregnant in case the families want to know. He insists on taking me to his house so



he can introduce me to his mother, he says his father is on a business trip in Zambia. I thought my family is rich but Nkanyiso's house left me speechless.

"Let me warn you, my mother is a little loud," Nkanyiso places his jacket on my shoulders and takes my hand leading me inside his house. One thing I was failing to understand is why Nkanyiso is so quick to trust me. I could be lying to him.

We find his mother on the couch reading a magazine, she is already in her nightgown.

She stands up when she sees me;

"Nkanyiso!" she looks at me then her child. "Who is this and why is she here?"

"I messed up mum," Nkanyiso scratches his head, I just look down.

"What is going on, who is she?"

"This is Ziphozenkosi, my girlfriend... her mother kicked her out of the house because she's pregnant," he mumbles the last part.

"And you're only introducing her to me now?" Nkanyiso's mother shakes her head and walks up

to me "Are you okay sweetie? Have you been crying, you must be scared... come with me."

She takes my hand and leads me up the stairs. I look at Nkanyiso who follows us quietly. She takes me to some room and makes me sit on the bed.

"Are you okay? Are you hungry? Hope you haven't been stressed?" she asks.

"I..."

She interrupts me, "Don't answer... there a shower, bath and I'll prepare something to eat (turns to Nkanyiso) call your father and tell him what you've done so that we can handle this sooner,"

Nkanyiso's mother was very nice to me, she did scold Nkanyiso though saying I'm young and that he should have done things right.

Everything feels surreal. I can't believe Nkanyiso and are going to pull the fake relationship thing. I sleep in the guest room although I keep thinking about Keith. He denied his baby yet he was the one telling me about how he loves me and sees a future in us.

The following morning Nkanyiso brings me breakfast in bed saying he is going to work and that I should watch out for his cousins.

"Thanks Nkanyiso," I say. I could be dead if I had not met him.

"Thank you too, my parents were going to disown me if they found out I wasn't straight."

"The things we do to please our parents," I sigh.

"We'll have the freedom we need after the wedding don't worry."

"Good morning! Good Morning!" Nkanyiso's mother barges into the room and opens the curtains.

"Morning!"- me

"I'm off to work, mum please don't bother her," Nkanyiso kisses me on the forehead before leaving. He is a good pretender.

I bathe then Nkanyiso's mother gives me a dress to wear. She is excited about the baby thing, she even helped tie my braids up she was doing all the things I've dreamed of doing with my mother.

My mother almost fainted when we pulled up into our yard with 5 expensive cars the Gxaba uncles

were escorting me. Stupid me is getting married to a stranger but again I would do anything to earn my freedom.

[#KeithandSydney](#)'s story

Chapter 15

\*\*\*\*Ziphozenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

My mother makes me excuse her and the Gxaba uncles although I wanted to hear what they were talking about. A few minutes later I see my father's car drive in and for some reason I get scared, my mother had already promised the Dube's that I was going to be their daughter in law. What if she just makes the Gxaba pay for the 'damages' then marries me to Cullen?

"Zipho!" Mam'Sophie enters my room.

"Hello!"

"I heard what happened are you okay?" she hugs me.

"I'm fine."

"Are you sure? They said you left last night, I was worried something happened to you," she cups my

face, even my mother wasn't this worried when I walked in.

"I'm fine just pregnant."

"Zipho what happened? I thought you were going to wait until you get married." we sit on my bed.

"It wasn't planned and it was my first time and I regret it."

"We all make mistakes what's important is to learn from our mistakes," she says. She looks very worried.

"I learnt my lesson."

"Did you eat?" she asks.

"Zipho!" Nikiwe walks into my room. "Sophia please excuse us."

"Yes ma'am," Mam'Sophie leaves the room.

Nikiwe opens the curtains then joins me on the bed.

"I'm sorry! I didn't mean to disappoint, it was my first time and I wasn't thinking straight. If I could turn back time I would and not sleep with him that night," I look down playing with my hands.

She shifts my chin with her hand so I can face her,  
“Do you realize what you’re done, how do I explain this to the Dube family?”

“I’m sorry mama.”

“Anyways the Gxaba family are willing to do anything for their child and they seem like wealthy people so at least you’ll be well taken care of,” she retorts.

“I’m sorry for disappointing you.”

“All I want is for you to be happy Zipho and if this Nkanyiso guy makes you happy then I’m fine with it,” she answers. “They look rich.”

“They are.” at the back of my head I’m rolling my eyes, she only cares about money.

“They said they want to marry you as soon as possible so the negotiations will take place this weekend.”

“That’s in 2 days,” what’s the rush?

“Why wait? You’ll go live with your husband.” she says dismissively.

“Mum I want to stay here.”

“There’s no need to staying with us when you can just stay with your husband,” she shrugs.

“Why do I get a feeling you no longer want me here?”

“Don’t say that, you know I love you and you can visit here anytime or better I’ll visit you and I’d love to meet your mother in law,” she smiles.

As always she cares about herself and I bet they are going to charge the Gxaba family millions during the negotiations. After about half an hour Nkanyiso’s uncles leave and they left one car for me, they said they take care of their own.

“All good?” Nkanyiso asks on the phone

“My mother frustrates me.”

“Just a few days and you’ll be free,” he chuckles.

“Thanks Nkanyiso, God knows I would have hanged myself by now.”

“I should thank you. My father is on his way, he’s very happy and can’t wait to see you not to mention my mother who’s already looking for a house where we are going to stay,” he replies.

“And I thought my family has drama.”

“Wait till you meet the rest of the family... they are loud and annoying if it was up to me we were going to move to another country but I can't since business is here.” he says.

“So tell me... what's next after the negotiations?”

“You move in with me then we'll have the white wedding,” he answers.

“Dude you met me last night”

He exhales sharply, “I'm moving too fast aren't I? I'm sorry.”

“But is the white wedding necessary?”

“Yes! For the media and I forgot to tell you from now on watch what you do because anytime you might wake up on the front page of a newspaper,” he states.

To think I was running away from drama.

“The media, I didn't know you guys were that famous?”

“My grandfather was once minister of finance,” he answers.

“Wow!”



"You tell me the kind of wedding you want and I'll make it happen," he promises.

"Since it's fake we can't we just go to court?"

"Sydney we have to make it look real meaning the best wedding ever," he tells.

"Okay then Mr Gxaba."

"Have a great day soon to be Mrs Gxaba," he laughs.

"I guess I have to get used to that... bye!"

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

It's been two weeks since the Sydney drama, maybe I overreacted. I bought a new sim card and I've been meaning to call Sydney but I don't know even know where to begin. I admit I messed up and I shouldn't have reacted the way I did. I should have taken responsibility for the mess I caused. She's just 18 and I'm sure she might have been scared especially with her strict mother.

"Keith I'm talking to you," Snenhlanhla snaps her fingers in my face

"What?"

She frowns "Are you even listening?"

"I'm sorry I have a lot on my mind... what were you saying?"

She rolls her eyes, "Never mind."

I look at Sydney's contact on my phone debating on whether to call or text. What do I say? Should I mention the baby or apologize first?

"What are you looking at?" She snatches my phone from my hands.

"Nothing."

"Who's Sydney" she ask still wearing a frown.

"A friend."

"Male or female" she gives me the 'I hope you're not cheating' look. Every woman has one.

"I have a lot on my mind Sne why don't you call and find out yourself."

She exhales. "Is everything okay you haven't been yourself lately?"

"Like I said I have a lot on my mind."

"Care to share?" she places my phone on the table.

“It’s not important... today is about you and me.”

Sooner or later I’ll have to tell her about Sydney, I’ll have to tell my family and face the consequences like a man. I look at the food in front of me and push it away wishing I was having this date with Sydney instead. I had a good girl and let her go.

I remember when I couldn’t pay for ice cream, she was there and never judged. After lunch I uber back to work, on my way there I decide to try calling Sydney.

“Hello!” she answers the phone, her voice is soft and something turned in my stomach when she answered the phone.

I exhale heavily. “Syd!” my breath rasp in my throat and quickly clear my throat.

“Who am I talking to?”

“It’s Keith, can we talk?” I plead.

“I don’t have anything to say to you.”

“I’m sorry! For everything... I shouldn’t have reacted the way I did and I’m sorry.” I say.

"I aborted the baby... isn't that's what you wanted."

"I'm so sorry, how are you though?" I ask

"I'm fine in fact I'm happy. Anything else?"

"Can we meet up and talk, please!" I utter

"I don't want to talk to you Keith and I'd appreciate it if you don't call me again."

"Syd I'm sorry, I admit I messed up. Please give me a chance to fix things," I request.

"You had your chance and you blew it. I really loved you Keith and you hurt me... I had no one to turn and I thought you of all people would understand and what did you do? You know what it's done and I'm glad you denied the baby because I wouldn't have met Nkanyiso."

She hangs up.

I get to the office, the first thing I do when I get there is deliver the file Mr Nxumalo asked for. As usual I knock once then let myself in. He's facing the window.

"I brought the file sir," I utter.

The chair turns and Sydney is sitting on the chair.

“Syd!”

“It’s Ziphozenkosi,” she answers and my eyes rush to her stomach. She’s gained a little weight.

“Zipho I...”

“Leave before I ask my father to fire you,” she snatches the file from my hands.

“Your... your father?”

She chuckles. “Who do you think got you the job?”

Before I could answer and young man in a royal blue suit enters the room, walks up to Sydney and kisses her cheek. Jealousy washes over me.

“Oh hi! I didn’t see you there,” he smiles at me.

Sydney has a ring on her finger but she quickly shifts her hand when she notices that I’m staring at the ring. Why does it hurt seeing her with someone else?

[#KeithandSydney](#)’s story.

Chapter 16

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

"Can you please give your father this file," I say handing Sydney the file in my hands and fake smiling at the mysterious man who's making my heartache by just standing next to Sydney.

"You're working with me today, I'm standing in for Mr Nxumalo... you must be Mr Keith Manzini," the man in a royal blue suit smiles extending his hand to me so we can shake hands. My eyes are on Sydney, that ring looks too expensive to be just a ring for fashion. It has to be an engagement ring.

"Are you two together?" my mind rushes to my mouth.

Sydney and the royal suited man crack into laughter. Stupid me asking stupid questions!

"We are cousins, but a lot of people think we are dating."

Relief!

"I should get going, I was just passing by," Sydney stands up from the chair, grabs her bag, hugs her 'cousin' then walks out.

I excuse myself and follow her to the elevator. She puts on headphones just to ignore me.

"Syd!" I tab her arm

"What is it?" she still has her headphones on.

"I'm very sorry... I was shocked and I know I shouldn't have reacted like that. I apologise!"

"I was shocked too you know, my mother threw me out of the house. I had nowhere to go I even thought of taking my own life," she mutters sullenly.

"I'm sorry but Sydney what did you expect me to do? You disappeared for a month then came back claiming to be pregnant."

"My mother almost killed me for seeing you Keith... you know what I don't need to explain myself because you and I are not together," she gets off the elevator and I follow her out.

"Did you abort the baby?"

"No! I will raise the baby myself. Actually, I'm not raising him myself I'm raising him with my soon to be husband," she raises her hand showing me the ring.

"Him?"

"It's a boy. I know I'm not ready to be a mother but I won't kill an innocent soul. I will try by all means to love him and give him all the love in the world," she brushes her stomach.

"But the baby is mine and you're just going to let another man raise him?"

"Another man who was willing to man up, you suggested abortion, what if I had died doing that?" she yells.

"I was shocked!"

"I was shocked too but I didn't suggest it," she folds her arms.

"Just give me a chance to fix things... please?"

"You're a little too late. I'm getting married," she answers.

"Look I know I messed up and I know we are young but Sydney marriage is a huge deal. Are you sure you're ready for this?"

"And how do you know you know about marriage?" she questions.



“Okay I don’t know but I love you. I know I messed up but you know I love you more than this man of yours would ever dream of loving you.”

“Keith I’m 18 and pregnant trust me right now I would do anything to have a roof above my head.”

Out of the blue Snehlanhla shows up with her always hyped up self. She throws herself in my arms and kisses me on the lips. “Hey baby!” she says excitedly then turns to Sydney, she weighs her with her eyes then greets her.

“I was leaving,” Syd says quietly.

“Are you my man’s friend?” Snehlanhla asks.

“He’s just someone who works for my father,” Sydney answers opening her car.

“Is that your car... girl!!! That’s one fine baby. I’m Snehlanhla by the way.”

“Ziphozenkosi and like I said I was leaving,” Sydney answers but Sne stops her before she can get into the car.

“Since you’re my man’s friend we should go out sometime and who knows we also might be friends,” she keeps emphasizing the ‘my man’ part.

“I’d love to but...”

Snehlanhla interrupts her again, “I’m not taking no for an answer and I love what you’re wearing I think I’m going to copy it. You have great fashion sense.”

Sydney knows how to dress up neatly, she doesn’t show that she’s rich but she kills it.

“Thanks Snehlanhla... Keith tell her I have to go please.”

“Oh my word! You’re married,” Snehlanhla gasps.

Sydney sighs heavily. “I’m engaged!”

“That’s one pretty rock. I want just one like it, I want a Harry and Megan kind of wedding.”

Want it from who?

My eyes meet with Sydney’s, tears are clouding in her eyes and It reminds me of the day she came to my house crying. We are so lost in each other’s eyes that we can’t even hear Snehlanhla talking. A tear drops from Sydney’s eye but she quickly wipes it off and my heart shatters into a million pieces, I never meant to hurt her things just happened.

"Are you okay?" Snehlanhla asks her.

"Yes, see I'm pregnant... it's just these damn hormones. Why don't you hop in and I'll drop you where you're going since Keith is busy with work," Sydney smiles.

"I'd love to (turns to me) I love you see you tonight," she kisses my lips and rushes to the passenger's side.

\*\*\*\* Snehlanhla Ngubane \*\*\*\*

"So how old are you?" I ask Ziphozenkosi. Her car is very beautiful and smells nice. She's pretty, when I saw her standing with Keith I thought maybe he's cheating with her, You know what they say, 'if you want to see if your man is doing something shady show up at his workplace unannounced'.

"I'm 18," Zipho answers. Her skin is just flawless I'm jealous.

"Then that means I'm older than you, I'm 20."

She smiles and focuses on the road. She's 18 yet drives an expensive car and has a diamond ring on her finger. Talk about goals!

“Direct me to your place please,” she smiles. She smiles a lot it's weird!

“So how long have you known Keith?”

She exhales “A couple of months.”

“How did you two meet I mean I mean you’re so different?”

She looks at me then shifts back to the road.

“What do you mean?”

“You look super-rich!”

“My parents are rich not me,” she answers dismissively.

“Isn’t that the same? What matters is that you get everything that you desire.”

“Money isn’t everything Snehlanhla but I’m grateful for what I have,” she replies.

“So what does your fiancé do I bet he’s super-rich?”

“Where to from here please?”

“Why are you so formal? Are you also like this in bed?” I giggle.

She just smiles and takes a right. "I'll drop you off at Keith's"

"You've been there? I wonder why he's never told me about you?"

"Him and I don't talk anymore," I wonder why.

"Why, did you two fight?"

"It's a long story... we're here," she parks outside Keith's house.

"I'm not in a hurry can we hang out a little more?"

"Look I can't, I have to get going," she tries to let me down easy.

"Just for an hour or two... please I don't have many friends and trust me it sucks."

She exhales. "I know the feeling but I have to get going, why don't you go shopping that helps cheer up."

"It's the middle of the month and I'm broke."

"My mother gave me a gift voucher you can have it," she hands me a pink card.

"Are you serious?"

"Yeah it has about 3K (R3 000)" she says.

“Wow!”

“I have to get going Sne,” she unlocks the car door. I’m sure she wants me out of her car.

“Can we be friends?”

“I can’t!” she answers.

“You don’t like being friends with people who are not in your class?”

“No! God no! I’m not like that. We can be friends Snehlanhla. You can take my number.” she gives her number then drives off.

They say keep your friends close and your enemies closer. I saw the way Keith was looking at her and there’s no way he’ll go after her when I’m friends with her. It’s a win, win; I get to keep my man and have a rich friend who isn’t afraid to give out money.

\*\*\*\* Ziphozenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

I was supposed to meet up with my mother at 2 pm but Keith’s girlfriend just had to delay me. I can’t believe Keith lied to me, he told me he was single when he knew he had a girlfriend. He still had the nerve to look me in the eyes and tell me

that he loves me when he's with someone. At least I had the decency to tell him that I was with Cullen.

"You're late Zipho," mother scolds as I run into the boutique, we are choosing my wedding dress. Sometimes I look at my mother and ask myself if she knows my real age because I don't think she does. She's pushing this wedding thing, she says the sooner I get married the better.

I start trying out dresses, they all look good but she says she wants me to wear something that will leave people speechless it is as if she's the one getting married.

"What do think?" I twirl.

"Oh, my baby you look very beautiful."

"You like it?" I ask.

"I love!!"

"Are you happy?" I question.

"What do you mean?"

"Are you proud of me?" I ask.

“Sydney I’m always proud of you. Baby, you know that.”

“I’m glad that I finally lived to your expectations because that’s my only wish, to make you proud of me and be the daughter you want me to be.” I turn and blink away the tears clouding my eyes.

“Sydney how can you say that?”

“We both know I live to please you... I’ll go change.”

[#KeithandSydney](#)’s story

My apologies for posting late 🙏

Chapter 18

\*\*\*\* Ziphokenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

“Mum!” I exclaim.

Keith and I are now standing a metre apart from each other listening to my mother’s heels hit hard on the tiles as she walks up to us.

“Mrs Nxumalo I’m so sorry I...” Keith stutters but mother raises her hand stopping him from talking. She walks up to me and I feel my cheek sting.



“Mrs Nxumalo!” Keith gasps, only if he knew that this isn’t new to me. I get a lot of slaps from her.

“You should be ashamed of yourself. You’re carrying Nkanyiso’s child yet kissing another,” she yells.

“Mrs Nxumalo it’s not her fault.” – Keith

“Please leave my sight I want to talk to my daughter.”

Keith leaves although I could tell he wants to argue. Nikiwe looks at me with her hands on her hips tapping her heels on the tiles.

“Who do you take after because you’re nothing like me. Have you no shame Ziphozenkosi Sydney Nxumalo. Your fiancé is downstairs and you’re kissing someone else,” she says and my eyes are on her hands, she could slap me anytime.

“I’m sorry!”

“You’re always sorry, just like your father,” she yells.

“It just happened mum I’m sorry.”

“Just happened, everything just happens in your life just like you just happened to get pregnant,”

she charges towards me and I run to my room but she follows me there. Her eyes are wandering around the room looking for something to hit me with.

She doesn't even care that my soon to be husband is in the house she's going to hit me even though he's around. I want to scream badly but this urge to vomit won't let me so the only thing that can help me is apologizing. I get down on my knees and tell her how sorry I am.

"God knows I have tried to raise you well but seems to be a slut is in your nature," she's still looking for something to hit me with and she called me a slut. When she can't find anything she takes off one of her heels and throws it at me but I duck down just in time.

"Come here!" she commands.

I shake my head no and shift away, my cheeks are already wet with tears. I hate that she never gives me the chance to explain myself, she wants me to do whatever she wants. I'm not allowed to have my opinion and right now I know she's not angry about Keith and me kissing she hates that I'm not

marrying Cullen. My mother wanted me to marry Cullen badly.

She takes off her other shoe and throws it at me.

"I can't wait to marry Nkanyiso and leave this house," I mumble.

"Trust me I can't wait for you to leave either you're such a disappointment. Everything just happens to you just like your mother just happened to dump you at our doorstep."

She picks up the Twilight (Breaking Dawn) novel that is on my studying table and throws it at me, it lands right on my stomach. I let out a scream and hold my stomach lying on the floor.

Nikiwe breaths in and out collecting herself, did she just say my mother dumped me at her doorstep?

I lie on the floor crying holding my stomach, it hurts where she hit me with the book not to mention my other ear that has lost its hearing because of the slap I received earlier.

"Zipho stand up from the floor," she's calm now.

I silently cry.

“Stop being dramatic and get off the tiles it’s cold.”

I hold on to my stomach as the pain lingers all over my body.

“Nikiwe what’s going on in here we heard a scream,” I can tell that’s my father’s voice and there are two more pairs of shoes that I assume are Nkanyiso and Keith.

“Zipho is just being dramatic as always.”

Nkanyiso rushes to me and helps me up. “Are you okay?”

I shake my head no.

“Nikiwe what did you do to my daughter?” father yells

“I didn’t even touch her”- Nikiwe

“Oh so she happens to be crying and on the floor?”  
-father

“Where does it hurt?” Nkanyiso asks.

“My stomach.”

He scoops me up and carries me to the car, taking me to the hospital. My parents are going to follow

me in another car. Nkanyiso holds my hand as I groan in pain in the car on our way to the hospital.

"Did she hit you?" he sounds concerned. "Why does she treat you like that? But don't worry you have me now and after the wedding, I'll take you somewhere safe."

I nod and he takes my hand and kisses it. How I wish he wasn't gay.

We get to the doctor's and he gives me something to ease up the pain. The doctor said the baby is fine and that the pain is going to go away but he's keeping me for the night and he also mentioned something about my blood pressure rising.

My mother didn't show up, only my father and Keith came to see me. Only one person was allowed to see me at a time so I saw my father first who apologized for my mother's behaviour then Keith followed.

"Sydney I am so sorry," Keith holds my hand.

"It's okay."

"I didn't know this is what you go through, every time you'd tell me your mother is strict I thought

maybe it was your way of letting me down easy. I apologise," he holds my hand tight.

"Don't worry about it, I'm fine now."

"This is all my fault, I shouldn't have kissed you especially in your father's house," he goes on.

"You're right it is your fault and I'd appreciate it if we never crossed paths again. Go to your Snenhlanhla and leave me alone."

"And the baby?" he sounds hurt.

"The baby is Nkanyiso's now and I'd like to keep it like that."

"He needs to know his father, his real father," he snaps.

"He will! You might have cum inside me but that doesn't give you the right to claim this baby. Isn't you wanted me to abort it well let's assume I did."

"You're not being fair Sydney," he utters.

"Life isn't fair! So if you still value your job leave and never call me again, tell the same to your ratchet girlfriend."

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

After talking to Sydney I go and sit by the benches waiting for Mr Nxumalo who was now talking to the doctor. Nkanyiso gave me coffee and went to see his 'fiance'.

"Everything okay son?" Mr Nxumalo sits next to me.

"Yeah, all good."

"What's your relationship with my daughter and before you think of lying my wife told me about what happened at the house," he says.

"I love her sir! I love your daughter very much and today I didn't mean to disrespect you I am very sorry."

He nods. "Does she know that?"

I didn't expect him to say that. I expected a punch and maybe get fired.

"She knows but we are worlds apart and she kept saying that it won't work."

"If you love her then fight for her," he shrugs. Did he just say that?

"But she's getting married."

“But she’s not yet married,” he pats my shoulder standing up.

I follow him to the car. He drives me home, it is now about past eleven.

“I also used to work at a tuck shop you know,” Mr Nxumalo chuckles.

“I’m sorry what?”

“What I’m trying to say is; work hard in whatever you do. You might not be successful today but you will be one day the key is working hard and don’t envy those who are at the top. Remember not only 5 plus 5 makes 10 even 6 plus 4 makes 10 or 9 plus 1. Run your race and one day you will also make it. I had never seen my daughter smile like she used to do when she spoke about you although she spoke indirectly, she loves you. I know she’s doing all this to please her mother but if you really love her then fight for her,” he says then drops me off at my place.

[#KeithandSydney](#)’s story

Chapter 19

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*



I log into my WhatsApp account and let the messages flood in, most of them are from Snenhlanhla. At first, she was talking nicely then she got furious and started cursing. I read all her messages but I don't reply. Mr Nxumalo's words keep ringing in my head.

Mr Nxumalo advised me to fight for my love in other words meaning he gives me his blessing or maybe I'm getting ahead of myself. Sydney told me to stay away from her, I don't know what to do. I love Sydney so much and I've also hurt her a lot. She seems to be going through a lot with her mother and if I were to do something stupid this time she'll kill her.

I hardly sleep thinking about Sydney and whether to fight for her or let her be happy with Nkanyiso because he looks like he loves her. The way he rushed to her side when we saw her on the floor, the way he was quick to pick her up and drive her to the hospital.

Not forgetting how rich this Nkanyiso fiancé looks. He can give Sydney everything that she desires at the same time pleasing her mother. I have nothing to offer just my love. Maybe I should let her be

with Nkanyiso, it wouldn't be fair to get between them knowing that I have Snenhlanhla.

"Hey babe!" a text message comes in from Sne while I'm brushing my teeth. I didn't reply to her messages the previous night.

"Sne we need to talk," I reply back.

"Keith you want to break up with me?" she attaches crying emoji(s)

If drama was a person it would be Snenhlanhla.

"No, I want us to talk about something."

"Oh okay."

I get ready for work, Mr Nxumalo isn't around so Thandeka and I are the ones handling everything. I'm tempted to call Sydney but I stop myself, I don't want to get her in trouble with her fiancé or her mother.

After work, I met up with Snenhlanhla at Chicken Licken. I wanted to break things off with her but she came looking all gorgeous and yummy I can't get my eyes off her. Her dress is showing off her gorgeous thighs, her shoulders exposed and she changed her hair. I guess its the 3K voucher from Syd.

“You look amazing,” I say to Snehlanhla.

“Thanks my love, I also bought a few shirts for you,” she waves a bag

“That’s thoughtful of you.”

“So what did you want to talk about?” she sips on her juice.

“Uhm it’s about...”

“Wait, me first. Firstly, I want to apologize for my behaviour last night and I know I haven’t been the perfect girlfriend but I’m working on it and I’m very sorry for accusing you of cheating with Sydney. I mean Sydney is pregnant and engaged,” she says

“That what I wanted to talk about see...”

I pause and think about it. Snehlanhla is very forward and if I tell her that Sydney is carrying my child she’ll make her life a living hell. She will ruin things for Sydney and Nkanyiso and I can’t have that.

“I’m listening.” –Snehlanhla

"I wanted to say Sydney is sick and her father couldn't make it to work today, that's where I was last night when you were messaging me."

"Oh I'm so sorry, is she okay?" she asks.

"She was fine when we left the hospital."

"I'm sorry for doubting your love for me but I promise I'll make it up to you," she winks.

\*\*\*\* Ziphokenkosi Nxumalo \*\*\*\*

I wake up to Nkanyiso sitting next to me and holding my hand, looking great as always. He knows how to dress up well, one can't even tell he's gay especially without the nose ring.

"Hey!" Nkanyiso helps me sit up

"Hey! Shouldn't you be at work?"

"And leave my fiancé all by herself," he gently squeezes my hand.

"I'm fine the pain is gone and you shouldn't have skipped work."

"Are you kidding me, and miss being here and doing nothing," he laughs

"I'm hungry!"

"I brought you some food and I didn't want to wake you up," he hands me a plastic bag.

"Smells delicious."

"Cooked by yours truly," he brushes his shoulders with his fingers.

"Seems I'm gaining a kilogram or two this year, a fiancé that can cook. For the record, I can't cook."

"Don't worry I got your back," he laughs.

"Thanks Nkanyiso, for doing this for me."

"I should thank you, God knows my parents would have thought I'm possessed if I told them I'm gay," he sighs heavily.

"People need to understand that no one chooses to be different."

"Well it's easy to judge when not in the situation some say it's demonic," he answers.

"I'm sorry that you have to hide who you are. I can imagine how hard it is for you not to feel comfortable in your skin, your body."

"It's okay," he wipes my chin with his thumb he always accuses me of being messy.

“Do you have a boyfriend?”

“I’ll introduce him to you,” he smiles. Someone is in love.

“I bet he’s handsome like you.”

“He’s okay,” he laughs.

“Keith is the baby father.”

“Figured, saw how you two were looking at each other it’s as if who were insulting each other with your eyes,” he replies.

“But don’t worry he won’t be a problem”

My mother walks into the room or should I say Nikiwe since she said something about my mother dumping me at her doorstep. I’m not even surprised that she’s not my mother this woman has been nothing but harsh to me. Yes, she wanted the best of me but I didn’t need a DNA test to know that she didn’t carry me in her belly.

“Hey Nkanyiso,” Nikiwe greets politely.

“Mrs Nxumalo how are you?”

“I’m well thanks and yourself?” she forces a smile, she’s wearing sunglasses.

"I'm fine thank you!" Nkanyiso answers

"May I please talk to my daughter for a second?"

Nkanyiso excuses us. Nikiwe takes out the yoghurt from the plastic bag she's carrying, she also takes out two spoons and hands me one. This is my favourite yoghurt and we have it whenever I'm sad, it's our mother-daughter bonding moment.

"I'm sorry baby," she brushed my arm.

"It's okay you're right sometimes I don't think before doing things."

"Are you in pain?" she asks.

"Not at all."

"I'm sorry," she holds my hand and kisses it.

"It's okay mum don't worry about it."

She takes off her glasses and her eye is bruised.

"What happened to your eye?"

"Nothing don't worry about it," I can tell she was trying to stop the tears from falling on her face.

"Is it because of me?"

"No, you didn't do anything," she answers.

My parents fight all the time but my father has never gotten physical. Her eye looks bad, she tried to hide it with makeup but it's all bruised.

"I'm also sorry about what I said and I'm sorry for not telling you sooner," she says.

"Where's my mother?"

"I'm not sure, she left you at our doorstep with a letter that she couldn't take care of you," she answers.

"So Charles isn't my father?"

"He is, he was with your mother before me," she wipes the tear that had dropped on her cheek

"Is she still alive?"

"I don't know Sydney but you can look for her if you want, I can help you look for your mother," she offers,

"But I already have a mother there's no need to look for another."

If she dumped me then it means she doesn't want me.

\*\*\*\*



A month goes by and the big day is here. I'm starting to show but it's hard to point out if one doesn't know me. Everything at the wedding is on point, with the combination of two drama queens (my mother and Nkanyiso's) everything was a success starting from the deco to the bridal team.

My dress made the newspapers, Nkanyiso helped me pick it out. Even though the wedding was fake I had a lot of fun and Nkanyiso looked handsome in his white and gold suit. We were titled couple of the century by our internet relatives that never run out of things to say.

After the wedding, Nkanyiso and I go for our honeymoon in Cape Town, it's a gift from Nkanyiso's family.

"What a day!" I threw myself on the bed.

"I can't believe we did this," he lies next to me facing the ceiling.

"Feels surreal right?"

"Well, at least we have our freedom now," we fist bump.

I get off the bed. "Please help me take this dress off?"

He stands and unzips the dress that instantly falls on my ankles leaving me bare. He stares at me and swallows hard, my mother insisted I wear white lingerie.

I walk closer to him covering the gap between us, Nkanyiso is very handsome and I've always wanted to kiss him so I do that. He's responding to the kiss and he's a very good kisser but I want more, I'm already wet for him. I help him take off his jacket but when I try to unbutton his shirt he stops me.

"I can't Syd, I'm sorry!" he presses his head against mine.

[#KeithandSydney](#)'s story.

Chapter 20

\*\*\*\* Ziphokenkosi Gxaba \*\*\*\*

FOUR YEARS LATER...

"I'm so happy for you," Nkanyiso kisses me on the cheeks. We are launching my beauty product line. Nkanyiso helped me with the capital. We are still married although we had agreed that we are going to divorce after two years but we enjoy staying

together so we figured why not stay together and just have our separate sexual lives.

I won't lie it's been hard; Nkanyiso is very hot and the only thing I get to do with him kisses, only in front of people. When we are alone in our house we are two siblings that live together. Yes, we cuddle sometimes but I want more. I want him inside me. I have had several affairs that ended in tears but I just want Nkanyiso even for one night.

He introduced me to his boyfriend, I don't want to lie I'm jealous how come the handsome ones are gay? His name is Alex and he is the African version of Chriss Hemsworth. He thinks I'm cute, he and Nkanyiso treat me like their firstborn child only if they knew that at the back of my head I'm begging for a threesome.

"Congratulations baby!" Nikiwe hugs me. I never got to look for my real mother, I think it's better to stick to Nikiwe well at least she doesn't control me anymore. If my real mother wants to know me then she should reach out first.

Now that I'm married and don't live with Nikiwe she started treating me like a person with feelings. She now listens to me especially when we talk

about my marriage she seems to want to know if I'm happy she says she wouldn't want me living miserable. One thing we have in common is decorating the house, I change things monthly.

"My beautiful daughter in law," Mrs Gxaba (senior) hugs me. She and Nkanyiso's father separated a year ago. It affected her a lot she started doing drugs but she got out of rehab months ago. Turns out she cheated and he left her for a 20-year-old.

"Congratulations baby!"

"Thanks dad!" I smile

He still wishes I married Keith instead, I don't know why he likes him so much. Speaking of Keith he married Snehlanhla or so I heard. Did it hurt? A lot! I never thought they would last Sne looked like she was just after money but she proved me wrong.

My father sold his company for reasons I don't know of so Keith no longer works for him I heard he now works for a cellphone company.

Keith and I kept in touch, we talk but as friends and sometimes we meet up just so he could see Seth (his son).

After the launch Nkanyiso drives me home then leaves saying something about meeting up with Alex, it's his birthday and Nkanyiso could not be with him since he had to be at my launch.

I put Seth in bed then take a long relaxing bath while watching reels on Instagram. I met someone 4 months ago and I hope this time it doesn't end in tears.

\*\*\*\* Snenhlanhla Manzini \*\*\*\*

"Where are you coming from?" Keith asks me when I walk into the house.

"From work where else could I be coming from?"

He shakes his head and sits down picking up the remote. This is not how I picture things would be when Keith and I got married I thought maybe we'll have the movies kind of life where I get to sit at home and sip on wine knowing that my man is working for me but no, it's bills and debts.

To make matters worse Keith lost his job two months ago. Honestly, I didn't know things were going to turn out like this, Keith used to take care of me and we didn't lack the time he was working for Ziphozenkosi's father. Speaking of

Ziphozenkosi she hardly replies to my messages, isn't she thinks she's a celebrity now that she opened a beauty line we all know her rich fiancé funded her; she didn't even go to university.

Keith and I don't have kids yet, we don't want any well speaking on my side I don't want a child yet. I wouldn't want my child to suffer because things are very tough as we speak.

"You know I came by your workplace today?" Keith says, I clear my throat.

"What time because my friends and I went out for lunch?"

"Which ones?" he leans on the walls watching me take off my uniform, I work as a nail tech.

"Keith you know my friends, where's all this coming from?"

"You tell me Sne and when did we start lying to each other," he's calm.

"What do you mean lying to each other? I have many friends and some of them are my customers. Sometimes they offer to buy me lunch and that's where I was."

He walks up to me, I'm standing in front of the wardrobe. I'm already in a floral dress that is just above the knees and it's sleeveless. He holds me by my shoulders and turns me around to face the mirror. I notice have love bites on my neck. Shit!

"No Keith, it's not what you think," I say

"Then what is it?"

"I don't know baby we had sex before I left for work and I didn't care to check myself. Keith, I'd never," I say.

"I'm going to go get some air," he walks out on me.

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

When I left the house I called Sydney to meet up with me at Steers and I asked her to bring Seth. We agreed to keep the secret between the three of us (Nkanyiso, Sydney and I) my family don't know that I have a three-year-old son.

Luckily I managed to build a house for my mother before Mr Nxumalo closed his company. Mr Nxumalo had given me some money to start my own thing but Snenhlanhla wanted her princess wedding and I had to do whatever it takes to make

her happy. See I very much love Snenhlanhla but right now I think she's cheating well she just confirmed it with the love bites.

It's one thing when we men cheat but when a woman does it hurts like a dagger to the heart. When a woman does that you start questioning whether maybe you weren't man enough or maybe I was no longer satisfying her properly in bed because she did mention that our sex life is starting to get boring.

Well, sex isn't fun when you're broke. Sex isn't fun when you're thinking about where to get the rent money.

"Say hi to Keith baby" –Sydney

I pick up Seth and brush my lips against his soft cheek. Sydney and I agreed that Seth knows me as his mother's friend and Nkanyiso is his daddy, honestly, I didn't fully agree to that but Nkanyiso man-ed up when I couldn't so he kind of deserves the 'daddy' title.

"Hey, my little monster!" I spin giggling Seth around then put him down and hug Sydney she



turned 22 but her fancy clothes are making her look like a mum well she is a mum after all.

"I hope I wasn't disturbing," I say taking a seat.

"Not at all, Seth and I were shopping."

"Still addicted to shopping I see," I chuckle and she smiles.

"Well daddy Nkanyiso did tell us to bankrupt him," she squeezes Seth's cheeks.

I'm happy that she's happy although every time I see her face I wish that she was mine. I wish I was the one telling her to bankrupt me, I can't even afford anything at the moment. Sydney said I don't have to support the child even though I wanted to there's nothing I can give that she doesn't already have.

I have been trying to look for a job but things are tough especially without any academic qualifications. It's like I'm back to where I was 4 years ago but this time I have to figure things out myself.

"So how's work?" Sydney asks.

"Well... work is ...work is okay "

“Keith!” she frowns.

“What?”

“I can tell when you’re lying you know,” she replies.

“I got fired.”

“Oh no! What happened?” she’s giving me the look she gave me 4 years ago when I couldn’t pay for the ice cream.

“Some phones went missing and were fired, me and 4 other guys.”

“I’m so sorry so what are you doing now?” she sounds concerned.

“Nothing just looking for a job.”

“What qualifications do you have they are hiring in Nkanyiso’s company?”

I look down. “I don’t have any qualifications Sydney and I wouldn’t want to work for your husband.”

“Do you want me to talk to my father, he opened another company but my cousin is running it.”

“I don’t know isn’t that too much” I scratch my head

“I’m sure it must be tough not working Keith let me help... please?”

“Okay and thank you very much,” I smile.

“I’m not promising anything but I will try to talk to him and have you ever thought about going back to school?”

“I’m too old for school don’t you think?” I chuckle.

“No one is ever too old for school Keith you need Academical qualifications to get a paying job.”

“I will look into it when I have money,” I answer.

“I have a friend who teaches night school.”

“I don’t have the money yet,” I mumble.

“She owes me a favour so don’t worry about it with your go-ahead I can talk to her.”

After all, I’ve done she still has the heart to help me.

[#SydneyandKeith](#)’s story.

Chapter 21

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

Funny when I'm with Sydney; Snehlanhla never crosses my mind. On my way back home that's when I start thinking about the love bites on Snehlanhla. I don't know what to think anymore because for sure we did have sex before she left for work. But then, how does she explain not being at work when I passed by, her colleagues said she knocked off earlier. Why would they lie?

Maybe, I'm the one over-thinking things because when you're broke you feel like everyone and everything is against you. I love my wife and she deserves a chance to explain where she was, after all, she's not in a prison and she's allowed to have friends. Also as someone who is hiding a 3-year-old child from my wife, I'm the last person to assume things right now.

I get home around 7 pm and find Snehlanhla cooking, I walk up to her and hug her from behind. Snehlanhla has always been a very good cook; that's one of the things I like about her.

"Hey, you're back!"

"What are you making?" I kiss her shoulders, she turns to face me.

"I didn't know today was my day off and on my way back home I ran into an old friend, they offered to buy me a drink. That's where I was, I swear!"

"It's okay, I shouldn't have reacted as I did," I retort.

"Do you believe me?"

"Of course!"

"Where did you go?" she's wearing that look only a woman can pull.

"I ran into Sydney and we went for ice cream," I answer and wait for her to snap. She hates Sydney.

"Why do you call her Sydney... everyone calls her Ziphosenkosi?"

"I don't know it's just something I've gotten used to," I answer sincerely.

"Well, she's not answering my text messages, isn't she's a celebrity now!"

"Sydney... I mean Zipho is a very busy person. She's a mother, wife and has a beauty line. I'm sure she can't keep up," I sit on the kitchen stool.

"I know very busy people, people who run big companies but they reply to my text messages."

"Anyways, she said something about speaking to her father and asking if he can hire me," I change the subject because we might end up fighting.

"My love that's great! I pray they hire you maybe I can stop working at that hell hole."

"I thought you love your job?" she has never complained before.

"No, I don't! Working like a slave six to six. I pray you to get this job," she hugs me.

\*\*\*\* Ziphozenkosi Gxaba \*\*\*\*

From the ice cream shop, I pass by mother in law's house, she wants to see me. I just pray she didn't plan another road trip because I have so much going on right now. She has a certain power over me, I can't say no to her.

“There’s my cutie!” Nkanyiso’s mother hugs me, Nkanyiso is not the only one that treats me like a baby.

“Hey, Ma! How are you?”

“I’m young as you can see and how’s my little Nkanyiso?” she picks up Seth. She never calls him by his name she uses ‘little Nkanyiso’ the day the truth will come out, people will be heartbroken.

“Go to the kitchen and ask Aunty to give you a cookie, go!”

Seth runs out of the room, Mother in law shifts her attention back to me. “How are you Zipho?”

“I’m very fine, thank you,” I smile making myself comfortable on the couch.

“Is Nkanyiso treating you well?”

“He treats me like a queen,” I answer. That’s not fake, Nkanyiso takes good care of me.

“Eating well?”

Okay! Now I’m starting to think there’s more to these ‘questions’

"I'm eating well," I sip on my tea that Aunty Tilda just brought in. I would have preferred wine though!

She shifts from the single couch and comes to sit next to me. She cups my hand with hers.

"I'm turning 42 this year," she looks younger than her age.

"So I heard! And, don't worry I've started preparing your present."

"This year I want a specific present," she tucks my braids behind my ear.

"You name it, I'll get it for you."

She stares at me directly in the eyes. "I want another little Nkanyiso,"

I swallow hard. "Another grandchild? Seth is still young don't you think?"

Hell no, I'm not having another kid I almost died giving birth, I even fainted.

"Seth now wants a little sister or brother to play with... please Zipho I want to see my grandchild before I die."



My eyes widen. "Are you sick? Do you have cancer?"

"No! But I'm lonely in this big house and if you have another child then maybe Seth can move in with me or the little one, so I can spoil them."

"I don't know Ma! I don't want to make promises I can't keep," I scratch my head. I wonder how Nkanyiso will take this.

"It's not that hard sweetie you just sleep with him and you have a baby"

"Nkanyiso and I had agreed to wait!" I lie.

"He doesn't have to know, you just get off the pill and get pregnant trust me he'll be happy to know that you're going to have another baby."

I smile and sip on my tea, maybe Nkanyiso and I should have divorced when we had the chance. Nkanyiso's mother insists I leave Seth at her place. On my way home, I pass by my parent's house I'm not rushing home because Nkanyiso is not around, he's sleeping at Alex's place.

Nikiwe told me to go to my husband, of course. I leave my parent's house around 10 pm. I can't stop thinking about what Nkanyiso's mother said,

what if Nkanyiso and I are forced to have another child? I don't want to have a child and I'm not even sure if Nkanyiso can even have sex with a woman.

After a while I hear Nkanyiso's car drive-in, I didn't expect him home usually he spends Thursdays at Alex's. I sit up and wait for him to walk in.

"You're still awake!" Nkanyiso takes off his jacket walking towards the fitted cardboard to change into his pajamas.

"I wasn't expecting you home today."

He sighs, "Alex and I fought"

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"Alex doesn't seem to understand that I also hate that we have to hide our relationship. We have to keep it a secret for the company's sake. It wouldn't put a good picture when the customers find out that the boss is gay," he explains.

"Being gay is just a title Nkanyiso. You are still you gay or not."

"People see otherwise Sydney. People have different religions and some say being gay is an

evil spirit. I remember this one time I went to a certain church and the mother of the girl (who was transgender) had her being prayed for to cast out the spirit. Only if they knew how it feels, only if they knew how it feels not being comfortable in your own body. Having feelings for the same gender, do you think I wanted this? Trust me I also wish I was normal like other men. I wish I can look at a woman a desire to be with her but I just don't," he harshly throws his jacket on the floor.

I get out of bed and hug him. "I'm sorry! I didn't know that's how you feel and you're right, one will never understand until they are in the situation but I can promise you one thing. I'm here for you, you need to know that you're not alone and whatever decision you make I will support you."

"Thanks Syd!"

"Did you eat?" I ask

He chuckles. "We fought after eating, let's go to bed."

We get in bed and he spoons me, "I don't know if now is the right time to say this but I was with your mother and she wants another grandchild."

He sighs sharply. "I knew this day will come... what did you say?"

"I told her I was going to talk to you first."

"Knowing my mother she will presser us until we have a child," he answers.

"So what are we going to do?"

He exhales heavily. "I don't know!"

"Do you want a child?"

"Honestly, I would love to have a child of my own. I love Seth but I need someone to pass all this to; be it a girl I don't mind. I'm not saying Seth won't be part of my empire but I want my child," he replies,

"So what are we going to do?"

"I don't know what do you suggest" Although I don't want a child, I would love to carry his child but Nkanyiso isn't into women.

I turn and face him, "We can try... if that's what you want of course."

"Sydney you know I can't!"

“All you have to do is cum inside me that’s all,” I answer. It sounded a lot better in my head.

“It doesn’t work like that Sydney and I have to talk to Alex first.”

“Okay, but do you think he agrees though?” I ask.

“I don’t know but can we try something?” he gets on top of me and we start kissing

[#sydneyandkeith](#)’s story

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## Chapter 22

\*\*\*\* Ziphozenkosi Gxaba \*\*\*\*

Nkanyiso and I are still kissing, it didn’t even take me 5 minutes to be ready. On the other hand, Alex is trying to be here with me and I can tell he is struggling. He’s gay, no questions asked! Nkanyiso has to pretend to be something he’s not just so the world can accept him. I’m supposed to be the person he feels safe around yet I’m now trying to turn him into something he’s not.

“Nkanyiso wait!” I say catching my breath, as much as I want this I cannot do this to him.

“What’s wrong?”

“I know you’re doing this for your mother but there’s no need to do this really,” I tell him.

“We are just giving it a try Syd.”

“I know but I’m sure Alex would feel hurt if he found out that we slept together. Trust me I have waited for my whole life for the day you would wake up and say you now like a woman but I’ve realized you are who you are. It doesn’t matter what the world thinks. As much as I’m loving this, it’s wrong. This is not what you want, you’re doing what your mother wants you to do,” being a mom has ruined me!

“You’re right!”

“I think it’s about time you came out of the closet, it is better for people to hate you for who you are not to love you for being fake trying to please them,” I sit up. Man, I’m so wet!

“You’re too mature for your age do you know that?”

I laugh. "I watch a lot of television."

"You're so sweet and you deserve to be happy, find a man who will give you the love you deserve."

"I met someone on Instagram, I don't know if it's a fake account but we've been talking and I think I like him," I bit my lower lip smiling. His name is Liam!

"I think it's time we divorced and went our separate ways that way you can have a happy relationship with Mr Instagram not having to hide."

"I love living with you and Seth will always be your son," I squeeze his hand.

"I know and I will still take care of you until your man takes over."

"Thank you very much Nkanyiso, God knows what would have happened to me that night if you didn't help me," I hug him

"I should thank you... you understood me and please let's continue living together?"

"I'm not going anywhere after all I'm your firstborn child," I chuckle.

"You're adorable"

“So what will we say is our reason for divorce?”  
Nikiwe will kill me

“I’m gay! I will tell the truth and we will say we’ve been having problems.”

“And then I start crying about how you haven’t touched me in 2 years,” we both crack into laughter.

“Then we mention that we want to go our separate ways.”

“I can’t wait to see the look on Nikiwe’s face, she loves your family’s money,” It’s the truth.

“My mum will want to make us take therapy sessions, Lord the drama is about to begin.”

“Have you noticed how dramatic our mothers are?”

He sighs, “Tell me about it, they love drama and attention it’s just too much.”

“So tell me, you’ve never been with a girl in your life like ever?” I’m curious.

“I have but I just didn’t like it, at first I thought maybe there was a problem with me but seems I’m just different,” he replies.



“Are you gay or bisexual?” If he’s been with a girl he’s Bi, right?

“I’m 100% I’m gay Sydney.”

“You should call Alex and apologize,” I say

“He’ll be strong! I’ll talk to him in the morning.”

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

It’s now a week still waiting for Sydney’s call, I know she’s a busy person being a mum and the beauty line but I need a job ASAP. Snehlanhla is always on my case about when Sydney will reply to my messages because she’s tired of working. I’m also tired of sitting at home and waiting for my wife to bring food to the table. Yes, I do piece jobs but they only pay R250 per day and that’s not much because sometimes I work twice a week.

Since I no longer have a job, Snehlanhla is starting to do as she pleases. She comes home late. I’m the one now cooking for her because she works. When I try to talk to her about her behaviour she snaps at me talking about how what I want her to do since she’s working to make sure we get food on our table.

Today she's later than usual, it's already past 10 pm she's still not yet back from work. I tried calling her but her phone is not reachable. Around half-past 10 I hear a car outside our house. I peek outside and see Snenhlanhla coming out of a blue Bentley. A man opened the door for her and helped her climb out.

After a few minutes, she walks into the house, "Keith! Gosh, you scared me... you're still up?"

"Of course I'm still up, why would I sleep when my wife is not yet back home?"

"I'm sorry I finished late today."

"Were you doing that man's nails" I look at her facial expression waiting to see if she's going to deny everything.

"Keith why are you being so mean to me, I just came back from work... I'm working late so we can have enough money and you're treating me like this?"

"Cut the crap! I saw that man open the car door for you. Who was that?" I question and she flaps her eyelashes.

“That’s my cousin, what are you getting angry for?”

“Which one because I know all your cousins?” the nerve!

“You don’t know this one and I can’t believe you think I’m doing something shady. All I do is work hard so that we don’t sleep on empty stomachs.”

“Don’t even try that... don’t even pull that card on me, you’re doing something and you know it,” I yell.

“Oh, so you think I’m cheating Keith! Is that what you’re saying? If you’re not faithful don’t think I’m also like that and that was a client’s husband who offered to drop me off at the house.”

I chuckled shaking my head. “You can’t even keep up with your lies just a few minutes ago you said it’s your cousin.”

“Well I’m tired maybe I’m hallucinating,” she leaves for the bedroom.

I sit down and take out my phone then dial Sydney's number. I know it’s late but I need to know if I got the job....

(On the phone)

Me: Hey Syd!

Syd: Hey, how are you?

Me: I'm good thanks. Sorry to bother you so late but I called to ask about the job.

Syd: I'm afraid I got bad news, they are not hiring.

Me: It's okay, thanks.

Syd: I talked to my friend about school and she said you can start next week. I'll send the details.

Me: Thank you Syd where's the school?

Syd: I forgot but I'll hire transport for you... look I'm tired...

Me: It's okay you can rest, good night!

I hang up and sigh heavily. I would have preferred the job instead. Now I have to suck up to Snehlanhla. She's making me seem weak as a man.

[#sydneyandkeith](#)'s story

Chapter 17

\*\*\*\* Keith Manzini \*\*\*\*

“Your friend is very cute,” says Snenhlanhla, she keeps going on about Sydney. A part of me wishes there was a mute button I could press just to make her stop talking. I can’t believe Sydney gave her an R3 000 gift voucher, I guess she has a good heart in general because I thought maybe she was just nice to me only. “Keith I’m talking to you.”

“She is cute Snenhlanhla!”

“Oh so are you telling me that you find her cute?” she snaps.

“Isn’t that what you wanted to hear? You’re just looking for a fight. Look I have a lot on my mind and you stressing me is the last thing I need.”

“I’m stressing you, Keith? I can’t believe you just said that or maybe you like Zipho since she’s rich,” she quotes her hands on the rich part.

“Zipho’s money has nothing to do with us being friends so please if you don’t have anything positive to say you can just leave.”

“Are you seriously kicking me out?” tears cloud in her eyes. She’s being dramatic again, my mind is on Sydney. She found out that I have a girlfriend and I’m sure she’s hurt where she is. It’s one thing

that she has to deal with the pregnancy alone now she has to stress about me lying to her. Then there's Snehlanhla who wants to become a headache in my life.

"I didn't mean it like that," I pull her to my arms.

"You love her, don't you? I saw how you were looking at her. You love her and I can see it," tears run down her cheeks and I wipe them off then cup her face.

"I love you! Zipho and I are just friends, nothing more. Now kiss me."

"Is grandmother around," she smiles naughtily.

"Why?"

"I just want to give you a treat," she gets down on her knees and unzips my trousers. Snehlanhla is very wild. At first, I used to like it I mean who doesn't want a girlfriend who has a huge sex appetite but then it got boring because she thinks a relationship is all about sex, she thinks sex fixes everything. Sometimes I just want to sit down and talk about her, talk about what she likes, talk about her short and long time goals but all she

wants is us to have sex. Sex is all she has to bring to the table.

After our little session, I walk her home although all I had on my mind was Sydney, so she got me the job and her father is my boss. My phone rings, speak of the devil it's Sydney's father.

"Good evening sir!" I answer the phone

"Keith! I hope I didn't catch you at a bad time?"

"No sir, not at all how can I help?" I reply

"Remember those documents I told you to take home with you? Please bring them to my house?"

"Today?" please say no!

"Yes please!"

Mr Nxumalo lives far from my house, in order to get there and come back home in time I'll have to hire an uber. I wonder if Sydney will be around, I'd love to talk to her.

I get to Mr Nxumalo's house around 6 pm, their house is very beautiful. I knock on the door in hopes that Sydney would open for me but her mother opens instead. Now I see what Sydney meant, this woman is very scary.

“Good evening ma’am!”

She looks at me as if she’s disgusted. “Who are you?”

“I work for Mr Nxumalo and he asked me to bring these files,” I wave the files

She eases up a little. “Please come in.”

I walk inside the house, one could eat off the floor it’s very clean.

“You can take a seat I’ll go call Charles,” she leaves the room. Minutes after a woman walks in with a glass of juice.

“Here you go sir,” she smiles placing the juice in front of me.

“No! Don’t call me that. Call me Keith and thank you for the juice ma!”

She smiles and leaves the room. There are huge portraits of Sydney and her mother on the walls funny Mr Nxumalo isn’t in the picture, he’s in just one from the looks of it-girls run the world in this house.

Mr Nxumalo is taking longer than I expected because I’m almost finishing my juice and trust me



I made sure I take small sips. I hear a car drive-in, I just sit there looking like a lost person waiting for Mr Nxumalo.

The door opens and my eyes meet Sydney's who has just walked into the room. A man follows behind her. He is wearing black jeans and a white t-shirt, Sydney is also wearing jeans and a t-shirt; they have matching outfits and this one has to be the fiancé.

"Oh hi Keith," Sydney smiles.

"Hello," I reply slowly.

The man extends his hand wearing a huge smile.

"Hello sir!"

"No, I'm no sir," I chuckle

"Keith this is Nkanyiso my sugar muffin and babe this is Keith he works for my father," Sydney introduces me to her sugar muffin.

Sugar muffin my foot. Is that even a thing? I flash a wry smile and wish Mr Nxumalo would come so I can leave already.

"Nice to meet you, Mr Keith," Nkanyiso says

Sydney leaves the room, leaving me with her 'fiancé' the nice lady who served me juice brings some for Nkanyiso also. This Nkanyiso man seems like a busy man and he also looks way older than Sydney. He's been talking on the phone nonstop making me feel out of place.

"1 million, take it or leave it," he's very straight forward and I haven't heard him say the word please or thank you. I don't know what the deal is about but 1 million, I would faint if I won a lotto for 1 million.

"You're speaking to Mr Gxaba! Book an appointment with my P.A if you want to meet me... bye," that's how he talks and I can't help but eavesdrop.

"I'm back, hope I didn't take too long," Sydney walks into the room and sits on the arm on the couch Nkanyiso is sitting on.

They look so damn good together and it's making my heartache. I don't know what they are talking about but Sydney won't stop smiling although our eyes would meet now and then. I wonder what is taking so long for Mr Nxumalo.

I sigh relief when I see Sydney's mother coming down the stairs.

"Oh crap, I forgot to tell Charles you're here," she rushes back up.

You gotta be kidding me, then where was she?

After some minutes Mr Nxumalo joins us in the lounge. Nkanyiso greets him first, keeping it formal.

"Oh, Keith my son. How are you?" Mr Nxumalo smiles walking up to me.

"I'm fine sir I brought the files."

Mrs Nxumalo also joins us

"We were about to have dinner do you want to join?" Mr Nxumalo asks.

"Uhm..."

"Nikiwe! Keith will be joining us," Mr Nxumalo utters before I could turn him down. Mrs Nxumalo frowns but hides it with a smile, Sydney rolls her eyes the only people who seem happy is the Nkanyiso guy and Mr Nxumalo.

We sit by the table, I'm sitting between Mr Nxumalo and Sydney then Sydney is between me and the fiancé. See I'm used to eating in front of the TV shouting about the characters on Uzalo. This being quiet at the table is all new to me and luckily we were eating simple things and thank God I know how to use a fork and knife.

After the big meal, we have ice cream for dessert, now they are talking, Sydney's mother is the one bombarding Nkanyiso with questions. I take my hand and place it on Sydney's lap, under the table. She looks at me and I kept a straight face. She removes my hand and I put it back this time I caressed her stomach a little under the table.

She clears her throat but I don't remove my hand. I can't believe my baby growing in there. Touching Sydney makes my blood rush.

"Excuse me," Sydney leaves the table, I watch her go up the stairs.

"May I please use the bathroom?" I request.

"Third door on your right," Mr Nxumalo answers.

I can't find Sydney so I use the bathroom then go back. On my way back I see Sydney coming out of

some room. I walk up to her, she smells toothpaste as if she just brushed her teeth.

"Did you just brush your teeth?"

She nods, "I was throwing up."

"I'm sorry."

"It's not your fault, there's the bathroom if you were looking for it," she points in the direction of the bathroom.

"Actually it's you I wanted to see." I pull her in my arms and hold her tight. "Please let me fix things?"

"I can't, I'm getting married."

"You're allowed to change your mind," I plead.

"My mother would kill me and the Gxaba family has already paid my bride price."

"So I've lost you forever?" I ask.

"Yes, now please let go of me."

"I can't, I miss you, I miss your lips," I shift my face towards hers.

"Keith please don't," she whispers.

"I love you and I will win you back," I kiss her.

“Sydney!”

When we turn it’s Mrs Nxumalo.

[#KeithandSydney](#)’s story

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