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NDUMISO by Nomcebo Myeni

Insert 1

Ndumiso got off the taxi followed by a lady and closed the door as the taxi drove off.

The lady smiled greeting him and they started walking whilst chatting.

They passed by the tuckshop and greeted the few guys seated on the crates playing cards and continued walking.

Lady:(stopped walking) Wait, you're Ndumiso from UJ?

Ndumiso: I'm not sure about the UJ part but I guess so.

Lady: I see. She chuckled softly recognizing him from the pictures she once saw from a certain girl in their village.

Actually a lot of girls knew him from her because he was all she spoke about during their meetings.

Looking at his features, she was also gonna go crazy dating someone like him.

They turned to the sandy road and approached the cliff and he frowned placing his palm over his forehead as the sun bounced on it. A shallow smile spread across his face when he saw a few women disappearing into the thick forest carrying their plows coming from their fields. That was a confirmation enough that he was back home.

Even with the recent developments of the electricity that has just been connected, the trees and their fields on the other side of the village still remained unaffected. It confused him though as to how did they manage to keep their trees from being cut off and have the transformers connected on the other side.

The community must've refused to have the forest destroyed which was going to affect their ancestors. It was crazy but everyone believed that the forest and some of the trees in the village symbolised their ancestors and losing them would mean losing their identity.

Even though others complained about ghosts in the forest, destroying it was out of the question.

Lady: I'm here.

He turned to her and nodded then bid farewell to her before proceeding with his way.

He released a sigh of relief when he saw their home but his relief was short lived when his eyes fell on their neighbor coming out of a burning hut supporting herself with the wall.

He went to her and helped her walk to the other house then went to look for water after placing his bag nicely on the grass.

He put off the fire and rubbed his eyes coughing endlessly.

He went back to the old woman as she crawled out of the house coughing and he crouched lifting her up.

MaMpanza: Did you manage to put it off?

Ndumiso: Yes, the hut is fine but your stuff has been burnt.

MaMpanza: Thank you. May God bless you. I was trying to make something to eat, Nhlahla was late for school so she couldn't make it.

Ndumiso: I'm sorry to hear that.

She grinned and sat on a plastic chair as he helped her drink water. She leaned back and brushed her wrinkled face frustrated. Her stomach rumbled and she rubbed her eyes blurring her vision even further as they got more reddish.

Ndumiso: Is there something I can do for you?

MaMpanza: You've done more than enough, you can't mess up your expensive clothes. I'm sure my granddaughter will be here soon.

Ndumiso: Actually I don't mind.

MaMpanza:(coughed) You can make soft porridge. Everything is in that cupboard.

She pointed at one of the cupboards.

He went to take his bag then started preparing something to eat for her.

Moments later her granddaughter arrived and she held the straps of her backpack tighter quickening her footsteps when he heard her grandmother's laughter which she mistaken for something else.

She swallowed and rubbed her teary eyes then picked a lighter wood from the firewoods next to their traditional hut. She wasn't going to beg and cry again seeing them taking advantage of his sick grandmother.

She dropped her backpack and got inside the house. Ndumiso stood up holding two bowls and without any second thought she lifted her arms about to hit him. He dropped the metallic bowls and held the wood pushing her back as she lost balance and fell hitting the back of her head on the 20L bucket.

She shut her eyes and lazily opened them grinning as invisible sparks circled her disoriented face.

Her grandmother rubbed her eyes looking at them.

MaMpanza: What is going on?

Nhlahla: He tried to kill me.

Ndumiso: If I wanted to kill you, believe me you'll be dead. What were you trying to do anyway?

She clicked her tongue and got up rubbing the back of her head.

Nhlahla: What was he doing here gogo?

MaMpanza: He was helping me.

Nhlahla: He came out of nowhere and helped you?

Ndumiso: You're crazy and it's not even cute.(to her grandmother) Ntomb'endala let me leave I'll see you tomorrow.

Nhlahla: You're not..

Ndumiso:(annoyed) Angikhulumi nawe wena.

MaMpanza: It's okay my boy. Thank you so much may God bless you.

He smiled briefly and picked his bag then left.

Nhlahla looked at him as he brushed his dreadlocks to the back and walked out of their gate.

She saw his expensive watch on the table and sat down taking it into her hands.

Nhlahla: Gogo what was a man like him doing here?

MaMpanza: He saw the hut on fire then helped me put the fire off.

Nhlahla:(suprised) That's all? He didn't try anything?

MaMpanza: No he didn't. He actually made me something to eat. He's a sweet soul

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he's Mdletshe's eldest son I'm sure you know them.

Nhlahla: So he didn't do anything wrong?

MaMpanza: No(stood up) Let me go and lie down, my eyes are itchy and I'm tired.

She helped her to her room and removed her shoes then she got on bed and laid on the side.

At Ndumiso's home...

His mother dropped her plow and fixed her pinafore as he chuckled hugging her.

MaZikhali: Your tshirt is going to get dirty.

Ndumiso: Forget about the tshirt. How are you doing queen?

MaZikhali: I'm fine. You look so grown and beautiful but skinny.

He placed his fist over his mouth laughing and shook his head walking to the main house whilst holding her hand. It was always the same thing with her, he was always skinny on her eyes. Maybe it a mother's thing, he has been lifting weights for a while now so being skinny was impossible.

He placed his bag on the chair and started making tea for his mother whilst asking her about the Ndwandwe family. He sighed sadly when he heard the reason for Nhlahla's outburst.

Ndumiso: What are the police saying?

MaZikhali: Those useless people. They don't trust them, some even went as far as saying Nhlahla is making up stories because she's seeking leverage so that she can blackmail them into giving them money for food.

Ndumiso: What?

MaZikhali: It's expected though, those men drink with the police kwaMzobe so they won't arrest their drinking buddies.

He scoffed in disbelief and placed the tray in front of her whilst thinking of ways to help those defenceless women.

MaZikhali: Don't do anything stupid.

Ndumiso:(faked a smile) I won't.

MaZikhali: I'm serious. I don't know the things they taught you in Joburg but don't do anything stupid. It'll be easy for them to arrest you than to arrest those rapists. Tread carefully.

Ndumiso: I hear you.

He took his house keys from the room divider then walked to his house next to the gate. He pushed the door open and saw his high school girlfriend, Thembalami walking to the river holding an empty bucket. She saw him and walked away. Minutes later his phone rang as he settled on bed then he shook his head chuckling in disbelief when he realised that Thembalami was calling him.

It has been years, that ship has long sailed, she should get the hint and keep moving. He bent removing his sneakers and then laid on his back pressing his phone.

2

At Ndumiso's home...

The next day he finished raking the yard and went to fetch a wheelbarrow as Thembalami walked over.

He sighed and started loading the grass on the wheelbarrow.

She smiled nervously looking at his muscles maneuvering as he lifted his arms straightening then dropped the grass on the wheelbarrow.

Thembalami: Hey.

Ndumiso: Lami.

Thembalami: You've been ignoring my calls.

Ndumiso: Oh...

He continued cleaning until he was done whilst she watched him admiring his dark chocolate skin as sweat went down his spine.

He washed his hands and wiped his face with a towel then drank water from the bottle.

Thembalami: We need to talk.

He walked to his house holding a bucket full of water then placed it in his house as anger build up.

Ndumiso: What are you doing here?

Thembalami: I thought...

Ndumiso: Thought what?..Huh?..What? I don't appreciate what you're doing. Coming to my father's house as if you own it needs to stop. I was going to call you when I get time, right now I'm busy.

Thembalami: You weren't busy when I came in here.

Ndumiso: What was I doing? Dancing?

Thembalami: I still love you Ndu.

Ndumiso: I also do but you don't see me acting desperate for attention. I know where you stay and I have your number. Can you please leave before someone sees you? I don't want to disrespect my mother, really.

Thembalami: Okay, I'll see you later.

Ndumiso: Maybe tomorrow. Today I'm going to St Lucia, I'll be there till late, job related.

Thembalami: You're working?

Ndumiso: Something like that. I'll call you.

She nodded and stepped closer kissing his lips, he sighed and kissed her back as she rested her hands on his bare chest. He broke the kiss and faked a smile then cleared his throat seeing Nhlahla behind them.

Ndumiso: Hey, I didn't see you there.

Nhlahla: I brought your watch.

She handed it to him feeling Thembalami's eyes on her.

Ndumiso: Thank you.

She nodded dropping her eyes as he chuckled softly looking at her shiny face. He wasn't aware that people still used vaseline to lotion their faces. Her face was smooth though with a bit of blackheads here and there. She must've been the type who steamed frequently, no skin routine whatsoever.

Nhlahla: Is everything wrong?

Ndumiso: No, aren't you late for school?

Nhlahla: I'm not, I still have an hour before my exam starts.

Ndumiso: How is your grandmother doing?

Nhlahla: Fine.

Thembalami cleared her throat and rested her hands on her hips impatient.

Nhlahla brought her hands together apologizing.

Nhlahla: I'm sorry for disturbing you.

Thembalami: It's fine you can leave.

Ndumiso: Oh, is...

Thembalami: You'll come some other time Nhlahlenhle.

Ndumiso: Bye Nhlahla, I'll go and check up your grandmother later, if you don't mind.

She swallowed feeling uneasy about him. He was still a man afterall.

Ndumiso: It's okay

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goodluck on your exam.

She nodded and left. Thembalami clucked turning to him as he walked inside his house.

Thembalami: What was that? Are you sleeping with her? Is that why you're giving me a cold shoulder?

Ndumiso: No.

Thembalami: Don't lie...

Ndumiso: If you're asking me then no and if you're telling me then that's on you. It has got nothing to do with me.

Thembalami: I love you.

He sighed and held her hands.

Ndumiso: And I do too but can you please understand me. I'm not that teenage boy again, you can't come in here like this. You're making me feel uncomfortable and I don't like that.

Thembalami: We're still fine?

Ndumiso: Yes we're.

She hugged him as he rolled his eyes hugging her back. She was being dramatic for nothing.

She broke the hug and went back to the river and took her laundry going back home.

At Thembalami's house...

She hang her clothes on the line and picked her basin then went to their house.

Her friend, Khanyisile sat on the chair as she started undressing and bathed.

Khanyisile: Ndu won't do you like that especially with someone like Nhlahla. That girl is plain and dirty, with these rape allegations they usually make, no guy will fall for her.

Thembalami: You didn't see the way he was looking at her. It was warm, like something was melting inside him. I don't want to lose him to that girl. Ndumiso will soon get a job and take me out of this village. If I lose him I might as well forget about ever leaving this place. Mngenh I want to plait my hair with expensive hairpiece and put on make up. Ndumiso is smart and capable of going far in life. I have to be by his side. I won't get lucky twice, I have to act now.

She thoughtful reached for her towel and wrapped her body with it then slid her feet on her flip flops. A thought hit her and she smiled then stopped when she saw that her plan was impossible.

Thembalami: Mngenh, I made a mistake. I did it with Musa.

Khanyisile: How? I thought the guy wasn't worthy enough.

Thembalami: I wanted to experience sex and Ndu wasn't coming back. He's a very traditional person. If he learn that he's the one who did it, he will love me more.

Khanyisile: But how can you be so irresponsible? Now we have to do damage control. He can't find out the truth.

Thembalami: True but how?

Khanyisile: I'll give you my cream and you'll apply it down there. It'll hurt though because the cream will tighten your muscles so bad that penetration will be worse than breaking your virginity.

Thembalami: It's worth it. Ndumiso is worth everything and more. I'll take it.

Khanyisile: I'll get it for you. This afternoon we should go to the river and wait for that dirty thing. You man won't get taken by her whilst you're here never.

Thembalami: Definitely. I won't stand by and watch her playing house with my man.

She ran Vaseline on her lips and applied ponds on her face then looked for one of her beautiful dresses in the trunk.

At Nhlahla's house...

Ndumiso and his friend, Nkosinami placed the firewoods next to the hut and dusted their hands.

Nkosinami: If only we were doing this for the in laws I would be very happy to help but we're not.

Ndumiso: Not everything is about girls Namu hawu.

Nkosinami: Ai suka.

They washed their hands and went to the house where they found MaMpanza seated crocheting something with her big glasses on.

Ndumiso: Ntomb'endala we're done.

She smiled and fixed her glasses before sending her hand to her breast and took out her wallet.

MaMpanza: How much do you charge? I usually pay R150 I don't know about you.

Ndumiso: It's okay. You don't have to pay us. If there's nothing else we would like to go.

MaMpanza: No I think we're fine for now. Thank you.

He nodded and stood up then they reached for their t-shirts and putted them on after making sure that their vests were clean.

They stood up walking to the door and a guy staggered in smelling like brewery. They stopped walking and looked at him as he tried to stand still realising that she had company that day.

He wasn't familiar with them and from their colognes he could tell, these weren't his partners in crime. They all knew each other and these guys were not part of them.

Ndumiso:(calmly) Can we help you?

Guy: Can I have...water...yes...I wanted water...

Ndumiso: Asinawo.

Guy: But...

Ndumiso: Asinawo now get the stepping.

He removed his cap and walked out as relief covered her body sending a warm feeling in her heart. For the first time in a while, she was going to rest. After that one, surely more were coming. The thought of them leaving her all alone sent tears to her eyes but she took a deep breath and swallowed a lump in her throat before she continued crocheting.

Ndumiso and his friend excused themselves and left.

Nkosinami: What if they go back?

Ndumiso: They won't.

Nkosinami: And you know that?

Ndumiso: Yes. You know where that guy lives right?

Nkosinami: Yeah.

Ndumiso: Right, we'll check out his house when we get back.

They continued walking whilst he thought of a way to deal with that guy. He had to make sure that nothing traced back to him. But one thing for sure, he was going to punish all of them. He despised rapists and what they were doing to that woman was inhumane. How does a guy get a hard on for someone that old anyways? People are really wicked out there!!

3

In the forest...

Nkosinami saw a snake wrapped itself around a tree branch and tapped Ndumiso on his back showing him the snake. He looked at it for some time then continued walking.

He bit his lower lip thoughtfully and turned back to it.

Nkosinami: What are you doing?

Ndumiso: How far are we?

Nkosinami: Not far...what are you doing?

Ndumiso: Taking it with me.

Nkosinami: A fuckin snake?!!

Ndumiso: Yes, in that way I can get the job done without getting my hands dirty.

Nkosinami: It's still a snake.

Ndumiso: And he's still a rapist, what is your point.

Nkosinami: What if it bites you?

Ndumiso: It teeth are locked and I know just a way to get it to him without hurting us.

Nkosinami: Even on tv they use...

Ndumiso:(annoyed) Do you see a camera here? Stop telling me about useless tvs and help me or step back if you won't.

He stepped closer to the tree careful not to make noise and alert it. He took a deep breath and rubbed his sweaty palms together reminding himself why he was doing this. His mother stayed alone since his father was working in Pietermaritzburg, what if he actually got a job away from home and those wicked men come for his own mother?

The thought of his mother in the mercy of someone his age fueled his anger giving him more strength and he swallowed and held it.

He walked back and Nkosinami ran away leaving him behind as he paced up behind him.

Nkosinami: What if it....

Ndumiso: Nkosinami Ncube futeq!!

He kept quiet and led the way.

At the guy's house...

He took a sip on his black label beer then dropped the bottle on the floor then got on bed with his shoes on. He was very horny and drunk at the same time. It was a pity, he couldn't go back.

He lazily unzipped his wet pants and took out his manhood. He slowly stroked it whilst thinking of his last sexual intercourse.

That dreadlocks guy wasn't going to stop him, he was going back the next day. He couldn't depend on his hand forever.

He grunted with his eyes closed enjoying his handiwork. After a while he reached his peak and sighed in relief then burped before dropping his head on the pillow whilst chewing then slept.

Outside his mother spilled the water she was using to wash dishes with her granddaughter strapped on her back. She went

back to the house whilst cursing as Ndumiso and his friend waited for the yard to clear up.

His sister hang her school shirt and socks on the fence then went to the main house.

Nkosinami: Don't bring that thing closer.

Ndumiso: I'm not stupid.

Nkosinami: Uyalazi ihoboshe kahle wena.

Ndumiso:(impatient) Ngilidedele khona sizolazi kangcono?

Nkosinami:(swallowed) No.

Ndumiso: Good

check the coast. I'm coming.

He rushed to his house and got in. He looked at him laying on bed and clenched his jaws feeling more angrier. The snake moved its body wanting to break free. He did a count down then placed it on the headboard before stepping back. It wrapped itself around his arm and then did a hiss sound again then bit him on his neck.

Ndumiso rushed out leaving him alone as it locked its teeth on his neck. He woke up from his sleep and his eyes fell on it wrapped around his arm as his neck got numb. He screamed pulling it away from him.

Everyone got out of their houses and ran to his house. The neighbors rushed to them as they got alerted by his painful scream as his mother's cries followed.

One of the woman saw Ndumiso running with his friend, she followed them wanting to see their faces. He tripped and fell on a log hurting his ankle. Nkosinami pulled him up and hang his arm on his shoulder walking with him as he dragged his leg. The woman sighed and went back before she missed more action. She couldn't afford to come up with fake news to her friends the next day.

Nkosinami: You good?

Ndumiso:(grinned stretching his leg) I'll be fine. Let's go.

Nkosinami: It didn't hurt you right?

Ndumiso: Namu please.

Nkosinami: Sorry.

He took a deep breath and continued walking.

Meanwhile everyone stepped back with their eyes popped out. Most of them have witnessed people getting bitten by this type of snake in the fields but not like this.

A teenage boy ran to his mother and bent over with his hands on his knees gasping for air...

Boy: The car broke down on the way.

His mother:(crying) Oh Nkosyami, what did I do to deserve this? Go and check his police friends.

He nodded and ran through the crowd as he laid in the middle crying painful with his pants on his ankles. The weird stares he was getting from the people didn't matter to him but the snake was. The feeling of its skin on his was even more scarier. Maybe

God was punishing him from hurting people, but God doesn't judge people so it wasn't Him.

He teared his tshirt with his one arm as his neck turned green.

Man 1: Find something and tie him.

Woman 1: It's impossible since the snake bit him on the neck. It'll block his airway.

He gasped for air as his chest tightened. He breathed heavily seeing his life flash before his eyes and clenched his jaws in pain.

His body shook uncontrollably as the veins on his forehead erected.

He gagged and shook harder as the police car approached.

His mother: Please take him to the car...(to her daughter) Bring my handbag.

Everyone shook their heads stepping back. What if they touched him and the snake bit them too?

Two officers jumped off and rushed to him. They saw the snake and swallowed then picked him up as foam came out from his mouth. His eyes rolled to the back and his mother got at the back with him and they closed the door and drove off...

Woman 2: Into zabantu lezi ngothi ngasho.

Woman 3: Ilumbo uqobo akaze ngikbone okunje.

Woman 1: They should consult, this is a serious abomination!!

In the river...

Later that day Ndumiso placed his knee ontop of the bucket and looked at Nhlahla as she shyly looked down unable to hold his gaze.

Ndumiso: Are you always like this?

Nhlahla: I want to leave. My grandmother is alone, I can't leave her for too long.

Ndumiso: Let me walk you home.

Nhlahla: I can't allow that. Please don't complicate things for me.

He raised his eyebrows and shrugged stepping closer to her. Her heart pounded as she swallowed a lump in her dry throat.

He touched her hair and pulled a few strands stretching them. He smiled impressed...

Ndumiso: Why aren't you plaiting your hair?

Nhlahla: I don't have mone...I don't want to.

Ndumiso: Can I pay for your hair?

Nhlahla:(frowned) Huh?

Ndumiso: How about I take you to the salon tomorrow?

Nhlahla: My grandmother won't allow that.

Ndumiso: Make a plan. I'll see you tomorrow.

He picked the bucket and placed it on her head as Thembalami walked over with her friends. They stopped in their tracks looking at him holding the bucket and her arm with the other hand. Thembalami scoffed in disbelief and attempted to walk to them.

Khanyisile: You can't do that. He could get angry and take her side. You'll get her some other time.

Thembalami: You're right. But this isn't over!!

They walked back...

Nhlahla closed her eyes feeling his minty breath fanning her face as his deep voice vibrated from his throat. Why was he whispering again?

He chuckled softly and stepped back wiping his lower lip. He was coming onto her too hard and he had to reprimand himself. Damn she was too innocent, handle with care type of things!

Ndumiso: See you tomorrow Nhlahlenhle.

Nhlahla: I didn't agree.

Ndumiso: You didn't disagree either. Goodbye.

She smiled shyly and walked away as he smiled back and walked back home. What he was doing felt wrong but then that was where the fun was!!

4

At Ndumiso's home...

MaZikhali knocked on Ndumiso's house and stepped back with her hands rested on her waist. She scoffed in disbelief and shook her head biting her lower lip. It couldn't be him, not her innocent boy. What has Joburg turned him into? She silently prayed that her suspicions were wrong.

Ndumiso wore his pants and stretched himself opening the door then stepped out greeting her.

MaZikhali: Someone died was it you?

Ndumiso:(yawned) Ma?

MaZikhali: Hey! Answer me.

Ndumiso: Answer what because I don't even understand what are you talking about?

MaZikhali: A few days ago I spoke to you about this and you said you understood but one of those guys turns up dead, how coincidental is that?

Ndumiso: Ma I don't know what you're talking about.

MaZikhali: You didn't kill him? Others said it's a snake but others believe that the snake was planted in that house.

Ndumiso: I don't understand but the planting of the snake part is ridiculous. I thought snakes were dangerous, who the hell is capable of holding a snake?

MaZikhali: Other people can, it's dangerous but possible.

Ndumiso: I didn't do it if that's what you think.

MaZikhali: Are you sure? Son you can't endanger your....

Ndumiso: Ma!! I didn't do it. Why would I risk my life for a rapist?

She looked at him in the eyes as he looked at her with a straight face. Maybe he was right! She sighed and dropped her eyes feeling ashamed. How could she accuse her son of murder?

MaZikhali: I thought you did it. Everything pointed to you.

Ndumiso: I understand.

MaZikhali: Your breakfast is in the microwave. I'll cook your favorite meal when I get back.

She fixed her doek and the scarf over her shoulders walking away. She stopped and turned...

MaZikhali: There's some money in the room divider, if it happens you go to St Lucia today buy fruits for me and keep the change.

Ndumiso:(chuckled) No I'm fine thanks.

MaZikhali: Okay.

He shook his head and went back inside. All of this because she didn't want to apologize. God bless our African mothers.

His phone vibrated on the bedside table indicating a message from his friend.

He reached for his phone and went to take a piss whilst reading, "I spoke to someone in Durban in accommodating you. Everything is sorted."

He smiled and went back inside. In a week he had to be in Durban and he couldn't leave whilst danger was still roaming around the corridors, nobody was safe.

Then there was Nhlahla, she was left with one exam and that sent a wave of relief over him.

He texted Nhlahla and made his bed, "Get ready we're leaving in 2 hours. That should be enough."

Nhlahla: I'm not leaving.

Ndumiso: I'm coming to your house then.

Nhlahla: You can't do that.

Ndumiso: Watch me.

He put his phone back on the charger and started preparing for the day ahead.

At Nhlahla's house...

She stood up and went to wash the cow dung off her hands and rinsed the basin as her grandmother sat on the reedmat under the tree enjoying her tea.

She poured water in the basin as her stomach turned into knots. She has never lied to her grandmother before and she didn't know where to start. From the little he knew about Ndumiso she couldn't really say he was bluffing.

She undressed at the back of their house and started bathing. Why wasn't she standing her ground like she always did to other guys?

But then this wasn't other guys, this was Ndumiso. The guy with a soft smile and those sharp eyes that sent electrifying waves to her joints.

Were all the guys from the urban areas like him or what? Nkosinami wasn't like that though. Maybe it was a just him, moguy really did the things that make the pots to be undone.

She finished and wrapped a towel around her body and put on her flip flops before going back to the house.

She opened their metal trunk and searched for something to wear, He was always clean and smelling expensive, she couldn't afford to disappoint.

At Thembalami's house...

Khanyisile placed her empty bucket on the shiny stoep before walking inside the house where she found Thembalami bathing.

Khanyisile: You're bathing? I thought we'll go and fetch water in the morning.

Thembalami: We're

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I can't go there without bathing. Ndu is an early bird walking next to their home still dirty is wrong.

Khanyisile: It just water.

Thembalami: I know but I can't risk anything at the moment. I'm sure he's used to beautiful girls in Joburg who bath 5 times a day I have to keep up with them.

Khanyisile: If you say so.

She wiped her body and took the virginity cream and applied it on her vagina as her vagina dried up when her muscles constricted.

She pushed her finger deeper and flinched feeling a minor discomfort.

Thembalami: Is it supposed to be like this?

Khanyisile: Yes, hurry, mom needs to bath before they go to Mtheza's house apparently he was bitten by a snake yesterday.

Thembalami: Mtheza? Mtheza? Your Mtheza?

Khanyisile: He was not mine, he chose his baby mama over me.

Thembalami: But still...

Khanyisile: Hayi Lami!!

She shrugged and reached for her ironed dress putting it on and went to spill water outside then took her bucket and they left.

At St Lucia...

Ndumiso hang up and went inside the salon where the hairdresser was laying down Nhlahla's edges. She fixed her face and smiled shifting away from her face as she smiled at the

mirror admiring herself. She was beautiful and different, it was the first time getting her hair done and it felt fulfilling in a way. She felt like a girl from movies as Ndumiso paid for her then leaned over resting his chin on her neck.

Ndumiso: You good?

Nhlahla: Yeah.

Ndumiso: After you.

She giggled and stood up then he put his arm around her waist walking out. She softly removed his arm around her feeling everyone's eyes on her.

She was certain that everyone was wondering what was she doing with an old man like Ndumiso. His body made things worse, his big arms made her feel younger than she already were.

What if people were assuming that they were dating? He paid for her hair surely they were dating. But she was supposed to make him wait or else she was going to look like a lose and immoral girl.

He led her to a seafood restaurant and pulled a chair for her before calling a waiter.

Ndumiso: What are you thinking about?

Nhlahla: Nothing.

Ndumiso: Really now?

Nhlahla:(sighs) Okay what does this mean? You didn't say anything to me except for asking to pay for my hair and now you took me to an expensive restaurant. Are you expecting sex in return?

Ndumiso:(leaned back) Let's correct the sex part, if I wanted sex from you. I wasn't gonna pay for anything. As for saying anything, do you want me to say anything?

Nhlahla: No I want you...

Ndumiso: Let us stick to no. Should I order for you?

Nhlahla: Yes.

She faked a smile as he placed their order playing with her fingers. He sighed feeling bad then reached for her hands.

Ndumiso: I'm sorry. I like you okay and I would like it if you could be my girlfriend.

Nhlahla: No.

Ndumiso: No?

Nhlahla:(knod her head) Yes I said no.

Ndumiso: Why?

Nhlahla: Because it's too early.

He chuckled letting go of her hands. He kind of expected that from someone like her but he wasn't taking no for an answer especially since he was going to Durban the following week for work. And besides he wasn't a type to beg, baby girl better let him in or else he was bulldozing his way to that heart.

He reached for his phone and took a picture of her as she covered her face with her hands. He took more pictures, baby girl was cute, her cornrows made her look even more beautiful. For some reason her natural beauty was more appealing to her, her caring and soft heart was a bonus. This was someone who was capable of making the house a home, should they have kids, she was surely gonna take care of them like any good mother would.

Ndumiso: You know you gonna be mine right?

Nhlahla: I...I..we...but..

Ndumiso: Whoever said that was lying.

Nhlahla: Said what?

The waiter placed their food in front of them and Ndumiso pointed at her plate with that smile that made her shy.

Ndumiso: Enjoy your meal.

5

At Ndumiso's home...

He opened the door and rubbed his eyes looking at his father in front of him.

Ndumiso: Msindazwe? When did you get here?

Msindazwe: Last night, I assumed you were sleeping so I didn't want to wake you up. Wash your face and put on something we need to go to the fields.

He looked at his overalls and gumboot then sighed.

Ndumiso: Is mom coming?

Msindazwe: My wife is tired, she needs to rest. We'll only carry the sweet potatoes and bananas

Ndumiso: But father...

Msindazwe: I'll not argue with you Ndumiso. Your mother is not going to pay people whilst we're here. Let's go. I'll come and get you in 10 minutes.

He turned and left him there as he brushed his face then got inside. He quickly made his bed and washed his face then brushed his teeth before walking out after sending a text to his girlfriend.

He went to the main house rubbing his hands together. His father saw him and stood up.

Msindazwe: Take the wheelbarrow.

MaZikhali: We don't greet each other anymore?

Ndumiso: Sorry ma. I'm just tired.

Msindazwe: That's so unfortunate because when we get back you're going to Khula.

Ndumiso: Father I have plans.

Msindazwe: Cancel them.

He put on his beanie and walked out as his father followed behind him.

At the tuckshop...

Thembalami took the mosquito coils and wrapped them with a newspaper walking away as Nkosinami followed her.

He recharged his airtime and dropped the slip then continued walking.

Nkosinami: You look different.

Thembalami: I know.

Nkosinami: All of this for my friend who doesn't care.

Thembalami: And you care?

Nkosinami: You know I do.

Thembalami: Really now?

Nkosinami: We both know that Ndu doesn't want you.

Following him like this will only turn him off more.

Thembalami: You know nothing about us. Ndu loves me, he's just confused.

Nkosinami: He ended things with you for a reason. Stop acting desperate Lami, why are you refusing to see the light?

Thembalami:(rolled her eyes and stopped walking) Look, I know you think there's a chance for us to be something but there isn't. Accept that and live with it. Ndumiso loves me so much, he's just confused, Joburg does that to people.

Nkosinami: He's not confused, he doesn't want you.

Blackmailing him isn't gonna keep him. You have to understand one thing about guys, we're never confused. We can cheat, do all the unspeakable sh*t but we know who we love. It's either we love you or we don't there's no in between. Forcing yourself down his throat isn't going to help you. Accept that he doesn't want you and move on. Waiting for him like this isn't gonna improve your life. 5 years later you'll still be here waiting for him to stop being confused whilst he progress in life.

She swallowed looking at him as he stared back at her. God knew how much he loved her and it pained him to see the way she was self destructing. She was living for someone who didn't even care about her.

After failing her matric she just became another village girl who basked in the sun all day and gossiped about the people who were trying to better their lives whilst they waited for a knight in shining armour to take them out from the village.

He faked a smile and turned brushing his face and looked at her trying to act strong.

Nkosinami: If you like I can give you the forms to apply for...

Thembalami: No.

Nkosinami: You didn't allow me to finish.

Thembalami: I don't want to hear it. Namu I know how guys operate, you badmouth each other when you want to betray each other. I won't allow you to use me like that, I'm not that naive and I know my worth. So whatever you think will happen between us, forget about it. Don't be that guy.

Nkosinami: You know I'm not like that. I only want the best for you.

Thembalami: The only best thing for me is leaving this place.

He exhaled licking his lips as his heart shattered. His throat dried up and tears filled his eyes.

Nkosinami:(swallowed) You're right. I'm sorry for stepping the line.

He left her there and she sucked her teeth then continued walking as Nhlahla approached with her classmates coming from school.

She looked at the two girls with their inked shirts and smiled softly. A few years back that was her when she wrote her last paper.

Her smile dissolved when she was Nhlahla's beautiful face with her nicely plaited cornrows. Where did she get the money to plait her hair because they're poor?

It can't be her man, never because if it was she was gonna bring hell on earth. The rand was gonna drop and the world was gonna stop moving. She wouldn't dare. She clenched her jaws and tried to keep it cool

she was going to find her in the river, confronting her at that time was going to go South and she didn't want that.

She greeted them and passed as Nhlahla squinted her eyes looking at her. It was her, she had completely forgotten about her. Why was Ndumiso asking her out when he had a girlfriend? Or he wanted sex?

The lollipop she was sucking suddenly lost taste and she took it out and threw it away. She felt like unplaiting her hair at that very moment.

She thought of that sweet message he sent her during the early hours of the morning and clicked her tongue feeling dumber. The nigga was acting, he never loved her. Who would cheat on Thembalami with someone like her?

At Ndumiso's home...

Ndumiso processed the payment for Nhlahla's application then tossed his phone to the side sitting down.

His father came from behind the house holding a rake and clicked his tongue walking to Ndumiso as he laughed standing up.

Msindazwe: I won't stand for your laziness. I won't have my wife sleeping with snakes because of the mini forest behind her house.

Ndumiso: It's not a forest father.

Msindazwe: I don't care. Finish up then you can rest.

Ndumiso: Father I'm not 12, you have to understand that.

Msindazwe: I don't care. Go and finish up.

He laughed and wiped his forehead then went to finish up cleaning behind his mother's house.

Later he emptied the wheelbarrow on the rubbish pit then saw Nhlahla going to the river holding a bucket.

He went to his house and came out minutes later then followed her. His father saw him and chuckled.

Msindazwe: Plans are breathing in Joburg.

In the river...

Nhlahla picked up the bucket and placed it on her aching head. She grinned and shut her eyes taking in the pain.

Ndumiso approached and her heart skipped a bit as he smiled seeing her. For some reason she looked as if she wasn't happy to see him which left him confused because the last time he checked they were fine.

Ndumiso: Hey babe.

Nhlahla: Hi Ndumiso.

Ndumiso: Okay. Is everything okay?

Nhlahla: Yes. I'm in a hurry.

Ndumiso: Wait. Why are you so jumpy? I'm talking to you.

Nhlahla: What are you saying?

He took the bucket off her head and she folded her arms pouting. He pinched her cheek chuckling.

Nhlahla: What do you want?

Ndumiso: Okay, this isn't funny anymore. What is wrong with you? You don't get to do that on and off sh*t on me. I'm not going to tolerate a bitcoin wannabe.

Nhlahla: Oh really now? When are you seeing your girlfriend when you're always following me like a puppy?

Ndumiso: Dare come at me with that nonsense again
Nhlahlenhle, I dare you. I don't even know what you're talking about but already you're insulting me. Don't try me. I won't even beat you but I'll make sure that you pee on yourself.
Angzwani nomuntu ophaphayo mina.

Nhlahla: Isn't Thembalami your girlfriend?

Ndumiso: She's my ex. We broke up after I left for UJ. Was that all?

Nhlahla: But she said she's your girlfriend.

Ndumiso: That's on her. I'm not his boyfriend, I'm your boyfriend.

Nhlahla:(shyly) You're not mine.

Ndumiso: Yes you're and I don't deal with people with fluctuating feelings. If you wanna know something ask me, don't assume whatever nonsense that only make sense in your head. Let's go I'll carry the bucket for you. How is your head?

Nhlahla: Still painful.

Ndumiso: You need to get painkillers..how was your last paper?

Nhlahla: Great.

He picked the bucket and started walking taking the other route. She blushed looking at his 'boyfriend' in his overall and vest. She assumed that he must've been busy with something and probably dropped it for her. Maybe he did love her after all even though she wasn't too sure. Why did he dismiss their argument like that?

He stopped a few meters from their gate and turned to her.

Ndumiso: You'll be fine right?

Nhlahla: Yes.

Ndumiso: Okay. I got you something,

He reached for his back pocket and took out a PS written Be My Bae and handed it to her.

She blushed and he chuckled softly raising his eyebrows.

Ndumiso:(smiled) Please be my bae.

She covered her face with her hand giggling shyly. She knew that it was cheap, it was the way he was handling the whole thing that got to her. That smile, that smile!

Nhlahla: Okay.

Ndumiso:(smirked) Oh yeah.

He leaned over and kissed her taking her by surprise. She froze and her lower lip trembled as he softly sucked on it. Okay this was her first kiss, so he was gonna be her first. He stopped as the thoughts of those guys violating her filled his mind. He brushed her lips with his and kissed her again pushing those thoughts to the back of his head. He didn't care anymore. The girl was his. After sometime she slowly followed his lead. He placed his hand on her neck and broke the kiss pecking her forehead then whispered,

Ndumiso: I love you.

She shut her eyes as her heart melted, was it the words or the sound of his voice? Whatever it was, it melted her heart.

Thembalami who was hiding behind the trees looked at them and swallowed tearfully as her heart pounded. Was he really into her or it was just a fling?

Ndumiso saw her and removed his hand on her neck stepping back.

Ndumiso: I'll call you.

Nhlahla: Okay.

She took the bucket and left as he jogged to Thembalami who saw him and ran away....

6

In the river...

Ndumiso caught up with her and grabbed her arm clenching his jaws as his ankle ached.

She fearfully looked at him as his chest rose and fell, anger visible in his eyes.

Ndumiso: What is your problem? What do you want from me?

Thembalami: So you're cheating on me with her? Her out of all people?

Ndumiso: Excuse me? The last time I checked, we broke up! I don't know where do you get this idea of me and you being together and I don't want to know.

Thembalami: No we didn't. You're just confused and it's normal. Ndumiso it's me, you love me and you also know that. You can't throw away what we have for someone like her. She's even...(sighs) She's not good for you.

He scoffed in disbelief. He didn't know what to say at this moment. The reason he kept on avoiding her was because he didn't want to sound rude. He was protecting her dignity. After she begged him to not end things with him years back he agreed for the sake of peace and he never came back home until now. He was expecting her to have moved on by now. Who wait for a boyfriend for years anyway?

She let go of her arm and brushed his face frustrated.

She looked at his veined forearm as he brushed his face then faced the other way. His nicely trimmed beard made the shape of his head more sexier. Everything about him was extraordinary, he was perfect, a macho guy!

She could already see herself wearing high heels standing side by side with him as he wore his expensive suits. Being rich was going to suit him, being his wife was going to be a bonus.

God would have to forgive her but she wasn't letting go.
Never!!

Ndumiso: What should I do to make you forget about me?

Thembalami: Nothing.

Ndumiso: There has to be something. I can't live like this. In fear of you attacking my woman in my absence. I know you and

I know that you can be a bully but bare in mind one thing, should it happen that you hurt her, I'm going to come for you. And when I do you'll hate me forever.

Thembalami:(crying) You're breaking my heart with your words. Please stop...

She covered her mouth crying as her heart broke once again. He stood by watching her then sighed...

Ndumiso: You have to accept my decision because if you think of attacking her I'll act on my words and I'm serious.

Thembalami:(held his hands) Ndu it's me. Your Lami. You can't do this to us.

Ndumiso:(bored) Aaah awuzwa wena.

He pulled his hands from his grip and left. She wiped her tears and shouted...

Thembalami: I won't allow her to break us apart. You're not in your right mind and I'll fix that.

He went back to her and held the back of her neck...

Ndumiso: What was that?

Thembalami: I said I won't allow...

He tightened his grip around her neck and she flinched moving her neck as his nails dug deeper onto her skin.

Ndumiso: I said what was that?

Thembalami: ng..ng..ng...nothing

Ndumiso: Good!

He released her and walked away as she sat on the rock breaking out into a loud sob. Her shoulders shook as she cried painfully for her first love. Her heart was breaking and beating faster than normal. She didn't want anyone else, she wanted him and only him. Was that too much to ask for?

Thembalami:(crying) God please make it stop. I love him!!

At Ndumiso's home...

Later that day before his bedtime his father walked inside his house and sat on the chair next to the window and looked at him for sometime with his arms folded without saying anything.

He got up and sat on the edge looking at him quizzically.

Msindazwe: Are you sure it won't come back to you?

He swallowed and choked on his saliva then coughed uncontrollably hitting his chest as his father stared at him calmly waiting for his answer. How do you answer such question? He wasn't asking if he did it and that alone spoke volumes.

He wiped his tears and looked at him with reddish eyes.

Ndumiso: Baba?

Msindazwe: You look dumber when you do that so stop it.

Ndumiso: I don't know what are you talking about?

Msindazwe: I'm not going to get mad at you for doing the right thing but are you sure it won't come back to you? Did anyone else see you?

Ndumiso: I don't know what are you talking about father.

He scoffed and rubbed his chin before placing his palm on his cheek then raised his eyebrow leaning forward. This boy was good, too good for his liking it made him uncomfortable. Was he that experienced in murdering people to an extent that he could lie with a straight face. No hint of fear.

Msindazwe: Should I be worried boy?

Ndumiso: No.

Msindazwe: Aren't you the one who killed that boy?

Ndumiso:(calmly) No.

Msindazwe: I see. Tomorrow one of my friends I came with is fetching me early in the morning. We can leave together, it might help you settle in first before going to work.

Ndumiso: Okay I understand.

He stood up and walked to the door then turned to him...

Msindazwe: Never leave evidence behind. If a second person knows

drag him to the mess that will keep him in check. It always work. Goodnight.

Ndumiso: Goodnight.

He walked out and he dropped on his back sighing in relief. That was close.

Leaving the next day might work in his favor, nobody will suspect him after what he did a few hours back. Now his girl can leave freely without fear.

He reached for his phone and called her again and it still went straight to voicemail.

He got up and wore his pants and a hoodie then left...

At Nhlahla's house...

She looked at her blank screen again and sighed sadly. He was probably calling her but her phone was unreachable. Her clumsiness led to that and putting her phone on rice didn't work.

A soft knock sounded on her window and she got up and peeped on the window coming face to face with him. She giggled and quickly covered her mouth then stepped out.

He lifted her up and spun her around before kissing her.

Ndumiso:(whispered) Why aren't you picking up?

Nhlahla: My phone finally gave in after years of fainting and waking up and slipped to my bath water.

Ndumiso: Sorry. I'll see what I can do....can I ask you something?

Nhlahla: Okay.

Ndumiso: Please come with me. I promise you'll get back before anyone notice that you weren't here.

Nhlahla: Ndu.

Ndumiso: Please. I'm begging you right now. I really want to be with you but I can't stay here. My skin is very sensitive to mosquito bites.

Nhlahla: I can't.

Ndumiso: Please my love.... Okay you'll stay for a few minutes.

She sighed and looked at him as he pouted playfully under the moonlight.

Nhlahla: Few minutes only.

Ndumiso: Okay then let's go.

She went to lock the door and went with him to his house.

At Ndumiso's home...

They stayed for a while chatting then he propped his elbow on the pillow looking at her. She smiled shyly as he brushed her cheek and leaned over kissing her then got in between her legs.

Her heartbeat accelerated when her mind registered what was about to happen.

What if he hurt her? Her friends usually told her about how painful the first time was going to be.

His hand went under her top and squeezed her breast as she moaned closing her eyes. He started dry humping her as his d*ck expanded in his briefs.

Ndumiso: You sure?

Nhlahla:(nodded)...

Ndumiso: If you don't want to...

Nhlahla:(eyes closed) I want to.

He removed her top and her pyjama pants then kicked off his boxers planting kisses on her jawline as she opened her legs wider.

He looked at her firm breasts with dark nipples and smiled softly twisting her nipples with his fingertips sending electrifying waves to her coochie.

He planted wet kisses until he reached her bellybutton then slowly lifted her leg then exhaled seeing her pinkish hole, it was too tiny it almost made him feel guilty but nah. He was going to fuck that pussy!

He ran his fingertips on her folds then circled her clit with his thumb whilst inserting his middle and forefinger. She grabbed onto the sheets whimpering as a wave of pleasure hit her.

He took out his fingers whilst looking at her face and slowly rubbed himself on her. She threw her head back biting her lower lip as he slowly pushed it in blocking her entrance. She froze and pushed him back as he slowly went deeper stretching that tiny thing whilst biting his lower lip,

Nhlahla: Ndu it's painful.

Ndumiso: Relax your muscles, It'll be over soon.

She nodded and he started moving in and out slowly whilst she whimpered in pain.

He leaned over and kissed her lips his other hand holding her neck. He pushed it further and he screamed as tears fell from her eyes. He gave her two strokes and pulled out...

Ndumiso: Should I stop?

She shook his head no and he kissed her lips and curved his back pushing himself in again. He moved slowly and gently for a while. Beads of sweat collected on her forehead, he buried his face on the crook of her neck and kissed her whilst fucking her slowly enjoying the warmth of her pussy.

Ndumiso: Oh fuck!! I love you so much.

He gave her a deep kiss and got off bed pulling her to the edge and started fucking her. He moved his waist in circles rhythmically, hitting the left and right corners of that pussy as she moaned in pleasure. He hang her leg on his shoulder and gave it to her hard and deep as she moaned louder feeling a lil bit of discomfort mixed with pleasure.

He hit all the right corners grunting as sweat dripped down his back. She dug his nails on his forearms moaning as he fucked her harder. Looking at her cute face whilst buried deep inside her made him feel like the man! That pussy was so sweet and tight. Damn baby girl was doing the things, he never imagined himself as a person to enjoy sex with a virgin.

He rubbed his finger on her clit whilst giving it to her as she screamed in pleasure spasming on that black cock.

Her legs vibrated as air left her lungs whilst he fucked her through her orgasm filling up space in her tight pussy.

He pulled out and turned her around lying her on her stomach and inserted himself in.

Ndumiso: Mmhhh!!!

She grinned pulling away as he pulled her towards him pushing his legs on bed and pushed her upper body down.

He started off slowly whilst holding onto her waist.

He placed his foot on bed and went for the kill. She moved forward and he dragged her back again as she opened her mouth gasping for air whilst he pounded onto hard and fast.

Nhlahla:(whimpering rhythmically) Ndu...oh..God.

He groaned and pounded faster as his dreadlocks fell on his face. He pushed them back and curved his back rubbing her clit as she screamed in unbearable pleasure spasming. Their bodies slapped one another creating that clapping sound as he groaned louder his veins erecting as sweat coated his arms.

Ndumiso: Oh yeah...aahhhh!!!

He laid on her and kissed her neck giving her a hickey as he slowed down and his dick twitched inside releasing those fertile seeds shooting straight to that uterus!!

He pulled out leaving a trail of his cum as she laid on her stomach catching her breath. He reached for a towel and wiped himself before wiping her.

He kissed her forehead and pulled her up taking off the sheet and put on a clean one then laid down placing her head on his arm facing the ceiling.

A while later his phone vibrated on the table. He reached for it and glanced at the screen as Nhlahla caught the first line of the message, "You know how much I love you but you went ahead..."

She got up and limped to the door angrily.

Nhlahla: Please take me home so that you'll chat to your girlfriend in peace.

Ndumiso: You're doing it again. I won't talk to you about one and the same thing over and over again. Come back to sleep, I'll take you back.

Nhlahla: No. You've got what you wanted, let me go.

He pressed the power button and flicked the light laying still on bed.

Ndumiso: You know, I think this is the right time to confess since you keep on nagging me.

Nhlahla: I don't care about your confession...

Ndumiso: A few years ago I sold my soul to the devil. It seemed right at that time until they started asking for crazy sacrifices. Asking me to sacrifice my mother's sanity. I wanted to leave but I was told that I can't unless I did something for the dark world.

I never shared this with anyone, you're the first one I told because you'll help me....

She placed her hand on the wall searching for the switch as Ndumiso narrated how she was going to help him. Her lips trembled as her teeth hit one another. The atmosphere changed as her body got covered in goosebumps.

Nhlahla:(crying) God please I know I've just sinned but please don't allow me to die.

Ndumiso: Which God my love? We have different Gods unless you meant ours. We've just had sex which means we're one and there's nothing you can do about that.

She slid down the wall crying as urine flew down her thighs...

7

At Ndumiso's house...

Nhlahla's chest closed in on her as she gasped for air feeling suffocated. She wheezed as Ndumiso chanted scary words non-stop.

Nhlahla:(softly) God I don't want to die.

After a while he turned and glanced at her then flicked the switch turning the lights on. He got off bed and prepared water for her to bath.

Ndumiso: Come and bath.

She remained still with her knees raised up rocking herself back and forth.

Ndumiso: Oh you're still stubborn?

She slowly got up and went to bath whilst crying as he cleaned the floor and switched the fan on for a few minutes then switched it off getting on bed.

She finished bathing and wiped her body then lotioned before getting on bed.

Ndumiso: I'm not going to go back and forth with you as if your head isn't functioning. This is the second time you're jumping into conclusions. I spoke to you about this just today and now you're doing it again. Next time I'll do worse trust me and you'll be scared for the whole month.

Nhlahla:(crying) I'm sorry I won't do it again. Please don't kill me. I'm all my grandmother has..(sniffed) Please.

He chuckled and got ontop of her kissing her then rested his arms on either sides of her.

Ndumiso: I won't kill you. I was joking babe please stop crying.

He wiped her tears and buried his face on her neck as her heartbeat went back to normal.

Ndumiso: I wanted you to stop undermining me and listen when I talk to you.

Still on her neck he reached for his phone and placed it on her chest.

Ndumiso: 0619 read that message.

She swallowed and wiped her tears unlocking the phone then clicked on the message from Thembalami pouring her heart out to Ndumiso. She finished and placed it on the table.

Ndumiso:(looked at her) Am I allowed to get dramatic and pout like you do?

Nhlahla: I thought it was your girlfriend.

Ndumiso: Angzwani nomuntu ophaphayo Nhlahlenhle. This whole dramatic shit isn't cute. I can't spend an hour looking at you pouting and another one explaining myself and another

one apologizing if it happens I'm wrong. Stop overreacting, think before you act. Someone who act without thinking is annoying. I expect you to handle our matters in a matured way, what is gonna happen when we have kids? Are they gonna get kicked out every time they break one of your plates? Am I gonna sleep on the streets because I forgot to take out the chicken from the freezer? Stop this, it's not cute.

Nhlahla: I'm sorry, I admit I was wrong.

Ndumiso:(smiled) I forgive you, a part of me understands that you're still young but unfortunately in this relationship there's no baby. If I'm wrong I expect you to tell me so that I can correct myself. Throwing tantrums is a set back. Are we gonna have this conversation again?

Nhlahla: No.

Ndumiso: Thank you...I'm also sorry for scaring you. I won't do it again if you don't force me too.

He kissed her lips parting her legs with his knee....

Nhlahla: I can't do it again. It hurts.

Ndumiso: I'll be gentle this time around I promise...Please or I'll put only the tip please.

Nhlahla: Ok.

He kissed her as she closed her eyes whilst he caressed her body...

At Nhlahla's house...

The next morning Ndumiso waited for to get inside and went back home.

She laid down and flinched then laid on her stomach with her legs spread apart.

She never knew guys had sex like that and never got tired. If it was up to him, they would've went for it for the whole night. Her vagina was burning and her thighs had cramps.

She wrapped her arms on her pillow and stared at the darkness thinking about the previous night's events.

They weren't supposed to have sex after a few hours of dating. What if he left her after their sex? Tears filled her eyes as she thought of the possibility of him leaving her.

And he had to embarrass her like that by making her pee on herself. That guy didn't love her. Who scare someone they loved like that? She cried and begged him but he remained unaffected. Now that everything had passed she could think clearly and she realised a lot of things she should've done but didn't.

Her heart pounded as she remembered the important thing, the condom. She was about to get impregnated by a city guy only because he was charming and knew how to play with words. How could she be so stupid!!

She buried her face on the pillow and cried till she eventually fell asleep.

At Ndumiso's home...

He blew air onto his hands and went to his house as a car flashed its lights in front of the gate.

His father stepped out and went to it smelling fresh and he frowned confused, where was he going?

Msindazwe: Ndodana. We're leaving in a bit.

Ndumiso: Leaving to where?

Msindazwe: Ndumiso I told you last night.

Ndumiso:(remembered) Oh crap!!

He rushed inside the house and started preparing for his trip. He felt really bad for leaving. He still needed to get her a phone and emergency pills. He could just stay and leave some other day but leaving was going to be very beneficial to him.

He sat on bed and brushed his face as his head buzzed. Knowing how much he loved to overreact got her heart pounding. Maybe he should've done things differently the previous night but he couldn't, not when she was that hot!!

Ndumiso: God this feels so wrong!!

He got up and started bathing before washing the sheet and went to hang it on the washing line.

He finished packing and placed his bag on his bed thinking of a way to communicate with her.

A letter? It was overrated but then it was either that or leaving without saying anything.

He wrote her a letter and put it into an envelope together with his second bank card then went to her house.

He knocked on the window but there was no answer, he slipped it on the door and took off without looking back...

Hours later MaMpanza walked out of her bedroom and went to wake up Nhlahla in the dining room...

She shook her and she murmured and turned to the side as she shook her harder.

She exhaled and lifted her head looking at her...

Nhlahla: Gogo?

MaMpanza: Wake up, it's late.

Nhlahla: I'm sorry. I overslept.

MaMpanza: No problem I saw that you were tired.

She got up and sat on her butt grinning...

MaMpanza: Is everything okay?

Nhlahla:(faked a smile) Yes, everything is fine.

She stood up and went to open the windows and the door. An envelope caught her attention

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she bent and picked it up.

MaMpanza: Are you okay? What happened to your legs, why are you limping?

Nhlahla: I...I...I twisted my ankle...yes I did, I would be fine.

MaMpanza: I see, use MCO it helps.

Nhlahla: I will.

She folded her blankets then went to place them in her grandmother's room. She looked at the envelope with her heart pounding realizing who it was from. Nhlahlenhle was well written at the back, he was the only one who called her by her full name and oh boy she had a bad feeling about it.

She went out and cleaned then bathed before preparing breakfast for her grandmother after she had her morning bath.

When she was done with everything she went to take the envelope and opened it.

She placed the bank card on the side and started reading the letter.

The first few lines nearly sent her to ICU. So he left? Just like that? Immediately after sleeping with her, he left!!

She started breathing heavily and swallowed as her bottom lip trembled. She gained strength and read it again. She finished and folded it wiping her tears as her heart shuttered. She really wanted to understand his reasons for leaving but her heart wasn't having it. He left her!! All she was left with was his bank

card and the memories of the best few days she has ever had in her entire life.

"Sthandwa sami I'll come back for you, I'm also not sure when..." That felt too cliché in a way. That not sure when, might actually turn into years!!

At St Lucia...

Nkosinami walked out of Alpha Pharmacy on a call with his friend...

Ndumiso: Please don't sleep without giving them to her. I don't want to ruin her life like that. Please man.

Nkosinami: Relax, I have them with me. If she's not in the river I'll go to her house and make a plan on how to give them to her without her grandma suspecting anything.

Ndumiso: Thank God you have them. Call me when you reach her.

Nkosinami: Why did you leave so early again?

Ndumiso: It's complicated. Do this one thing for me, give her those emergency pills.

Nkosinami: I heard you the first time.

Ndumiso: I had to make sure. Sharp chat later.

He hang up and he shook his head chuckling and continued walking. A thought crossed his mind, what if Lami needed a little push to let him go? Maybe this was what she needed, with a baby in the picture, she might see that she doesn't stand a chance and eventually back off.

He took a deep breathe and walked to the trash bin nearby,

Nkosinami: I'm sorry bro.

He dropped the emergency pills in the trash bin and left.

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3 MONTHS LATER

8

At Nhlahla's house...

Nhlahla greeted her grandmother who was seated under the shade crocheting and went inside the house where she placed her bag on the chair then sat down removing her shoes. She flinched placing her swollen feet on the ground as they stung.

She walked to the bedroom where she changed to her summer dress and went to the kitchen to start cooking as her grandmother sadly watched her.

She was juggling work and school but she could tell her granddaughter wasn't happy. She was very sad and losing weight really fast.

Then there was the issue of her pregnancy, she was still refusing to tell her about the father.

The neighbors were rejoicing at her misery, everyone was waiting for her to fail in life and even though she wasn't bad considering the circumstances, the pregnancy was a huge setback.

At Ndumiso's workplace...

The elevator dinged and opened as Ndumiso stepped out with his boss wearing overalls carrying a file and a helmet with the other hand and walked to the CEO's office.

The CEO placed the helmet next to the leather couch and removed his suit jacket hanging it on his chair.

CEO: If I didn't know any better I would say you don't like your jobs.

Ndumiso: We do but we're not going to lie and pretend like being here is fun.

He poured water for himself and took a sip then walked towards the floor to ceiling window with his hands buried deep in his pockets as Ndumiso leaned back on the chair his hand rested on his lap looking at him.

CEO: I needed a clarification on the blueprints you presented to us the other day but looking at how busy you're, we'll look at that when you get back.

Ndumiso: I never said I'm busy. If you need something

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ask.

CEO: I didn't mean it like that you know but I understand it has been months.

He chuckled as he looked back at him with a stoic expression unaffected by his meaningless chuckle.

CEO:(cleared his throat) We've been observing how you've been committed to your work and we would like to give you a promotion but everything will be finalized when you get back.

Ndumiso: That would be fantastic, thank you.

CEO: Don't mention it, you can leave the file there I'll look at it later.

He pushed it towards his laptop and stood up walking out as he looked at him with his heart pounding. He closed the door and

he released a breath he wasn't aware he was holding feeling lighter than before. How can one person carry that kind of aura? He commanded respect and attention without even trying.

In the river...

Khanyisile closed the bucket and replied to a few messages on her phone. Nhlahla lifted the bucket and placed it over her head as the nike hoodie she was wearing lifted exposing the dark vertical line on her abdomen. Khanyisile quickly covered her mouth in shock.

She has heard rumours before but for some reason they never believed them or rather they were in denial.

Nhlahla pulled the hoodie and started walking as she grabbed her arm turning her around.

Nhlahla:(annoyed) What do you want?

Khanyisile: You're pregnant? Is it Ndumiso's?

She sucked her teeth and continued walking as Khanyisile pulled the hoodie from behind. She staggered back and dropped the bucket. She clenched her jaws looking at it as it broke and splashed water onto them.

She angrily slapped Khanyisile across the face.

Khanyisile:(shocked) Haa!!Wenzani?

She slapped her again and grabbed her afro as she punched her on the stomach. She bent over grinning as she kicked her abdomen. Nhlahla went to her in full speed and tripped her and she fell on the rock and screamed as her head ached. She grabbed her breast and twisted it whilst biting the other one as she kicked and screamed in pain.

She extended her hand and picked a rock. Nhlahla saw her and banged her head on the rock again and got up then ran away.

Khanyisile held her bitten breast crying painfully with her eyes closed as the village ladies approached singing and helped her...

At Ndumiso's rental house...

Later that day he passed a group of friends having a braai whilst drinking beer celebrating as the music played in the speakers. He chatted to a few guys and shoulder bumped with them and went to the car parked by the gate holding his bag and jumped inside bringing the engine to life. The crowd cheered whistling and he stepped on the accelerator as the engine roared louder.

The crowd went crazy and others stood up, he chuckled and reversed out of the driveway as their favorite verse in Umsebenzi Wethu by Busta came on.

Minutes later he paid the petrol attendant and thanked him then drove off taking a sip on his energy drink.

Driving late at night especially somebody else's car wasn't ideal to him but he had no other option. He wasn't spending another day in Durban, he missed his woman like crazy. Not being able to call her drove him crazy because she knew she was doing it on purpose. She used his card all the time but never bought a phone, he needed to teach her a lesson because it was clear that she had to cry for him to be heard.

He took another sip on a drink and leaned back as the traffic light turned green then drove into the night...

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At Ndumiso's house...

The next morning his mother stepped out from her bedroom and smiled softly seeing him seated in the dining room having coffee. He placed down the cup and stood up hugging her as she smiled happily.

MaZikhali: Money loves you, look at how fit you're.

Ndumiso:(chuckled) It feels safe and cared for around me. How are you feeling?

He pulled a chair for her and went to make a cup of tea for her.

MaZikhali: I'm fine, it's just my ankle acting up but I'll be fine.

Ndumiso: I'll give you a rub later on. How are your sinuses?

MaZikhali: Worse since your people started with the renovations it has been bad.

Ndumiso: Dad told me they have complaints.

MaZikhali: Ayi suka, they were trying to bully me because I'm a woman but your father sorted it out.

He placed the cup in front of her and sat down. He had missed these mornings with her mother, just listening to her complaining about the neighbors and everything she saw worthy to complain about.

Even though there was a topic he wanted her to talk about, he couldn't ask her straight up. He didn't want to make her suspicious.

MaZikhali:(sipped) I nearly forgot, Mzobe and his wife got arrested.

Ndumiso: Serious?

MaZikhali: Yes, apparently they were not allowed to sell alcohol since they had no licence.

He stood up and went to start on breakfast as she continued speaking.

MaZikhali: The police turned their backs on them since most of their colleagues died of alcohol poisoning shortly after you left.

Ndumiso: They died?

MaZikhali: More than 5 people died and most people suspect MaMpanza.

Ndumiso: What?!!

MaZikhali: Apparently it seemed as if the people who died were targeted.

Ndumiso: Why would she target certain people?

MaZikhali: I don't know, I think there's something they aren't telling.

Ndumiso: Serves them right though, ubani one vip beer espotini?

MaZikhali:(chuckled) They wanted them to feel special look where it got them.

Ndumiso: Ai asazi.

She placed the cup on the saucer and stood up.

MaZikhali: Let me go and bath, No avocados for me please.

Ndumiso:(laughing) Oh you're being choosy?

MaZikhali:(laughing) Ai suka.

He laughed and rinsed the tomatoes on the sink as his phone rang...

Ndumiso: Hello.

Voice: Morning sir, you're speaking to Bongiwe from Elephant Lake Hotel.

Ndumiso:(wiped his hands) Yes.

Voice: Our call got disconnected and I've been trying to get hold of you for hours now. It's about your booking.

Ndumiso: Oh yes, I'm sorry about that there was load shedding in the area so the network was acting up.

Voice: I understand.

Ndumiso: Yeah...as I said before please add a spa treatment if possible.

Voice: For two?

Ndumiso: No for one person.

Voice: Got it. Anything else?

Ndumiso: No that's all.

Voice: Okay Thanks, Goodbye.

He hang up and placed the pan on the stove.

At Khanyisile's house...

She was laying on her back on bed sucking a lollipop with her bandaged head rested on a pillow whilst Thembalami sat on the bench by the door.

Khanyi grinned placing her hand on her face as the sun rays coming from the single window of her mud house blinded her vision sending a sharp pain on her already aching head.

Thembalami: How do you allow a child to beat you up like that?

Khanyisile: She took me by suprise because I wasn't expecting her to go all psycho on me. I mean she just attacked me out of nowhere...please pull the curtain down for me.

Thembalami got up and went to pull the old sheet acting as a curtain on her window and went to sit down still digesting what her friend was telling her.

Khanyisile: We can't let her get away with it. She's even pregnant, if we let this go then she wins and you need to forget about whatever plans you had of getting out of here.

Thembalami: I've done everything and I can't do anything more to her Ndu threatened me.

Khanyisile: You need to think of something! We can't let her get away with this.

She sighed deeply brushing her face feeling defeated.

At Nhlahla's workplace...

Nhlahla appeared walking with the security guard and Ndumiso straightened stepping away from the car. He bit his lower lip raising his eyebrows looking at her wide hips stretching her skirt and went up to her shirt catching a glimpse of her

cleavage. Goodness what was she eating the past few months? Her hair had been cut and oh boy she was flames! A champagne of looks with her funny looking full cheeks.

The security guard opened the gate with a smile leading Nhlahla out as she licked her lips trying to stabilize her breathing as her heart pounded.

The security guard smiled at him as he raised a thumb up then turned his eyes to Nhlahla.

He held her arms and embraced her taking a deep breath then held her tighter as she closed her eyes inhaling his intoxicating cologne. She rested her face on his left breast relaxing as her heartbeat went back to normal, at least he didn't notice the changes in her body. She sniffed realising how much she missed his big arms around her, his soft smile, his authoritative voice, his cologne but mostly his presence!

Ndumiso:(softly) Don't cry. I'm here now.

He broke the hug and wiped her tears smiling as more tears fell. He leaned over and kissed her then led her to the car.

Ndumiso: You good?

Nhlahla: Yes.

He nodded and she leaned back on her seat taking a deep breath then looked around not believing her eyes. She was convinced that she was not going to see him ever again and now he was there in flesh.

She looked at him as he started the car with his hand on the gear stick revealing his veined forearms reversing out and smiled impressed. Was this all hers?

Ndumiso: You look beautiful.

Nhlahla:(blushed) Thank you.

Ndumiso: Siyaliwe yini indoda ngahlukunyezwa kangaka?

Nhlahla:(blushed as butterflies filled her tummy)....

Ndumiso: Nhlahlenhle?

Nhlahla:(cleared her throat) Chabo.

Ndumiso: Kuhle ke makunjalo...Connect your phone on the Bluetooth and play some music.

Nhlahla: I...I don't have a phone.

Ndumiso: That's impossible cause I remember clearly telling you to buy it.

Nhlahla:(slowly) I didn't.

Ndumiso:(snorted looking ahead) I see.

He turned to her and chuckled in disbelief then bit his lower lip his hand rested on her thigh joining the tar road as she looked back confused.

Nhlahla: Where are we going? I can't leave...

Ndumiso: I'm still angry at you can you please keep quiet? Your grandmother is fine, you're coming back tomorrow. Stop panicking.

Nhlahla: I don't have anything in my bag.

Ndumiso: I know, relax I got you.

At Elephant Lake Hotel...

Hours later she got off the massage table as the masseuse packed everything.

Moments later Ndumiso stepped in and shifted away from the door allowing them to step out then looked at Nhlahla as she walked over hugging him.

Ndumiso: You liked it?

Nhlahla: Ofcourse, I loved it even though it would've been fun if we both did it.

Ndumiso: My body is fine unless they massage dicks then I don't mind.

Nhlahla:(giggled shyly) Really now?

She broke the hug and looked up at him then dropped her eyes and buried her face on his chest. He smiled and cupped her face kissing her.

He untied her robe and picked her up directing her to bed then gently laid her down whilst kicking off his shoes. He removed his tshirt and arched his back unzipping his pants. He froze looking at her small pregnancy bump.

He looked up to her face as she stared back at him with her lower lip trembling...

He sighed and zipped his pants sitting at the corner of bed as his erection slowly died down...

Ndumiso: You're pregnant?

Nhlahla:(sat up) I'm sorry, I didn't know I was pregnant until late. I thought maybe since it was my first time I won't fall pregnant. It was stupid of me and I'm sorry.

She sniffed wiping her tears with the back of her hand.

Ndumiso: You didn't take the morning after?

Nhlahla: No I didn't buy it. I was too stressed to think about buying them.

Ndumiso: You didn't talk to Nami?

Nhlahla:(offended) You think I slept with him?

Ndumiso: No I...(sighs) It's okay. Come here.

She crawled over towards him as he held her and placed his hand on her bump.

Ndumiso: You should've told me.

Nhlahla: I was scared, I didn't want you to think I'm using a baby to trap you.

Ndumiso: Woman it's my sperm you can trap me with it anyday!....so I made a baby?

Nhlahla: I think so.

He pressed his lips together in disbelief, why was he surprised though? That kind of sex was likely to result in a baby. Now that explained the wider hips and chubby cheeks.

Nhlahla: If you're still shocked...

Ndumiso: Shocked? We had sex and I made a baby, nothing shocking about that...thank you for keeping her.

She chuckled tearfully and rubbed her eyes as he unzipped his pants kissing her. His manhood expanded as he kicked off his boxers whilst she opened her legs wider accommodating him...

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At Elephant Lake Hotel...

Ndumiso tipped the waiter and walked to the door with a towel wrapped around his waist. He closed the door behind him and dropped his wallet on bed walking to the bathroom where Nhlahla was brushing her teeth on the sink with a towel wrapped around her body.

He held her from behind as she rinsed her mouth and then wiped her lips looking at him in the mirror.

Ndumiso:(whispered against her ear) I love you.

Nhlahla: I love you too.

She said blushing catching a glimpse of his left breast where her name was tattooed in an italic font. She tilted her head to the side as he nibbled her ear breathing onto it as her whole body came alive.

He removed the towel and planted kisses on her back his hand squeezing her sensitive breast as she closed her eyes. His other

hand went to her swollen coochie and softly parted her folds inserting his finger as her breathing picked up.

He fingered her whilst rubbing her clit with his thumb as she softly moaned parting her legs. He removed his finger and brought it to her mouth and she slowly sucked on it as he bit his lower lip pressing his rock hard veined cock on her ass dry humping her. Her pussy throbbed feeling that hard dick on her ass. She released the finger and looked at him in the mirror with pleading eyes.

Nhlahla: Please.

Ndumiso: What?

Nhlahla: Please put it in.

His hand went up to her neck, he held her neck and pulled her back whispering against her ear...

Ndumiso: I'm going to fuck this pussy and you're not going to stop me okay?

Nhlahla:(knod her head)...

Ndumiso: I don't hear you.

Nhlahla:(breathlessly) Ye...Yes...oh babe fuck it, it's all yours.

He released her neck and curved his back lowering himself and rubbed the tip on her entrance before slowly pushing it in. She held onto the sink tighter sticking her butt out and he pulled out and smacked her opening as she whimpered her eyes half closed. He rammed inside her and she screamed out loud taken by surprised.

Her pussy walls expanded accommodating that big fat cock as he grunted softly feeling her warmth.

Ndumiso: Shit!!

He slowly moved his waist whilst holding her shoulder looking in the mirror then increased his pace after a while.

Nhlahla: Uh..uh..

Her walls clenched around his dick as her legs vibrated then she moaned louder. He bit his lower lip his ego skyrocketing looking at her sexy expression as she came around his cock. He held her

hips and fucked her harder through her orgasm hitting all the right corners. Her breathing came out in gasps as they bodies clapped against one another whilst her boobs shook.

He looked down at his dick going in and out of her then clenched his jaws hammering that pussy even harder moving his waist in circles his veins erecting on his arms sweat dripping on his back.

She licked her lips and gasped catching her breath as she drilled into her harder then she shut her eyes tilting her head up feeling her wave of pleasure approaching. He held her shoulder and pumped inside her. He groaned freezing inside her then stuffed that warm pussy with his thick cum.

He remained still then pulled out before turning her around and kissed her exhausted sweaty forehead then picked her up directing his semi hard dick back in. He started moving as his dick hardened inside her whilst she wrapped her arms around his neck burying her face on his neck. He went to stand by the wall and bent his legs increasing his pace fucking that tight pussy for a while until he came and they both went to take a shower after catching their breaths...

Later they stepped out of the shower and went to the bedroom where they wiped their bodies and lotioned before getting dressed. He held her hand and led her to the balcony where they were gonna have their breakfast. He opened the chair for her and settled in front of her.

She squinted her eyes when the sun kissed her glowing skin as he uncovered their plates.

Nhlahla: This is beautiful.

Ndumiso: Like you.

She reached for a fork and started eating as he took a few pictures of her then began eating.

Nhlahla: The photographer of our relationship.

Ndumiso:(chuckled) It's my phone my rules.

Nhlahla: I can tell.

Ndumiso: So how long are you going to work? You need to take a maternity leave.

Nhlahla: Yooh weeh, maternity leave at 3 months!

Ndumiso: Yes, we can't risk your pregnancy.

Nhlahla: My pregnancy isn't risky and besides my contract was supposed to end next month.

Ndumiso: Was?

Nhlahla: Yep but since I've been assisting the Geography teacher with her work, the principal saw it very beneficial to the school for me to come and assist her full time.

Ndumiso: They'll be exploiting you?

Nhlahla: No he'll pay me from his pocket and besides I could really use this money.

Ndumiso: I don't feel too good about this. Teaching assistants don't teach.

Nhlahla:(sighs) They don't but he gave me a raise when I started. I was very good in Geography when I was in high school and the school has only one person teaching Geography so they need all the help they can get.

Ndumiso: There are a lot of unemployed graduates out there why my pregnant woman?

Nhlahla:(held his hand) That's because your pregnant woman is the best.

Ndumiso:(snorted) Cocky much?

Nhlahla: What can I say?

Ndumiso:(straight face) We can't deny that you aren't coping. You're unhappy in that school.

Nhlahla: It's nothing, I was just stressed about how you would react to the news.

Ndumiso: I see but I'm still not comfortable with you working.

Nhlahla: So what are we going to do about that because I'm not quitting?

He looked at her with her arms folded and a little pout and laughed feeling challenged.

Ndumiso: I yes my dick, now you're challenging me?

She rolled her eyes and continued eating...

At Khanyisile's house...

Later that day her sister, Buyisile joined Khanyisile and Thembalami as they sat on the reedmats chatting. She sat by their feet and sighed moving her shoulders sideways with her knees raised up.

Khanyisile: Everything okay?

Buyisile: Yes, I'm just tired.

Thembalami: Teachers don't get tired.

Khanyisile: These ones aren't teachers, they clean after teachers, only Nhlahlenhle is teaching.

Buyisile: Khanyi stop spreading fake news, she's just assisting Ms Ndlela.

Khanyisile: Same difference isn't she receiving special treatment in that school? I'm sure she slept with all the male teachers to secure that job.

Buyisile sighed annoyed

her sister's bitterness was boring and exhausting.

Buyisile: You know if you both stopped fighting useless battles your lives would be better. Other kids are fighting useful

battles, fighting for financial freedoms, bettering their lives. I'm talking about fights that will take them from one level to another. You're the only ones who are always on other people's business. You're the ones who know who slept with who to secure a job, who is driving an expensive car he can't afford, who's raising kids that aren't his, who's pregnant, who's cheating on who. What about your business? When are you attending your poverty? When are you attending this thing of you not working? When are you attending this thing of you not having financial freedom? You're getting old but yet you both have no direction in life and you don't have any problem with that. Wena Lami you think Ndumiso will fall for you? Thee Ndumiso fall for someone like you? Who bask in the sun all day hating on people because they're progressing in life and you're not?

Khanyisile: Heh Buyi...

Buyisile:(gave her a hand) Awume wena...If the roles were reversed would you fall for yourself? Not someone like you but You? Huh?

Thembalami: Yes.

Buyisile: Ngoba awusile ekhanda...(stood up) Find hobbies and leave the poor girl alone...(turned to Khanyisile) Eyakho angifuni nokuy'khuluma ngoba angazi uhlanganaphi no Ndumiso. Ezalukazi eyndala ezibhoreka kabi!

(because you're stupid...I don't even want to talk about you because I don't know what is your business with Ndumiso.)

She walked away as they looked at each other ashamed. Khanyisile sighed and reached for her phone calling someone but the phone rang unanswered...

Khanyisile: Look tell others to stop, we've thought about it and it's not worth it anymore. Call me when you get this message.

At the mall...

Ndumiso cupped the gear knob with his hand on top of Nhlahla's hand and gently moved the lever holding the steering wheel with the other hand leaning back and reversed out of the parking lot as Rude boy by Rihanna played in the background.

Nhlahla sang along whilst making a video as he moved his head slowly then shook his head pushing his dreadlocks back.

He glanced at her singing poorly and smiled feeling content. He didn't know what the future had for them but one thing he was

sure about was that, as long as they had each other then nothing could defeat them. He just had to be there for her and love her right. He didn't see himself failing to take care of her when he had such a great role model in his father.

He turned to her and pulled her for an intense kiss then pulled back smiling.

Ndumiso:(softly) I love you so much.

Nhlahla: I love you too.

She blushed dropping her eyes as he raised his eyebrows and chuckled licking his lips then looked ahead stepping on the accelerator hard increasing the speed.

Minutes later they parked a few meters away from her home.

Ndumiso: Please call me. For the first time in 12 months.

Nhlahla:(giggled) 3 months.

Ndumiso: Same difference.

Nhlahla:(laughing) I'm sorry, I'll buy a PS written I'm sorry okay?

Ndumiso:(laughing) Mxm leave me alone. That was the best I could do at that time.

Nhlahla: I saw it..

He scoffed and stepped out walking to the boot and took out her shopping bags. She got out holding her handbag and cellphone then he tilted his head to the side opening his arms. She hugged him and they kissed as he squeezed her ass then let go.

Ndumiso: Please call me.

Nhlahla: I will.

Ndumiso: Go I'll watch you.

She took the bags and left as he got in his car and drove off after she got inside their home.

At Nhlahla's house...

Her grandmother washed her hands and scoffed looking at her granddaughter walking towards her. She was glowing and crazy enough, she wasn't thin anymore, was it her eyes or her concerns about her led her to believe that she was losing weight?

MaMpanza: I thought you weren't coming back.

Nhlahla: I...I thought...

MaMpanza: Please get me grandpa from the supermarkets if you're not tired.

Nhlahla:(placed her bags in the bedroom) Grandpa only?

MaMpanza: Was that the father?

Nhlahla: Gogo.

MaMpanza: What?

Nhlahla: Yes.

MaMpanza: Ummh.

She took money from her bag and left.

Hours Later...

MaMpanza put off the candle with her fingers and sat in the dark waiting for Nhlahla to come back. She didn't know what was holding her because the supermarkets were long closed. Maybe she was with her baby daddy.

At Ndumiso's house...

He tried Nhlahla's number again and it rang unanswered. He sighed and flicked the lamp laying down, maybe she was already sleeping. He laid on his back looking at the ceiling with a smile on his face.

Ndumiso

#11

At Nhlahla's house...

MaMpanza woke up from her sleep and stretched herself yawning. She looked around the house and frowned realising that it was the next day and her granddaughter was still not back. She slowly stood up taking her walking stick as she began to worry.

Nhlahla wasn't someone who would leave without saying anything.

She opened the door and thoughtfully looked at the dark clouds her heartbeat dropping. Where was she?

She went back inside and started bathing before sitting on bed thinking of places she might've went to...

At Ndumiso's house...

He sent her a text message and pulled the blanket sleeping. His phone rang and he leaped up grabbing it from the table...

Ndumiso: Babe hey...

Nami: Huh?

Ndumiso:(annoyed) What do you want?

Nami: Is everything okay?

Ndumiso: Why are you calling me?

Nami: Ndu, it's me.

Ndumiso: I know who you're. Nami why did you lie to me?

Nami: About what?

Ndumiso:(sat up) I asked you nicely to buy the emergency pills for me and even sent you money but you lied to me.

Nami: About that, I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking...I just did it for you. I knew how much you loved her so...

Ndumiso: Whoah, don't lie. I never confessed my feelings for Nhlahla to you. You know I'm actually shocked that you would lie to me like this after all the shit we did for each other. How do you expect me to trust you after this?

Nami: I didn't think it was a big deal. I mean it's not like you can't afford the baby...

Ndumiso:(snapped) It's not about that!! Ofcourse I can afford a baby but she can't. She's not ready to be a mother and we never discussed that hence I wanted to contain the situation but no you had to play God with our lives...(sighed) I'm sad that you would destroy her life like this. She has school and a whole bunch of shit to take care of before having a baby. You should've told me if you didn't want to buy them for her. I would've got someone else or asked her to buy them herself. I hate what you did and I don't see myself forgiving you.

Nami: Okay I can see that I messed up, I'm sorry. We'll talk about this when I get there. I'm also coming home today.

Ndumiso: Aah suka!

He hang up and sat on the edge of bed his heart racing as sadness engulfed him. He looked at the time and brushed his face laying down.

His phone rang again and he closed his eyes ignoring it as it rang a couple of times before he received a text message...

Msindazwe: Call me.

He sighed and called him back...

Ndumiso: Msindazwe.

Msindazwe: I've been calling you what is going on?

Ndumiso: Nothing, my phone was on silent.

Msindazwe: I can tell, I've transferred my share of the payment to your account. Pay those people when they're done.

Ndumiso: I saw it but why contribute more than we agreed on?

Msindazwe: That's my house, you can't contribute more in your father's house. Enjoy your money....While we're still talking about that. Are you sure about the baby?

Ndumiso: Yes, I'm sure. It's mine.

Msindazwe: The mother is that short girl?

Ndumiso:(chuckled softly) Father...

Msindazwe: What? You said she's from the neighborhood so I assumed it was her. Your 'plans'.

Ndumiso: Yes it's her.

Msindazwe: Ummmh. When are they reporting the pregnancy?

Ndumiso: I'll talk to her and let you know.

Msindazwe: I'll hear from you. Let me call you back, I'm still busy with something.

Ndumiso: Okay

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bye.

He hang up and switched off his phone and switched on the fan laying down rubbing his heavy eyes. He was tired and he didn't even get a good sleep the day before because of nightmares. He couldn't remember what the nightmares were about but whatever they were about made his heart skip a bit.

At Thembalami's house...

They both paced up and down waiting for a call...

Khanyisile: Can't we call them again?

Thembalami: No, we've been doing that all morning.

Eventually her phone rang and she went to stand by the window picking...

Thembalami: Why weren't you calling us?

Voice: Relax, I was still busy. What's up?

Thembalami: Did you go through with it?

Voice: No, we got the voice message on time.

Thembalami:(relieved) Thank you so much.

Voice: When are you paying us?

Khanyisile: For what? You didn't do anything.

Voice: No, you don't get to tell me that nonsense. I was going to do it had you not called everything off.

Khanyisile: He's right.

Voice: 7pm at our usual spot and dare try to act smart with me.

Thembalami: We won't. Bye.

The call got disconnected and she turned to Khanyisile smiling.

Thembalami: That went well.

Khanyisile: It did because honestly we wouldn't have been able to live with ourselves knowing we had a hand in someone else's death

Thembalami: You're right about that. I just have to find something else and leave her alone.

Khanyisile nodded leaning back on the chair.

At Nhlahla's house...

MaMpanza locked the door and rubbed her eyes then went to look for Nhlahla.

She asked everyone she met on the way but nobody knew where she was.

After a while she sat on the big rock by the road and sighed sadly getting discouraged. What if her granddaughter was kidnapped and used for rituals?

She frowned rubbing her teary eyes failing to stomach the thought of something happening to her granddaughter. She couldn't afford to lose her, not after her daughter trusted her with her only daughter.

She could've asked her father's family to take her but she trusted her because she believed she could do a better job in raising her.

She rested her forehead on her clenched fists at the top of her walking stick as the image of her daughter's empty eyes staring at her on her death bed filled her mind.

Her pregnancy was complicated and she was well aware that there was a possibility of her not waking up after surgery. Her wish was for her baby to at least be raised by someone who would love her and care for her.

When she chose her mother, MaMpanza was grateful and she vowed to raise her with nothing but love and now she has lost her.

Nobody went missing for such a long time and turned up alive.

After a while Ndumiso appeared and pulled over next to her stepping out...

MaMpanza:(sniffed) Nduduzo my boy is that you?

Ndumiso: Yes it's me. What are you doing here?

MaMpanza: I'm looking for Nhlahla.

Ndumiso: On the road? Why would you look for her?

MaMpanza: I sent her to buy grandpa yesterday and she never returned home.

Ndumiso: What? Are you sure?

MaMpanza: Yes.

Ndumiso: Where did she buy it?

MaMpanza: In the supermarket, in these containers they only sell compral and panado.

Ndumiso:(panicking) Come and let's go look for her.

He held her hand and led her to the car then drove to the supermarket...

Upon their arrival he got off the car and went inside then showed the shopkeeper a picture of Nhlahla..

Shopkeeper: She did come here yesterday and bought bread...no tablets and stimorol.

Ndumiso: Then left?

Shopkeeper: Yeah.

A police van flashed its lights driving past the supermarket and shortly after that an ambulance followed.

Shopkeeper: These people don't get tired of killing each other. I swear this is the worst place ever.

Customer: Apparently a girl was found murdered in the river. When I finish here I'm going there to watch.

Ndumiso: Sorry, when was she murdered?

Customer: I don't know, she was found this morning by the herdboys. The ambulance was probably called hours back but as usual they took their time.

He slid his phone in his pocket and went to his car driving to the river forgetting about the tiles he was sent to buy...

In the river...

They parked behind the police cars and got off the car walking to the river where people were gathered whilst the police took a statement. The paramedics stepped back as the hearse slowly approached.

People allowed them to pass and they walked to the body covered in a body bag on top of the rock. The police held them back...

Ndumiso: We want to look maybe we know her.

The officer went to the body and unzipped the bag as he swallowed his heart pounding harder when he laid his eyes on the body. She covered her mouth in shock disturbed by the state the body was in...

Officer: Mam, do you know her?

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In the river...

Officer: Mam, do you know her?

MaMpanza: No it's not her.

Officer: Are you sure?

MaMpanza: Yes, I don't know this girl.

The officer zipped the bag as Ndumiso quietly held her hand and they left...

Atleast it wasn't her, that gave him a little hope. He sighed relieved and got into the driver's side then reversed...

Ndumiso: I think we need to go to the police station maybe they might help us.

MaMpanza: Those people don't take us serious. I won't waste my breath on them.

Ndumiso: We'll go together. They'll help us.

She sternly looked at him as he cleared his throat looking ahead.

MaMpanza: Why do you care so much about us?

Ndumiso: I care about everyone.

MaMpanza: If you say so.

His phone rang and he picked...

Ndumiso: Ma?

MaZikhali: How far are you?

Ndumiso: With what?

MaZikhali: Ayibo Ndumiso!

Ndumiso:(remembered) Tiles, ma look I'm still held up somewhere. I'll be there in 3 hours.

MaZikhali: Ayi Ndu.

Ndumiso: I'm sorry.

MaZikhali: Okay.

She hang up and he drove for a while then turned to the police station. He parked the car in the parking lot. They got off and went inside. They looked around the reception area and joined the que as the officers chatted and laughed whilst certifying some documents.

He tapped his foot anxiously on the floor glancing at his wristwatch from time to time. The que moved slowly until he got fed up and stood up then went to the front desk, They stopped laughing and watched him.

Ndumiso: Can I get help around here?

Officer: Join the line, you can't...

Ndumiso: You won't come at me with that nonsense. I've been here for some time now watching you chatting and laughing.

Officer 2: Okay...okay no need to get worked up...sir how can we help you?

Ndumiso: We're here to open a case for a missing person.

Officer 2: Has 24 hours passed?

Ndumiso: No.

Officer 2: How old is he?

Ndumiso: She's 20 years.

Officer 2: There's nothing we can do for you. That person probably went to visit her boyfriend.

Ndumiso: I'm the boyfriend.

Officer 2: Iyoooh and that's her mother?

Ndumiso: Grandmother.

Officer 2: We can't help you. Wait for 24 hours.

Ndumiso: Mr police officer...

Officer 2: Colonel...

Ndumiso: I don't care, you want to tell me that with all the GBV cases getting reported everyday there are cases you take for granted? Huh?

Officer 2: That's not what I said.

Ndumiso: If it happens something happens to her I will hold you accountable. I'll personally make sure that you get fired and never get hired anywhere after that.

Officer 2: Are you threatening me?

Ndumiso: Threats are for cowards.

He swallowed stepping back and pulled a file taking out the pen.

Officer 2: You said what happened again?

He called MaMpanza and she walked over to them and narrated the whole story then moments later they walked out.

The police gathered discussing them...

Officer 1: He probably killed her.

Officer 2: My suspicion exactly

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now he's here ordering us around pretending to be a caring son in law.

Officer 1: I know his type don't allow him to get to you. He wanted to score points with us.

He shook his head and then called the next person on the que.

Meanwhile outside she rested her hand on the wall bending down as her back ached.

Ndumiso: Are you okay?

MaMpanza: I'll be fine, my back is aching. I never stand for this long.

Ndumiso: I see.

She held her hand and they walked slowly and he opened the back door for her then got inside driving out.

They went to buy the tiles and then went to pharmacy before he drove her home.

Ndumiso:(helped her sit on a chair) Are you sure you'll be fine? I can get someone to help you.

MaMpanza:(shook her head) Are you the father?

Ndumiso: What?

MaMpanza: That's the only sound explanation.

Ndumiso: I'm..I..

MaMpanza: Yes or no. Come to think of it that was the car that dropped her off yesterday.

Ndumiso:(brushed his hands) I'm sorry.

MaMpanza: So it's you?

Ndumiso:...

MaMpanza: You can leave.

Ndumiso: Thank you.

He walked out as she grinned arching her back then stood up and went to lie down after praying for her granddaughter's safety.

She thought of her pregnancy and scoffed in disbelief. Why would Nhlahla hide him?

Yes she wasn't impressed with the pregnancy but the father was responsible and he respected women. That alone was enough for her to accept him.

At Thembalami's house...

Later that day Nkosinami stood by the fence talking to Thembalami.

Nami: I can't help you if you don't tell me the problem.

Thembalami: We ordered a hit on Nhlahla and later called it off but now Khanyi is blackmailing me with that information.

Nami: You think I have got time to waste. Nobody orders a hit on someone and go around telling people.

Thembalami: I'm serious. I suggested something else but Khanyi insisted on getting a hitman.

Nami: A hitman, all for a man who doesn't want you?

Thembalami:(crying) I know it was stupid off me but I'm desperate, Ndu can't find out about what I tried to do especially since she's now missing.

Nami: She's missing?

Thembalami: I heard people talking about it.

Nami: Yooh he's going to kill you.

Thembalami: I hope it doesn't come to that.

Nami: Believe me it'll. You don't know how protective he is over that girl. He kills for her, literally.

Thembalami: Oh God!!

Nami: Call your hitman and confirm the cancellation.

Thembalami: I'm going to meet up with him right now. I need you to convince Ndumiso that I didn't do anything. You're the only person he trusts so please take advantage of that.

Nami: I'll try, let's go...

Minutes later the hitman arrived in their usual spot...

Hitman: What is this?

Nami: I'm paying so I deserve to be here.

Hitman: Oh okay.

Nami: Are you sure you didn't kill her?

Hitman: Yes. I didn't touch her. I swear.

Nami:(looked at Lami) That's better.

She nodded and rubbed her arms looking around as the guys counted the money...

At Ndumiso's house...

Later that night Ndumiso stayed in the dark watching videos on his phone. Her videos brought tears to his eyes as he tilted his head up rubbing his eyes.

She can't leave him. It was impossible. They've been looking all over for her but she was nowhere to be found.

A knock spun on the door. He paused the video and flicked the lamp standing up...

Ndumiso: Yes.

Voice: Police open!!

He opened and stepped out looking at them under the moonlight as their cars flashed their lights in the middle of the yard.

Police: Are you Ndumiso Mdletshe?

Ndumiso: Yes.

Police: We would like you to come with us.

Ndumiso: Why?

Police: A body that matches Nhlahlenhle's description has been found in the bush by one of the drunkards.

Ndumiso: We're leaving now? The lady we saw earlier in the river also matched her description.

Police: I don't know about that...The old lady asked to come with you if you don't mind.

Ndumiso: No I don't, I'm coming.

He went inside and put on a hoodie taking his phone with him. He put his hands together on his face praying for her safety. She was definitely not dead, his Nhlahla was out there probably scared but definitely not dead!!

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At Ndumiso's house...

He saw her mother getting out of her house and excused himself...

MaZikhali: What is going on? What are the police doing here?

Ndumiso: Nhlahla is missing and they might now something so we're going to confirm if it's really her.

MaZikhali: Oh! Do you want me to come with you?

Ndumiso: No, you can go back to sleep.

MaZikhali: Let me know how it went. I'll wait for you.

Ndumiso: Okay mama.

He walked to the police car and found MaMpanza seated at the back with her eyes closed. He greeted her and looked ahead then the police drove out as he swallowed non-stop wetting his dry throat.

Minutes later they parked at the entrance of the bush and walked inside lighting their torchs to where other officers and the forensic team were waiting for them.

They took a deep breath and leaned over looking inside the black body bag as the officer lit her face.

MaMpanza quickly let go of his hand and fell on her knees crying touching her face all over. He clenched his jaws and brushed his face in disbelief.

Police: Is this her?

MaMpanza:(crying) Oh my baby! Yooh my God not my baby!

Ndumiso: Yes, it's her.

There she was laying with her eyes opened and blood coming out from the corner of her mouth and a big scar on the left side of her face.

She pulled the zipper down and her hands shook as she stared at the stab wounds on her chest and tummy. Her chest rose and fell as her airway tightened her blood pressure

skyrocketing and then she placed her hands on her chest gasping for air.

The paramedics quickly attended to as the other one brought a stretcher and they took her to the ambulance whilst the police zipped up the body bag and held each sides walking away as he stared at where she was laying.

One officer tapped him on the arm and he turned...

Officer: Please step back, this is a crime scene and we would also like to take your statement.

Ndumiso: I will come down to the station tomorrow.

Officer: We need it now.

Ndumiso: I said tomorrow Mr officer.

Officer: I hear you.

He walked out of the forest just as people gathered in their sleepwear.

Others whispered amongst themselves pointing at him as he walked to the ambulance...

Ndumiso: Will she be fine?

Paramedic: Her blood pressure is too high but she'll be fine.

Ndumiso: You won't admit her?

Paramedic: No, she'll go back home. Will you be able to wait for her?

Ndumiso:(sighed) No.

The paramedic nodded and he slid his hands in his pockets and took the long journey back home.

In his arrival at home he stripped naked and left only his boxers then sat in the dark leaning against the wall until the next morning.

In his mother's house...

The next morning she placed down the bucket and then wiped her hands reaching for her ringing phone.

MaZikhali: Baba unjani? (how are you)

Msindazwe: I'm fine, how are you doing this morning?

MaZikhali: Not fine, When I was fetching water I heard that your daughter in law has passed on.

Msindazwe: When did that happen?

MaZikhali: They found her last night. Apparently they found another body the day before but luckily it wasn't her but a woman murdered by her abusive boyfriend.

Msindazwe: Does he know?

MaZikhali:(sighed) Yes, he saw her last night. I went to his house today but he ignored me.

Msindazwe: That's not good.(took a deep breath) I'll talk to my boss and then come back home.

MaZikhali: Do you think that's a good idea?

Msindazwe: It's worth a try, I need to be there I'm sure he needs me, let me call you back.

MaZikhali: Ok.

She stepped out and looked at his house, she couldn't imagine the pain he was going through. Losing the mother of your child and your child at the same time.

If only he could open the door so that she could confirm that he was alright. He loved her, she saw it in his eyes a few days back. His endless smiles and beaming face. Her son was happy and content and now all of that was gone leaving him with nothing but sadness.

Moments later he stepped out and went to the gate but turned back when he saw her...

Ndumiso: Mama, how are you?

MaZikhali: I'm fine, you?

Ndumiso:(faked a smile) I'm good. Is everything okay?

MaZikhali: I heard about your girlfriend. How are you holding up?

Ndumiso: I'll be fine.

MaZikhali: Are you sure?

Ndumiso:(swallowed) I'm sure. We'll talk when I get back. I need to be somewhere.

She nodded and he left...

At Nhlahla house...

He knocked on the door and stepped back. Being there felt weird, he wasn't comfortable especially since he has been sleeping with their daughter.

MaMpanza slowly opened the door and went back in after inviting him in.

Ndumiso: How are you doing gogo?

MaMpanza: Trying my best to calm down. I can't die without burying her.

Ndumiso: I understand, is there anything I can do for you?

MaMpanza: I need to inform her father's family and my son about her passing.

Ndumiso: I can call them for you.

She stood up and went to get her notebook where all the numbers were written.

MaMpanza: Search Mbuzeni and Anti Phindile.

He found their numbers and called them putting the call on loud speaker.

Mbuzeni: Hello.

MaMpanza: Mbuzeni this is your mother.

Mbuzeni: Ma, I don't have money

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I recently got demoted...

MaMpanza: Nhlahla has passed on.

Mbuzeni: Hawu that's bad. I'll come after work with my wife.

MaMpanza: Oh.

Mbuzeni: Yebo and please inform her family they need to come and take their child.

MaMpanza: I'll bury...

Mbuzeni: Ma stop being difficult, you know you can't bury a Ndwandwe in my father's home, Sindi was married to that man and Nhlahla was born in wedlock. We have no business burying her.

MaMpanza: Why are you saying it like this wasn't her home?

Mbuzeni: That's because it wasn't. Nhlahla needs to go back home eHluhluwe. We can't waste our money burying her. I'll call you my wife is calling me.

He hang up and she sighed wiping her tears. Reality hit her, she was alone with no one to help with the burial. She knew the Ndwandwe family and knowing the kind of people they were, a huge fight was about to break out.

Ndumiso: Should I call the other one?

MaMpanza:(sniffed) Call her.

It rang for a while before she picked...

Phindile: Yebo.

MaMpanza: Phindi it's me Nhlahla's granny.

Phindile:(shuffling) Awu ma, is everything okay?

MaMpanza: Nothing is okay. It's Nhlahlenhle, Nhlahla has passed on and I thought I should inform you.

Phindile: Nkos'yami, when did this happen?

MaMpanza: Last night.

She hang up and called them back after a few minutes.

Phindile: I'm sorry for hanging up on you. I was still shocked.

MaMpanza: I understand.

Phindile: I'll let the family know and get back to you. I'm not home at the moment so I'll be there tomorrow.

MaMpanza: It's okay.

Phindile: Don't worry, I'll help wherever I can. Are you with someone there?

MaMpanza: Yes.

Phindile: Okay, Please get her body transferred to Siphosethu funeral services today before they charge us more. I know how

corrupt your police are so they obviously called private funeral services to remove her body from the crime scene.

Ndumiso: I'll do that.

Phindile: Yes...that'll be all. I'll have someone bring the necessary documents to you.

MaMpanza: Thank you.

Phindile: You don't have to remind me, this was my brother's child. Don't call anyone at home. They might blame you. I'll call them. If you need anything please let me know.

MaMpanza: We will.

Phindile: Okay, bye mama.

She hang up and she exhaled in relief.

Ndumiso: I need to go to the police station, don't you have any relatives I can call?

MaMpanza: It's only my son so I'll wait for him. You can leave I will be fine.

Ndumiso: I see. I'm sorry for your loss. I'll come and fetch you later.

MaMpanza: Okay I'll wait for you.

She sighed and rubbed her swollen eyes and he got up and left...

She looked around the room and bit her lower lip regrettably. If only she settled for the panado none of this would've happened. She probably screamed for help before taking her last breath. She shut her eyes thinking of the pain she went through when they stabbed her. They probably started with her stomach killing her soul first before finishing her off. Nhlahla was innocent, she didn't deserve what happened to her. She was only 20 years!!

She threw her head back crying hysterically as a few woman welcomed themselves in carrying their bibles with scarfs over their shoulders. They embraced her as she sobbed letting it all out. They started singing softly as their tears fell. It wasn't about Nhlahla anymore, it was about the dark cloud hanging over their village. They were losing their daughters like flies and nobody was doing anything about it. If it wasn't a boyfriend killing her girlfriend, it was a woman turning up dead floating in a dam or buried in a shallow grave in the fields.

Woman 1:(teary eyed) Ungabe usakhala Thabekhulu awuwedwa sikhona sizwelana nawe. (Don't cry, you're not alone we're here for you and we feel your pain)

She shook her head as more tears fell.

At Ndumiso's house...

Hours later his phone vibrated indicating a message from an unsaved number. He glanced at the screen and sighed getting off bed.

He couldn't help but feel like she's the reason behind her death, like he didn't protect them enough. He changed his tshirt and put on his white converse before taking the car keys. He looked for his watch and found it in the bathroom then looked at it for a while before putting it on. His watch of life stopped with her and losing her meant his watch has stopped moving and he had to adjust to this life thing without her.

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At Nhlahla's house...

The next day Mbuzeni stood by the door shouting at his mother. His wife finished preparing tea and placed it in front of her...

Mbuzeni: You can't stay alone we're not leaving you behind. I don't know why you're worrying yourself about dead people. Her family needs to come and fetch her, you don't have money and you're not sane enough to handle funeral preparations.

MaMpanza: I don't care I'm still burying my child. If you want to leave, leave. I didn't ask anything from you. My neighbours and the councillor will assist me just like everyone else. The sun will not stop shining just because you're against everything that I believe in.

Mbuzeni: You can't burden these people...

MaMpanza:(snapped) Hey Mbuzeni fuseg!! You want to leave? Leave we don't care. Running your mouth as if you've ever taken any responsibility in your life. You killed your father with your recklessness, your sister died unhappy because of you and

now you're trying to find a way to validate your wicked ways.
Leave me alone, I'm not going to turn into your doormat.

Mbuzeni: I didn't mean it in that way, you don't have to bring my father...

MaMpanza:(to his wife) Sisi wee? Take your husband and leave my house.

Wife: Ma?

MaMpanza: Nyaa ini? Take this thing and leave my house.

She stopped packing the groceries and took her bag going out. Mbuzeni clicked his tongue and went to unpack then left with his groceries. MaMpanza scoffed in disbelief and went to dispose the tea in the basin.

Phindile knocked on the door and stepped inside taking off her shoes.

MaMpanza: Don't take off your shoes.

Phindile: Okay how are you?

MaMpanza: I'm fine how was your trip? You didn't get lost right?

Phindile: No I asked around.

She placed the plastic bags on the floor and sat down.

Phindile: You're staying alone?

MaMpanza: Yes.

Phindile:(sadly) I'm sorry to hear that.

MaMpanza: It's okay.

Phindile: I spoke to my brother and he said Nhlahla is supposed to get buried back home.

MaMpanza: I know.

Phindile:(sighed) After finding out the cause of her death they don't want you there.

MaMpanza: But I didn't kill her.

Phindile: I know but they don't want you to come. Forcing it might results in my uncles hurting you. I really wish there was something I could do but there isn't.

MaMpanza: So I'm not going to pay my last respects?

Phindile:(shook her head) No.

She straightened her arms on the table dropping her eyes defeated. She had no money, no family and no means to fight them. Atleast they were going to give her a dignified funeral.

At Ndumiso's house...

Nkosinami walked through the gate, MaZikhali saw him and walked out calling him...

MaZikhali: Ndumiso is not in.

Nkosinami: The car is here.

MaZikhali: Your bags are in your house, are you also there?

Nkosinami:(softly) No.

MaZikhali: I will tell him you were looking for him.

Nkosinami: Thank y...

She walked back inside and he mouthed wow and left.

Msindazwe chuckled looking at her as she clucked wiping the table.

MaZikhali: I don't feel that friendship, it's a pity I can't choose friends for Ndu but I can't tolerate that boy any longer.

Msindazwe: Let them be. Let me go and check up on him I'll be back.

MaZikhali: Okay.

He went to his house

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he pushed the door and got in. He found him leaning against the wall next to the window looking outside with his hands in his pockets. He took a deep breath his heart shattering and stepped towards him.

He pulled him into a hug as tears burned his eyes. His body shook as he held his father tighter burying his face in his shoulder...

Msindazwe: Qina ndodana ungabe usakhala usephumule.

He took a sharp breath and dropped a tear. He let go of him and held his arms looking at him.

Msindazwe: It'll be alright. This too shall pass.

Ndumiso: She died in pain. Those stab wounds and...(exhaled) my baby was stabbed before she could see the world...

His voice shook and he turned away from his father and wiped his tears as his heart raced.

Her grandmother was now alone with no one to take care of her and he also couldn't do anything about that. The sad part was that there was possibility of the killer getting away with it. Nobody cared, the police didn't care, this was going to turn to another cold case like the rest.

More tears fell when he thought of the love they shared, so pure and innocent. She loved him and he loved her back with no limitations, couldn't the universe grant them more time together?

He shook his head feeling light headed. He staggered back and missed a step falling on his back. He laid on his back with his eyes closed as his head ached. The room spun and he slowly opened his eyes. His father crouched next to him...

Msindazwe: Are you okay?

Ndumiso: I'm okay.

Msindazwe: When last did you sleep or had something to eat?

Ndumiso: I don't know.

Msindazwe: You need to rest. You're also human.

Ndumiso:(softly) I don't want to rest. I just want my family. Everything was coming together. Next week I'm getting promoted, she was pregnant and happy to be with me. My life was content and at peace and now I'm stuck with an image of her laying in a body bag with disturbing stab wounds.... I don't want to rest, I just want her.

Msindazwe: Son you can't talk like that, you're breaking my heart. Allow us into your pain. We also lost a grandchild, you're not alone in this.

Ndumiso:(shook his head) Can I be alone?

Msindazwe:(sighed) I will give you space but I'm taking the key with me.

He went out locking the door behind him. He bit his lower lip concealing his cries as his tears fell.

He let them flow until he eventually fell asleep...

At Nhlahla's house...

Phindile opened the metallic trunk and pulled an old flip file whilst MaMpanza sat on bed telling her what to look for.

MaMpanza: Nhlahla used to pay for the insurance every month without fail. The documents are there.

She searched through the file until she found them and she took them out and read for a while before nodding.

Phindile: I found them. I'll claim the money and give it to you.

MaMpanza: You don't have to do that. Use it for the funeral. My son will come and get me any day from now.

Phindile: I'm sorry again for their decision.

MaMpanza: It's okay.

She pulled an envelope at the corner and opened it taking out a melted PS inside and then saw the love letter. She opened it out of curiosity as her phone rang from her handbag.

She picked and spoke for a while before putting it back.

She read the first and the last paragraph then blushed and put it back whilst shaking her head. In this day people still pour their hearts out on a piece of paper?

Phindile:(to herself) Love like this still exist?...Mama do you know any Ndumiso around here?

MaMpanza: He's the one who called you.

Phindile: Awu bakithi... anyway my brother just called me, the family is burying her in two days.

MaMpanza: Will everything be set by then?

Phindile: I think so. I'll stay with you until your son comes back. It's not safe for an old woman like you to stay alone.

MaMpanza: You don't have to.

Phindile: I insist.

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At Nhlahla's house...

Mbuzeni's wife packed maMpanza's things and went to place them in the car whilst she sat on the chair chatting with Phindile.

Phindile had called Mbuzeni the night before and asked him to come and get his mother.

Mbuzeni and his wife decided on renovating the house and then rent it to students seeking accommodation near the school. MaMpanza was obviously unhappy with leaving her home she once shared with her husband but she had no other option. The house had good and bad memories but it was time to let it go.

She sadly looked at her daughter in law as she carried Nhlahla's bags to the car knowing that they were about to leave. She wanted to see Ndumiso for one last time and thank him for his help. He might've not been aware of it but he was truly a blessing in their lives. He was the first guy to see them and look past their poverty but mostly to see an adult in her not a sex toy. She knew his family and they were one of the richest in the village but he wasn't proud.

He was humble and caring, may God bless him abundantly.

Mbuzeni: We're done mama.

Phindile picked her bag and walked out as she stood up reaching for her walking stick and looked around the room before making her way out.

Mbuzeni locked the door and helped his mother to the car as fresh tears fell from her eyes.

He started the car and drove out...

Khanyisile's house...

She laid in her room thinking about Nhlahla. She wanted her dead and now that she was really gone she wasn't happy. She wasn't sure if the hitman was telling the truth about not killing her. Maybe he was scared of getting implicated should things turn south for them.

Now that she was thinking about it, Nhlahla was innocent. The problem was with her and her early midlife crisis.

The younger girl than her was prospering in life and getting everything she ever dreamt off. Life was unfair on her!

Her passing hit a lot of people hard and shook a lot of young women in the village. Nobody was safe anymore, with all the killings going on, she too was scared for her life.

She badly wanted the police to find the killer and put her heart at ease. If they found that their hitman didn't kill her they were going to relax and change their ways of living. Having someone's blood on your hands isn't child's play, hopefully they didn't have a hand in her death.

At Ndumiso's house...

He popped the pills in his mouth and drank four glasses of water then sat down feeling nauseated. He hated pills for a reason and her mother loved them more than she loved her fields so she forced him to drink them.

A while later he walked out putting a bucket hat over his head and met up with Nkosinami by the gate.

Nkosinami: Sup? Going somewhere?

Ndumiso: To check up on the old lady.

Nkosinami: I see. Look I'm sorry about the pills.

Ndumiso: No prob, you were revealing your true colors.

Nkosinami: But still I was wrong.

Ndumiso: That's who you're don't try and excuse your behavior. I'm not going to waste my breath on you because I know something big is coming.

Nkosinami: Big?

Ndumiso: You know when people start showing who they're they become comfortable and do more. Not buying the pills is nothing trust me.

Nkosinami: It was a mistake I won't repeat.

Ndumiso: We don't know sizwa ngawe.

They walked through the gate and he frowned seeing the door locked. Nami notices the tyre tracks and showed him.

Ndumiso: They're still new meaning she finally left.

Nami: She was leaving?

Ndumiso: She said something like that.

He reached for his phone and called Phindile...

Phindile: Hello.

Ndumiso: Hey, you're speaking to Ndumiso I'm not sure if you know me but your mother used my phone to call you the other day.

Phindile: Oh okay. How can I help you?

Ndumiso: Is the old lady with you?

Phindile: No I'm at home. She left with her son.

Ndumiso: She's not going to the funeral?

Phindile: Yes she's not but you can come if you want to. The funeral will be held at home tomorrow.

Ndumiso: I'll come.

Phindile: Okay I'll send the location after the call.

Ndumiso: That would be great, thank you.

Phindile: My pleasure.

He hang up and sadly looked at their house. A part of him was happy that she won't be alone anymore but another part of him was sad. He had to go back and pack his bags because after the funeral he was going back to Durban. This time around he wasn't sure if he'll ever come back. He had no reason to.

Ndumiso: Let's go.

They went back home in silence.

At Ndumiso's house...

Later that day he laid on his back watching videos on his phone. He replayed a particular video taken in Elephant lake hotel when she was swinging on the swing giggling happily with her head tilted up whilst he pushed her. He wasn't comfortable with her on the swing because he was scared that the chains might miraculously break and hurt her. Her contagious giggles had him chuckling , she looked so happy in that video!

A knock sounded on the door, he paused the video and went to open. Lami walked in leaving him on the door. He closed the door and turned to her ready to tell her off but gasped when he saw her naked self standing in front of him.

Ndumiso: What are you doing here?

Lami:(walking towards him) Stop asking questions Ndu. I know you want this. One round won't hurt anyone.

Ndumiso: I can't do it, it's wrong.

Lami: No it not. I know you're sad, let me help you take your mind off things.

She knew people made stupid decisions in his state and she was about to take advantage of that. She rested her palms on his bare chest and stood on her toes kissing him as he kissed her back. She pulled down his briefs and held his neck deeping the kiss as he picked her up and threw her on bed kicking off his briefs.

She bit her lower lip as her pussy throbbed when she saw his black donkey dick with it shiny mushroom head which was licking of precume.

She spread her legs apart as he got in between her legs...

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At Ndumiso's house...

The next day he got off bed and shook Thembalami waking her up.

She murmured turning to the side as he got annoyed and shook her again.

Ndumiso: Wake up, why are you ignoring me?

Thembalami: Give me five.

He clicked his tounge and walked to the window and shifted the curtain to the side, atleast it was still dark outside and his parents were still sleeping. He couldn't risk being seen with her.

He went back to her and peeled off the duvet throwing her dress at her.

He grabbed her arm pulling her off bed. She yawned standing up and put on her dress then zipped it infront.

Thembalami: Aren't you gonna walk me out?

He sighed and walked her to the gate then went back as she sighed sadly limping her way home her whole body aching. Nkosinami left one of his entanglements halfway and saw her. He swallowed a painful lump in his throat when a realisation hit him. No matter what she was never going to be his. She had countless chances to choose him but she always did the opposite.

From her walk he could tell that he probably took out all his frustrations on her and fucked that pussy with no mercy.

Knowing how unsafe the neighborhood was he followed her at a distance until she walked through the gate. She stood by the wall and leaned on it with her legs spread apart and wiped her tears then walked inside.

He heaved a sigh and went back home.

Few hours later Ndumiso placed his bags in the car and went to his mother's house.

His father opened and allowed him in.

Msindazwe: You're leaving already?

Ndumiso: Yes.

Msindazwe: I'm sorry you had to go alone, I need to be in Pietermaritzburg today.

Ndumiso: I understand.

His mother walked in tying her gown and sat down feeling sleepy.

MaZikhali: You're leaving? Are you sure the funeral is today?

Ndumiso: That's what they said. I don't know if everything is in place, I don't even know why are they in a rush to bury her.

MaZikhali: Don't worry yourself with that focus on paying your last respects to her then leave. When people are grieving they tend to say a lot of painful words and blame everyone. They might blame you and you don't want that so help yourself by distancing yourself from any dramatic situations you'll come across there.

Ndumiso: I hear you.

MaZikhali:(got up and hugged him) Safe journey, I love you please take care of yourself.

Ndumiso: I will.

MaZikhali: Did you take the food I prepared for you?

Ndumiso: I did.

MaZikhali: Put it in a freezer and warm it when you're hungry. Don't starve yourself and don't throw my food away that would be throwing away my love for you.

Ndumiso:(chuckled softly) I'll eat it, all of it. Do you want me to record myself eating?

MaZikhali: Mxmn leave my house because you have started with your madness.

He rolled his eyes and hugged her again before letting go and shook his father's hand.

Ndumiso: I'll call you.

Msindazwe: Please do. Goodbye.

He nodded and walked to the car as they stood by waving whilst he drove out.

At Thembalami's house...

She laid in bed whilst crying. She wasn't aware that the pain will be 10 times worse than breaking your virginity. He kept on going with no care in the world, it was like a beast was unleashed inside him. Turning her around like he was turning braaipack in the fridge. He was too big but that didn't stop him from going deeper and deeper filling up the space inside her until she couldn't go any further.

Her whole body was burning and filled with hickeys. It was going to take a while before the pain eased up.

Her phone rang under the pillow as a knock sounded on the door. She sniffed and picked...

Nami: Lami hey.

Thembalami:(cleared her throat) Huh?

Nami: You good? Come out I'm passing by the gate.

Thembalami: I can't.

Nami: Please I've got something for you. Something you need to hear.

Thembalami: I'm coming.

She got off bed and staggered towards the door as her legs cramped then leaned against the wall regaining her balance then slowly walked to the gate passing her younger cousins and sisters playing with a skipping rope in the middle of the yard.

She flinched grinning with every step she took until she finally reached him.

Nami: You good? What happened to your legs?

Thembalami: I fell.

Nami: Really now?

Thembalami: Yes.

They walked away from the gate and stopped then she sat on a log looking at him scrolling through his smartphone.

Nami: What I'm about to show you isn't gonna sit well with you believe me on that one so I don't want any impulsive decisions.

Thembalami: Now you're scaring me.

Nami: Don't be scared, I met up with Ndu this morning and he told me about what happened last night.

Thembalami: Told you what exactly?

Nami: How you threw yourself at him and how he fucked your loose pussy only because you were begging for it. Lami you need to stay away from this guy. He doesn't love you, I'm sure a lot of people knows about the night you had.

She swallowed feeling ashamed as he played one of the old recordings they recorded whilst drunk. She tearfully listened as he went on and on about how loose her pussy was and how much he didn't enjoy sex with her. He went on to say that the only way he came was because he thought of his girlfriend.

Nami raised his eyebrows looking at her expression changing from being ashamed to extreme anger as her hands shook and her nose flared. That should be enough to keep her away from him.

He saw the recording saved in his phone, what she didn't know was that the recording was from years ago when they were still doing matric and the girlfriend he was talking about was Lami herself but since they weren't mentioning any names it was easy to fool her.

She angrily stood up and marched back home ignoring the pain she was feeling. She was going to teach him a lesson he'll never forget. She loved him yes but that kind of disrespect was way too much, she wasn't going to take it lying down.

At Nhlahla's home...

In the graveyard, Ndumiso quietly stood by with the crowd listening as the priest finished praying whilst a few family members sat under the gazebo.

He took a chunk of soil and dropped it in the grave whilst holding his bible,

Pastor: Uthuli othulini, umlotha emlotheni, inhlabathi enhlabathini.

The family members were called over to come and throw in the soil on her grave. They all did one by one as his heart broke into thousand pieces. He wished for one last chance to see her and say goodbye, his heart didn't want to accept that she was gone.

Things weren't meant to be like that. And looking at everyone crying those crocodile tears angered him. Her grandmother should've been there, she was with Nhlahla through everything.

The crowd softly sung as the guys started filling her grave. He bit his lower lip as a lone tear dropped from his eye. He asked to pass and walked back to his car as Phindile furrowed her brows looking at him as he failed to open the door. Maybe it was him but then she wasn't sure so she sighed and looked ahead.

He got inside his car and rested his forehead on the steering wheel as tears burned his eyes. His throat cracked with pain as he breathed out through his mouth feeling suffocated. He brushed his face and covered his mouth with his hands.

He took a deep breath and looked at her picture in his wallet and smiled tearfully...

Ndumiso: Rest easy my love, I'll always love you.

He kissed the picture and started the car then drove out without looking back...

At Ndumiso's home...

Later that day just after the sunset three police cars pulled over by the gate and officers stepped out walking through the gate as his mother stepped out confused.

Officer: Sawbona mama.

MaZikhali: Yebo, can I help you?

Officer: We're looking for Ndumiso Mdletshe where can we find him?

MaZikhali: He left, what do you need him for? Is this about Nhlahlenhle?

Officer: I don't know who that is mam, We need him. Call him right now.

She reached for her phone in her pinafore and called him...

Ndumiso: Mama?

MaZikhali: Where are you? The police are looking for you?

Ndumiso: Is it about Nhlahla?

MaZikhali: Apparently not but it seems urgent.

Ndumiso: I'm not that far yet so I'll turn back right now.

MaZikhali: Should they wait for you?

Ndumiso: Yes. I'll be there just now.

MaZikhali: Okay.

She hang up and turned to them...

MaZikhali: He's coming. What do you need him for again?

Officer: We didn't say.

They walked back to their cars...

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At Ndumiso's house...

Half an hour later he drove past the police cars as they woke up from their sleep and stepped out following the car. He parked the car as his mother stepped out and stretched himself meeting them halfway.

Ndumiso: What is this about?

The police he threatened a few days before chuckled recognizing him.

Police: Ndumiso we meet again.

Ndumiso: Do I know you?

Police: Mxm, you're under arrest ke threatist. Under arrest for rape and attempting to kill Miss Thembalami Mhlongo.

Ndumiso:(frowned) What?

He pulled the handcuffs and held his hands cuffing them as he absent mindedly allowed him still confused.

Police: You have a right to remain silent everything you say can be and will be used against you in the court of law. You also have a right to an attorney if you don't have one the state will provide one for you.

Ndumiso: This is crazy.

Police: Heh you think we're playing.

MaZikhali: What is the meaning of this?

She went to them and held her son's arms pulling him to her crying.

MaZikhali: My son is not a rapist, this is a misunderstanding.

Police: Ey la let him go.

He clucked and pushed her back and she staggered backwards and fell on her butt hurting her hip. He swallowed in disbelief realising that they were actually serious.

They roughly pushed him to their cars and shoved him inside and closed the door then drove out.

His mother got up and walked inside the house to get her phone as the neighbors stood by their fences watching.

She drank water to calm her nerves then called her husband...

Msindazwe: Nkosikazi I'll call you back I'm still busy with something.

MaZikhali:(crying) My baby has been arrested.

Msindazwe:(shuffling) What? When?

MaZikhali: Now. I shouldn't have called him. It's all my fault.

Msindazwe: Calm down then tell me what happened?

MaZikhali: The police came here looking for him and I called him and told him to come back only to find out that they wanted to arrest him for rape. Rape and murder? My son? If I knew I wouldn't have called him.

Msindazwe: Don't cry it's not your fault. You did good by calling him they were probably gonna fetch him from his workplace and embarrass him in front of his colleagues. Let me think of something, I'll see what I can do.

MaZikhali:(crying) My son is not a rapist Msindazwe you know him.

Msindazwe: I know don't cry your blood pressure will act up and I won't be there to help you. Calm down we need to be calm so that we can come up with a solution.

MaZikhali: Okay...okay...I'll try.

She hang up and rubbed her hip breathing heavily.

At the police station...

The detective stood by the wall watching Ndumiso as he leaned back on the chair with cuffs around his wrists.

Detective: You know I can do this the whole day and night.

Ndumiso:...

Detective: People like you disgust me. You think just because you're every woman's dream you have a right to go around violating woman and then try to kill them when they want to report you. You're a disgrace to manhood. And for your own

information I'll make sure that you rot in jail. You think you're above the law, you make us look incompetent.

Ndumiso: Can I call my lawyer?

Detective: You don't get to demand anything here we don't work for you.

Ndumiso: Okay, I'll speak when my lawyer arrive until then continue ranting all that nonsense. In a way you're keeping me company.

He clicked his tounge and went to take his notebook and then walked out.

Ndumiso leaned forward resting his hands on the table and brushed his face.

He was a bit rough on her but she didn't complain nor try to stop him. Why would she lie on him? If the case reached the ears of his bosses then he might as well kiss his job goodbye.

He worked around women everyday and no sane person could keep an alleged rapist around female workers.

Ndumiso: Wow!!

At Thembalami's house...

Her mother angrily looked at her seated on the reedmat in her panties.

Her: Why are you embarrassing this family? Rape? Wasn't he your boyfriend?

Thembalami:(crying) He was but I didn't want to have sex with him. He forced himself on me.

Her: Futeq!! That sounds even more stupid. How does your boyfriend rape you? What were you doing in his room? What were you expecting? You were dating, he had every right to have sex with you especially since you were in his house. What are people going to say? My daughter has been raped? Now I'm the village gossip only because my daughter chose to announce to the world that she had sex with a guy?

Thembalami: I'm sorry.

Her: Nyorry? Is your sorry going to fix anything? I'm disappointed in you. Very disappointed! My own daughter dragging the Mhlongo name through the mud? The daughter I carried for nine months went out to look for a penis and then announced it for the whole world to know.

She shook her head and then started crying as she swallowed regretting her decision. She thought when she saw the bruises and hickeys she would feel her pain but she was wrong.

She couldn't even drop the charges, being a victim was better than being called a liar.

At the police station...

The phone rang for a while and his Joburg friend finally picked...

Voice: Sure.

Ndumiso: Yeah man, it's Ndumiso.

Voice: Au why are you calling me with office numbers?

Ndumiso: I've been arrested. Can you please get me a lawyer?

Voice: Ehh iyoooh! Serious?

Ndumiso: Rape and attempted murder.

Voice: What's the plea?

Ndumiso: How can you even ask that? You know me.

Voice: Sorry. I'll speak to my lawyer friend in Durban. She'll probably see you tomorrow.

Ndumiso: Thanks man, I owe you.

Voice: Get me another friend from the village. Sharp.

He shook his head smiling and placed the phone back. The detective opened his mouth to say something...

Ndumiso: Awume ngescefe! Take me back to the cells.

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At Ndumiso's house...

MaZikhali finished cleaning the yard and went to take out the reed and laid it on the grass as one of her neighbors walked through the gate.

She scoffed recognizing her, one of the gossip mongers was in her yard. She arranged the reed and straightened dusting her hands on her pinafore, by sunset it would've dried up and by the following day she would start making her reedmats.

Neighbor: Kunjani ntombi?

MaZikhali: I'm fine.

Neighbor: I can tell, you've always been a strong woman. I heard about what happened yesterday. I want you to know that you have my full support.

She rolled her eyes and went to empty the buckets on the drum as the workers washed their tools on the basin.

MaZikhali: Support for what?

Neighbor: We all know...

MaZikhali: I don't know hence I asked.

Neighbor: You don't have to pretend like you're okay...

MaZikhali: Support for what?

Neighbor: About the case.

MaZikhali: What case?

Neighbor: I thought your son was arrested.

MaZikhali: When was that?

Neighbor: You mean he's not?

The workers walked to her whilst drying their hands.

MaZikhali: Are you done?

Worker: Yes you can go and check. We cleaned the place, your son told us about your sinuses so we cleaned all the dust.

MaZikhali: Thank you. Did he pay you for that?

Worker: Yes he did. Also I won't be coming in tomorrow but I'll send someone to renew the painting on the other side. He'll also change the backdoor tomorrow.

MaZikhali: I hear you. Thank you again.

Worker: The pleasure is all mine. Let us get going.

She nodded and watched them as they went to the car parked by the gate. They loaded their tools at the back and left.

MaZikhali: I have things to do, it's still early in the morning.

Neighbor: Not even one cup of tea?

MaZikhali: You'll drink tea in your house.

Neighbor: Awu bantu.

MaZikhali: Yebo makhe.

She faked a chuckle and left slightly annoyed. It was unlike her to have wrong information.

MaZikhali walked inside the house through the back door and went to prepare to go to the police station.

Her husband was going to call her later and let her know if his loan application was approved by the bank.

They used all their savings in renovating their house so they weren't going to afford a lawyer unless they applied for a loan.

An hour later she stepped out of the house and locked then left after locking the gate.

Walking to the stop the neighbors kept on looking at her and gossiping. The news of her son's arrest must've spread like wildfire across the village. She couldn't blame them after the recent activities in their village. Women were getting raped and killed like flies and one reported case of rape was enough to set the whole village on fire.

To many it was a huge milestone, one rapist has been reported hopefully others were going to come out and report their rapists too.

She didn't know what went down between her son and that girl but she knew his son and after the way he was a few days before, she was convinced that something else went down. A complete different version of events.

At the police station...

The police opened for him and locked the door behind him. He walked around the table and sat down facing the young lady

who was focused on her ipad, her long weave covering her face.

He cleared his throat and she quickly lifted her face and he smiled recognizing her. He raised his eyebrows and leaned back in awe.

She fixed her glasses and tucked her hair behind her pressing her lips together.

Ofcourse it was him, he was a trouble maker back in varsity, a part of her wasn't suprised he was arrested. Since he was in for rape, she could already conclude that the person behind his arrest was a bitter baby mama or a crazy ex with attachment issues.

He had a kind of effect on ladies that made them crazy the if you're not with me then nobody will type of thing.

Ndumiso: We meet again Small.

Small: We do. Baby mama or ex?

Ndumiso:(scoffed) Ex.

Small: How bad is it?

Ndumiso: With the little knowledge I have about law, it's pretty bad.

Small: I'm glad you know that. Well I did look at your case a bit and you're right. It's bad but for now we need to focus on getting you bail.

Ndumiso: Okay.

Small: Yes, I need you to detail everything. I don't want any surprises when we get to court.

He nodded and took a deep breath then narrated everything to her as she typed all the important details on her ipad.

He bit his lower lip and placed his fist over his mouth when he was done. She placed the ipad next to her and sighed feeling sorry for him.

He rested his elbows on the table masking his pain and confusion with a stoic expression.

She furrowed her brows a bit confused at his expression, wasn't he supposed to be sad or angry at the turn of events?

He didn't take his eyes off her, he had to maintain that stare, he couldn't have his lawyer using feelings whilst dealing with his case. He wanted her sober minded, a person drunk on emotions always made mistakes, useless mistakes and missed all the important details.

He also learnt that she was over sensitive, weird since she one of his friend's entanglements.

She dropped her gaze, her cheeks blazing with heat at his scrutiny. The room suddenly became hot, probably at his power radiating charisma. She had to leave before she messed things up with her client.

Small: I'll contact one of my contacts then get back to you.

Ndumiso: What contacts?

Small:(shook her head) Forget it. It's already Friday so we'll appear before the magistrate on Monday. You'll have to spend the weekend in the holding cells.

Ndumiso: I see.

He got up at the same time as her and walked around the table. She dropped her file and he bent over picking it up then placed it on the table dwarfing her with his height. Even in heels she was still that short girl they attended varsity with.

Ndumiso: You can't buy height I told you this before, Small.

He walked to the door leaving her as she exhaled, okay this was it! Shit wasn't working for her no more!

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At the police station...

Ndumiso sat with his mother as she told her what his father was planning to do.

Ndumiso: Please call him and tell him to drop everything.

MaZikhali: What? We can't let you rot in jail.

Ndumiso: I won't rot in jail but I can't allow my father to drown in debts because of me. There's a lawyer that can help me with this case and he doesn't come cheap.

MaZikhali: Where will you find that money? We're your parents it's our duty to help you.

Ndumiso: Not when it's going to put you in ridiculous debts like this.

She looked at him confused, why was he so against them helping him? Could it be that he actually did it?

MaZikhali: Did you do it?

Ndumiso:(shocked) Ma? I thought you knew me.

MaZikhali: I did but if that's not the case then why are you so against this?

Ndumiso: I'm not,(sighs) let me exhaust all my options then you can go ahead and do it.

MaZikhali: I hear you. How are they treating you? They didn't beat you up right?

Ndumiso: No they didn't. I'm going to apply for a bail on Monday, hopefully it goes well.

MaZikhali: I'll pray for you.

Ndumiso: Thank you ma.

MaZikhali: I'll come and see you on Monday. I have some things to do.

Ndumiso: I hear you. It was nice seeing you.

She smiled sadly and got up then left as the police escorted him back to his cell.

Being escorted like that scared him, there was a possibility of him not making bail.

Small was too emotional and over the place he couldn't even keep her in line.

He read her movements and if they didn't end their meeting, she would've squirted all over that wooden chair.

He had to call his friend and ask for another favor. It was dangerous but he had to do it.

The lawyer who was capable of getting him out was too expensive which was expected since he was a gangster's lawyer.

Why would Lami lie like that? They didn't make love yes but they both enjoyed sex and he didn't say anything to her after that. For all she knew he could've banged her again. What motivated her actions?

He cringed when he thought of their time together, if he didn't know better she would've said they performed an episiotomy then stitched her more than they should've. She probably teared up but still, that wasn't a reason enough to get him arrested.

He took a deep breath and leaned against the wall. He really needed that lawyer, with him the case might get thrown out of jail or get him a reduced sentence.

Meanwhile in the reception...

Nkosinami spoke to one of the officers who was busy filling in an affidavit. She put the cap back on her pen and straightened her cap looking up at him annoyed.

Officer: So I should drop what I'm doing and help you?

Nami: I really need to see him. It's important.

Officer: Join the line like everyone else then.

Nami:(banged on the table) You get paid because of me

Advertisement

I pay taxes for your ass. Take me to Ndumiso Mdletshe right away.

She looking at his ellesse bucket hat and stretched looking over the table then scoffed seeing his cream white pants.

Officer: You can't even buy yourself new pants uzosxina ngo was white but you have an audacity to tell me about tax? How much do you pay? I'll refund you.

He looked at his pants and looked at the people on the line embarrassed.

Other officers mumbled something and walked to one of the offices as one of them called the next person on the line.

Officer 2: Tax payer, please shift I need to assist others aksikho kwa SARS la. We don't deal with taxes.

He licked his lips and walked out as tears burned his eyes.

What happened to him took him back to the high school days before Ndumiso relocated to their village from the townships.

He didn't like to be the center of attention and those officers had a field day with him.

He desperately wanted to see Ndu and apologize about what happened. After that moment all the courage he had gained over the way left him.

A car honked in front of him and he tripped falling on his butt. The driver clicked his tongue and swerved the car besides him splashing him with the muddy water in the process.

At Thembalami's house...

Nkosinami walked through the gate as the dog barked at him. He angrily picked a stone and hit it on the leg. It cried out in pain as Lami walked out followed by her aunt.

Lami: Nami what are you doing here?

Nami: You witch. I didn't say get him arrested. Are you mad?

Aunt: Who hit my dog? Heyla? Who hit my dog?

Nami: You're wicked, very wicked, crying rape knowing you went there willingly? What kind of a person are you?

Lami:(scoffed) Me? I'm wicked yes but I didn't betray my friend. You betrayed your friend and now you want to act holier than thou on me. Unyile! You're nothing but a crazy narcissitic, always in a competition with someone who's not even in your league. You so badly want to live his life to the extent of hitting on his girlfriend.

Useless man, those boys should come back and drill your ass all over again. Stupid weak and toothless thing.

The whole family walked out and looked at them shouting at each other in the middle of the young.

They started insulting each other by their mother's privates and everyone gasped as Nami pointed at Lami's mother who was standing next to her husband holding her walking stick.

Nobody knew the root of the problem but they were aware that shouting like that in another man's home is disrespectful.

The aunt inspected her dog's leg and shook her head sadly then stood up searching for a stone. Her eyes fell on the stone they used to hit her dog and went to it as Lami's father went to release his bull dogs behind their house where their kennels were built.

The duo continued insulting each other angrily oblivious to the audience and was brought back to earth by the stone that hit him on his knee. He bent over and held his knee screaming.

The bull dogs came running towards his direction. He saw them and ran out of the gate dragging his leg. One of them jumped on his back and scratched his back whilst the other sank its sharp teeth on his thigh.

They tried to reprimand the dogs but he raised his hand up, "If you help him. Pack your bags and leave my yard!"

At the police station...

His friend laughed on the other end whilst he clenched his jaws annoyed.

Ndumiso: You're gambling with my life here.

Voice: Sorry. Your lawyer is coming in later today. Small wasn't your lawyer.

Ndumiso: When is my lawyer coming in?

Voice: Sometime today. You'll make bail or better yet walk free. Relax. Oh and one more thing, he didn't come cheap. But we'll talk about that when you get out of there. Sharp.

He hang up on leaving him confused and angry at the same time.

A knock interrupted his thoughts and the detective looked at the door.

Detective: What?

Officer: His lawyer is looking for you.

Detective: Oh.

He picked his notepad and walked out with him.

He opened the door and walked in. He walked around the table looking at the man seated on the chair waiting for him with a briefcase besides him.

Detective: Afternoon sir.

Lawyer: Unathi Ndunakazi his lawyer.

Detective: Mr Ndunakazi?

Lawyer: Yes, can we get down to it?

Detective: Oh yes...

He looked at Ndumiso who raised his eyebrow at him with a smirk...

FEW DAYS LATER

At the Magistrate's court...

Everyone who attended the case wasn't happy about the magistrate's decision of granting him bail. Looking at his lawyer everyone could tell that the chances of him losing the case were slim to none. Thembalami stood by with Khanyisile and her father as a couple of friends held her while she cried silently.

Ndumiso stepped out holding hands with his mother and went to stand by Unathi's car. Unathi shook hands with MaZikhali and then she left them to talk...

Unathi: Since you're going to Durban it'll be easier to meet and go through your case before the trial starts.

Ndumiso: I see. I'm not sure if I'm going to stay in Durban after this. I might be forced to come back.

Unathi: They're not allowed to fire you based on these accusations. You're innocent until proven otherwise.

Ndumiso: I work with women. What if they feel unsafe?

Unathi: That's on them. You can't be crucified for a crime you didn't commit. It's too bad because nobody knows the whole truth but that's life.

He reached for his business card in his bag and handed it to him.

Unathi: Call me should you have any problems.

Ndumiso: Oh...about your payment...

Unathi: Leave that to Thubelihle, he's cashing in on the favour. The case is pro bono in a way.

Ndumiso: I don't understand.

Unathi:(smiled) Oh you do, See you around.

He stepped inside his car as Ndumiso scoffed walking towards his mother passing Thembalami and her friends.

MaZikhali: Do you want us to pass somewhere before we go home?

Ndumiso: No, we have to go home. I need to be in Durban. I'm sure Mdu is wondering where his car is.

MaZikhali: You're not spending the night?

Ndumiso: No it's too risky.

At Thembalami's house...

She dropped her bag on bed and removed her top then sank on her bed.

She heaved a sigh exhausted. Since the bail hearing had passed, she wondered if she was going to stand the trial. That lawyer looked scary, he knew his story and being interrogated by him on stand was going to be the worst nightmare ever.

A part of her wanted to drop everything and drop the charges but a lot of people were involved already. Dropping the charges and being labelled a liar was out of the question. Her father believed her and he was determined to help her, a lot of people admired her for her bravely.

She heard voices of people shouting in their gate and went to peep through the window.

She saw two men and stepped out recognizing the other one.

Her father walked to the gate followed by her aunt. They spoke for a while and then her father walked straight to him fuming in anger.

Father: Yabo? Msebenzi wakho? Now we're being summoned by the chief because of men you bring in my yard. With you we can't focus on one thing. We have to be all over the place because you can't pick your battles.

Ntokazi you have to clear everything up, are we focusing on the case or your countless men?

Thembalami: I'm sorry.

Father: Ofcourse you're

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that's the only thing you know.(sighed closing his eyes) Don't worry about this though. Apparently the boy is still alive even though he's breathing through the machines but he's alive. Focus on the case, after all he's the one who came in here and insulted us.

She nodded and he walked to his house as her aunt looked at her...

Aunt: You know I know you more than your parents does. I hope it won't be too late when you come back to your senses. I arrived first, I heard that boy and from where I was standing he didn't look like someone who was drunk but carry on.

Thembalami: Auntie...

Aunt: As I've said, carry on.

At Ndumiso's house...

Hours later he stepped out of his house holding his toiletry bag speaking on his phone.

Ndumiso: I'll be there as soon as I arrive in Durban...I understand...Thanks, bye.

He hugged her mother and then stepped back smiling as she rubbed her eyes looking at him.

MaZikhali: Look at how thin you're.

Ndumiso:(chuckled) Hawu ma! I'll call you.

MaZikhali: Don't forget to call your father.

Ndumiso:(got inside the car) What for? He's your husband njena.

MaZikhali:(chuckled through her tears) Mxm.

He started the car and drove out as she waved...

At Ndumiso's workplace...

After hours of driving he parked in the parking lot and took a last sip of his energy drink and then stepped out stretching himself as his back ached. He fixed his golf tshirt and his watch before he walked into the building.

A few workers stopped working and watched him some whispering amongst each other. He rubbed his chin and went to the elevator ignoring their stares.

Ofcourse they knew about his case and he still didn't care. They knew everything about everyone anyway, minding them was a waste of time and energy.

The elevator dinged and slid open and his boss appeared standing next to the door. He saw and sucked in a breath walking inside as his heart raced.

Ndumiso closed the door behind him and pulled a chair sitting down after greeting him...

CEO: Mr Mdletshe I believe everything went well if you're here.

Ndumiso: I guess so.

CEO: Water?

Ndumiso: No thanks.

He shrugged and poured some for himself then took a sip looking at him facing ahead and then shook his head doing away with those crazy thoughts.

CEO: You do have an idea of why you're here right?

Ndumiso: No.

CEO: We can't continue working with you.

Ndumiso: I'm innocent.

CEO: The workers don't know that and we don't want to make them uncomfortable.

Ndumiso: I also have rights.

CEO: I understand. Look there's a way around this I mean this is my company and I'm sure we can work something out.

Ndumiso: There is?

CEO: Yes.

He loosened his tie and licked his lips resting his hands on the table looking straight in his eyes. He leaned back folding his arms pressing his lips together.

Ndumiso: Which way is that?

CEO: You're clever, why don't you work it out? Once, I know you're straight and I'm also straight. I've always fantasized about you so..?

He lifted his eyebrows and untied his dreadlocks straightening them with his fingers then quickly turned the chair around getting up. He went to lock the door and slid his hand in his pocket walking around the table as he turned around to face him....

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At Ndumiso's workplace...

He stood in front of him as he slowly rested his hands on the edge licking his lips.

Ndumiso: So I need to sleep with you in order to keep my job?

CEO: Once, we can find a hotel if you're uncomfortable with my office.

Ndumiso: Will that make your workers miraculously comfortable?

CEO: My world is law I can speak to them.

Ndumiso: I'm not doing it.

CEO:(frowned) What? What are you afraid of? Nobody is gonna know.

Ndumiso: They're gonna know believe me and besides that I'm not interested.

CEO: This is your career we're talking about here.

Ndumiso: And also your arse. You know mister If I were to fuck your arse your rectum will be damaged forever trust me on that one.

He exhaled as his palms became sweaty. The way he said those words made him want him even more. He has been living a double life for too long and for him, he was prepared to come out of the closet without any worry of what were people gonna say.

He was calm but the authority in his voice gave him goosebumps.

There was something about him, something that made every man out there a sissy compared to him, Goodness he was such a macho man!

Ndumiso: I won't tell anyone about your sexuality so let pretend like this never happened.

CEO: I told you I'm straight so what sexuality are you talking about?

Ndumiso: Being straight is also a sexuality.

CEO:(took a deep breath) Can you atleast kiss me?

Ndumiso: Aike!

He wasn't winning with that guy. He walked away from him and he followed him and grabbed his arm smashing his lips on his.

He pushed him rubbing his lips disgusted.

Ndumiso: What are you doing? This isn't funny stay away from me!

He continued walking and he still followed him and pushed him to the wall kissing his lips with his eyes closed rubbing his zipper on his.

He pushed him and then punched him on the face. He clenched his jaws tasting blood in his mouth. He spat on the floor and chuckled...

CEO: You like it rough huh? That's the exact image I have of you in my mind. Giving it to me rough and fast whilst grunting in that deep voice of yours. Come on, I know how your type is. You crave anal sex and I'm here to feed your cravings.

Ndumiso: Now you're being crazy for real. You might as well keep your job I won't work for a mental case.

He went to the door and tried to unlock the door. He quickly pulled the key and threw it out of the open window. He angrily turned to him.

Ndumiso: What is your problem? Why are you acting crazy?

CEO: Stop acting fresh as if you have a gold dick

It's just sex.

Ndumiso: One crazy shit from you I'm going to strangle the life out of your pathetic ass. Try me and see.

He went to take the phone on his desk and dialed security as he gently massaged his jaw getting back to his senses.

Ndumiso popped his knuckles and rubbed his chin.

A while later the door opened and he walked out as the security guard curiously looked at the blood on the floor and his boss's bloody lips.

Security: Is everything okay?

He raised his hand up dismissing him and then closed the door behind him. He placed his hand on his forehead and shut his eyes in shame.

What if he exposed him? That was going to be bad for the company. A lot of workers were going to report him and he wasn't prepared to have his dirty laundry out there for the whole world to see. He had to take care of the problem before it took care of him.

He closed his laptop and grabbed his car and keys and jacket walking out.

At Hlabisa Hospital...

Nkosinami's parents stood by his bed looking at his body covered in bandages while connected to numerous pipes.

His mother brought her hands together and started praying for her son.

The doctor walked in and waited for them to finish before she walked further into the room and went to his file.

His mother: Will he make it doctor?

Doctor: He will.

His mother: He has too. We can't lose him. I have to fine Mhlongo for hurting my son like this. Which sane person keeps highly trained bulldogs in their home? I'm going to treat him a lesson.

His mother: Forget about him. He's too arrogant, Let the chief deal with him. After all Namu went there willingly, he could say it was self defense.

His father: Self defense against my son?

His mother: What was he...

His father: Are you condoning what they did to my son?

Nami slowly moved his hand as the doctor closed the file...

Doctor: Okay, can you please keep quiet or leave the room if that fails?

She moved towards his face and helped him remove the oxygen mask.

Doctor:(smiled) Welcome back.

Nami: Wa..water.

The doctor poured water for him and put on a straw then helped him drink.

His mother: My son. Oh thank you father.

He blinked his eyes looking at the unfamiliar faces staring at him.

Nami:(softly) Who are you?

His mother: What? I'm your mother.

Doctor: Let us not panick. Everything will be fine. Sir, do you remember what happened?

Nami: No. I don't.

He shut his eyes trying to remember but his mind was blank.

His mother: Doctor why is my son like this?

Doctor: We'll run some tests and let you know for now please be patient with him.

She abandoned her body on the chair defeated.

At Ndumiso's rental house...

He walked to his fridge and took out a can of beer taking a sip. He took a deep breath replaying the events of the day in his mind and shook his head chuckling.

He saw this a long time ago but never paid any attention to it. People were brave out there.

A knock sounded on the door and he went to open.

Thubelihle stood in front of him holding his bag. He smiled and shifted away from the door allowing him to pass.

Thubelihle: Ndu my man.

Ndumiso: I'm still angry at you.

Thubelihle: Awu kahle phuma lapho. Ugrand?

They shoulder bumped and he dropped his bag on the couch and walked to the fridge.

Ndumiso: Stay away from my fridge.

Thubelihle: Mxm so did Smindlo meet you?

Ndumiso: Nop, why?

Thubelihle: He was in your village a few days ago. Work related.

Ndumiso: I didn't see him. What kind of work?

Thubelihle:(shrugged) Don't know....Forget about that one. So what's up? How did my girl treat you?

Ndumiso: Don't remind me about that short thing...Look for something to cook there I'll be back.

Thubelihle: I'm not staying.

Ndumiso: I didn't say you were. I said cook. Listening is a skill.

He placed his can on the counter and went to his bedroom leaving Thubelihle deep in thoughts. If their friend didn't meet up with Ndumiso just like he said then what were he doing there? Why did he lie about it?

He shook his head and opened the fridge...

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At Ndumiso's house...

Ndumiso stretched his upper body and popped his knuckles then sipped his coffee before he bit his lower lip concentrating on the laptop.

His phone beeped and he looked at the long codes on the screen then quickly logged out and sighed in relief getting off the stool.

Thubelihle came from the guest room and he quickly closed the laptop then went to search in the cupboards.

Thubelihle: Morning.

Ndumiso: Mmhh.

Thubelihle: I hope you weren't doing shit that's gonna land you in the hot waters.

Ndumiso:(calmly) When are you leaving?

Thubelihle: When I feel like it.

Ndumiso: I hope that's sooner than the word soon. I can't stand annoying people.

Thubelihle:(rolled his eyes) When did you wake up?

He went to settle on the couch reaching for the remote as Ndumiso started preparing breakfast.

Ndumiso: Around 1AM.

Thubelihle: What's the plan since you're officially unemployed? You know I still can't believe that they fired you just like that. The last time I spoke to that guy he was highly impressed with you.

Ndumiso: I have a rape case on my name it was expected.

Thubelihle: I see.

He rinsed his hands then rested his hands on the table looking at him.

Ndumiso: On a serious note, what are you doing here?

Thubelihle: I need something around here.

Ndumiso: So where do I fit in?

Thubelihle: Who said you fit in?

Ndumiso: I know you.

Thubelihle:(sighed) Okay. We need you...

Ndumiso: Miss me on that. I told you I was done with that shit. I can't gamble with my life anymore.

Thubelihle: Look, this one last time. We really need this. We could've asked anyone but there's noone else like you out there.

Ndumiso: No.

He pulled the drawer and reached for a knife then plugged the kettle as Thubelihle thoughtfully looked at him then turned to the screen.

He looked at him concentrating on the tv and sighed frustrated. That was his friend, he came through for him when noone else did. If it wasn't for him he would've dropped out in varsity and went back home.

He knew that he wasn't gonna press the issue any longer but still, he felt really bad.

Ndumiso:(stopped chopping) Everything is detailed to the T right?

Thubelihle: Yep.

Ndumiso: I'll do it.

Thubelihle: Sure

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I have your laptops with me...I'm meeting up with Small later, wanna tag along?

Ndumiso: Bhek' ibhola lelo uyeke uksangana.

At Hlabisa Hospital...

Thembalami slowly walked closer to Nami's bed as he pretended to be asleep. She licked her lips as tears burned her eyes. Things weren't supposed to go that far. They were both wrong and it was unfair that he was the only one paying for something they both did.

She wasn't her favorite person but he didn't deserve what happened to him.

She looked at the bandage around his head and the bleeding wound on his arm.

It was a miracle that he survived, those dogs were trained to kill by a cruel white man her father used to work for years back.

When he was relocating he gave them to him as a gift and they've been locked in their kennels ever since.

Thembalami: I'm sorry about what happened. I heard about your memory loss and I guess that's better. In a way that's the best news because you were going to expose me either way. I was wrong yes but I also didn't deserve to be treated like that.(sighed) He used me, It's crazy because I went there willingly but still I didn't deserve his treatment. He f*cked me like a prostitute the whole night and then went ahead and spread lies about me.

I'm the most respected girl around the village how is everyone supposed to look at me after all the things he said about me? You were right maybe I'm crazy but I won't allow him to use me.

Atleast after this you won't remember me and all the stupid love you have for me will be gone so we both get to benefit in all of this.

She got up and walked out. Atleast he was still alive!

He slowly opened his eyes and took a deep breath replaying her words. She was really crazy. Who rejoiced on somebody else's memory loss? He was also disappointed in himself for falling for

someone like her. She was the worst woman to ever exist on Earth. A real definition of beauty with no brains.

His friendship was also ruined all because of her, badluck followed her everywhere.

He shut his eyes slowly drifting to sleep, he had to keep up with the memory loss story. He wasn't gonna be able to look at his friend in the eyes and lie to him anyway.

At the mall...

They concluded the meeting with his lawyer and shook hands as he stood up leaving the restaurant.

Moments later he settled the bill and walked out bumping into Small and his friend walking in with yet another short lady.

He greeted them and introduced himself to the lady as she smiled smitten.

Ndumiso: Ndumiso Mdletshe.

Lady: Nomvuzo Mthethwa.

Ndumiso: Beautiful name....

Another guy walked in to them holding hands and took a deep breath looking at their hands. Thubelihle cleared his throat and covered his mouth with his hand.

Ndumiso pulled back his hand and walked out without a word.

Nomvuzo: I'm sorry.

Thubelihle: For what? It was just a handshake.

The boyfriend clicked his tongue and pulled her arm walking out with her. Small shrugged looking at Thubelihle.

Thubelihle: That dude is crazy that one will be my boy's girlfriend.

Small: Babe don't be that guy.

Thubelihle: He's single and Nomvuzo needs a man so what's the problem?

He pulled a chair for her and called a waiter.

At Ndumiso's house...

Later that day Thubelihle looked at the plan of a particular house whilst Ndumiso connected the third laptop on the charger.

Ndumiso: This is not bad.

Thubelihle: Oh yeah?

Ndumiso: It'll take up to 5 minutes.

Thubelihle shifted closer and looked at the screen and shook his head going back to the plan holding a red marker.

Thubelihle: I don't understand those things.

Ndumiso: What were you hoping to see in the first place?

Thubelihle:(shrugged) Don't know.

A loud bang on the door interrupted them...

Voice: Police open up!

They both looked at each other and Thubelihle quickly folded the plan. Ndumiso closed the laptops and went to place them in the bedroom as the banging on the door continued...

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At Ndumiso's house...

He opened the door and stepped back as the police flooded the house.

They looked between them and turned to Ndumiso with a straight face.

Ndumiso: Can we help you?

Police 1: Ndumiso Mdletshe you're under arrest for assaulting Mr Biyela.

Ndumiso: You're joking right? Assault?

They walked up to him and roughly pushed him to the wall putting his hands behind him cuffing him.

Thubelihle: Come on now? Is that necessary?

The detective clicked his tounge annoyed.

Detective: This is not Joburg where you own the streets and have the entire police force on your payroll.

Thubelihle: So this is personal?

He pulled Ndumiso by the collar and pushed him out.

Thubelihle remained rooted in spot confused. Assault out of everything? Ndumiso wasn't someone who lost his cool anyhow. That was unlike him and was definitely stupid.

He went to take his phone from the charger and called Unathi.

Unathi: Thuba let me call you back. I'm still busy.

Thubelihle: Ndumiso has been arrested.

Unathi: Give me a minute(he parked in his garage) I'm listening.

Thubelihle: He's been arrested.

Unathi: Again? What for?

Thubelihle: Assaulting his boss. Well former boss.

Unathi: He fired him?

Thubelihle: I don't know what happened he refused to tell me.

Unathi: This is bad, he's going to prison.

Thubelihle: Can't you do something?

Unathi: He was out on bail. He wasn't supposed to get on the wrong side of the law.

Unathi: What if I got the boss to drop the charges?

Unathi: It's useless. He's accused of attempted murder and rape. An assault charge will prove to the magistrate that he's not fit to be in public. Your boy messed up, if you have shit like this going on, You avoid unnecessary fights because they mess things up further for you.

Thubelihle: You have to try.

Unathi: Hayibo ngenzeni Thuba. That guy doesn't listen. You don't know the Captain in charge in that station. He has zero tolerance for rapists and murders, it's personal and believe me once he finds out that he has a rape charge in his name it's over for him. We can't pay him if that's what you think he's not corrupt.

Thubelihle: Everyone has a price.

Unathi: Not that one. I know you care about this guy but it's over for him. We must focus on getting him protection once he's in jail for now wait. I'll go and see him in the morning.

Thubelihle: Can't you come now?

Unathi: Uzongbhora ke manje. Wafuna ukuphoqa izinto nje yini kanti?

He hang up and Thubelihle cursed kicking the couch then called another number.

Thubelihle: Assault what was that about?

Voice: Thuba afternoon to you too. That bully you call a friend attacked me after trespassing in my building.

Thubelihle: What? He would never do that.

Voice: But he did and if you think you're going to hurt me so that I can drop those charges then think again. I told the police that should anything to me he's responsible for it.

Thubelihle: You're going to pay for this. You don't know who you're messing with.

Voice: But I know who that is. He's just a village boy with a mind full of cow dung. And don't ever call me again. I don't owe

you anything right now. I employed your rapist boy now stay away from me.

He hang up on him. He removed his shirt and took off his vest feeling hot.

He wondered just how much he told the police because from his tone he could tell that he told them more than he should. The way they looked at them and the remark about the Joburg police force being in his payroll.

To him that screamed personal. It wasn't about the assault anymore but then his friend was secretive.

Knowing that it may take up to years for him to retaliate to this kind of unfairness infuriated him even more. He was too premeditative it was annoying.

At The Police Station....

The next day the door opened and he got in with his wrists cuffed together. He sat in front of his lawyer as the police stepped back and stood next to the door.

Ndumiso: I'm going to jail right?

Unathi: Why did you do it?

Ndumiso: You're not going to understand. It was only one punch and that should tell you something.

Unathi: I'm not joking.

Ndumiso: I know. How long am I looking at?

He sighed when he got his question, looking at his case he could tell that a lot of injustice was going to happen due to the police incompetency

Unathi: Months or years even.

Ndumiso: Just for trial?

Unathi: You have to understand one thing. Police don't care

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they don't care about you. They only care about promotions and making arrests. They might even try to pin all these cases of those girls who went missing and turned up dead on you.

Ndumiso: That's crazy I don't even stay there.

Unathi: Where were you when your girlfriend went missing? Your woman was killed along with 2 other girls, those cases might be pinned on you.

Ndumiso: You're there to defend me, You know I didn't do it.

Unathi: I don't know I wasn't there. I just want you to be prepared. For now we need to worry about making your stay comfortable there we'll work on your case after that. Is there something else I need to know? I hate surprises, so any physically abused ex? Frenemies? Anything?

He thought of Nami and the guy they killed. If that came out he was done for. But he wouldn't be that stupid and tell on him knowing that he was also going to be incriminated.

Unathi: I'm your lawyer and I deserve all the truth.

Ndumiso: There's nothing.

Unathi: That better be the truth.

He squinted his eyes at him trying to read his emotions but he kept a straight face. He was too cool for an innocent person. He

might've not raped the girl but he sure did something sinister in the past.

He looked like someone who killed without any remorse and made sure to leave no evidence behind. Probably those type of deaths that end up being ruled out as coincidental.

He was more dangerous than electricity!

In prison...

Later that day Ndumiso walked along the corridor as two jail guards escorted him to his cell. He looked at the locked inmates howling banging the bars whistling loudly.

They passed several blocks until they stopped in front of a particular cell. The guards opened and roughly pushed him inside before locking him inside.

One of the guards looked at the intimidating inmate seated on his bed and nodded.

He turned around as everyone stared at him. One of them who was pressing on his phone looked up at him and scoffed, "Lucky Dube."

He scanned everyone with his eyes and walked to the unoccupied bed.

He looked at the locked bars and sighed. That was his home, a place that could either break or make him stronger.

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4 YEARS LATER

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In Prison...

***The judge fixed her glasses and scanned her eyes across the entire court room then concluded as everyone curiously listened.

Judge:...The accused has been found not guilty of attempted murder and guilty of rape. And therefore sentences you to 15 years imprisonment.

Ndumiso faced up as a cold chill ran down his spine whilst silence filled the courtroom. A loud wail from Thembalami broke the silence as her father rubbed her back whilst she rested her head on his chest with the other over her big pregnancy bump.

He looked at his parents holding each other as his mother cried on his father's shoulder. He swallowed wetting his dry painful throat as the guards escorted him out.

He looked at his father for the last time and shut his eyes when he saw the pain in his father's eyes.

He went down the stairs as his lawyer watched him defeated. He was sure that they would win the case as to how they lost it, it still remained a mystery till this day.

They locked him inside with his wrists and ankles cuffed. He looked around the car and for the first time he wanted to broke down and cry but crying wasn't going to help. He had to be strong and accept his situation...***

He snapped out of it and turned around facing the wall as the guard clicked his tounge and went back to tell Thembalami that he refused to see her.

He was slowly but surely accepting his situation but something about Lami's visits made him powerless and left him depressed. Maybe it was the fact that he was imprisoned for something he didn't do or maybe it was the fact that his lawyer was failing to apply for his appeal. He was really convinced someone else was influencing his case and his stay inside.

Nothing major so far but getting through the day was a miracle on its own.

He had even lost weight and his complexion was two shades darker than before, 3 years down felt like 10 years. Everyday he wondered if he was going to be able to get to that 10 years or he was going to die in his sleep like others.

Sharing a cell with psychotic sadists who killed for a living was no child play. Sleeping with both eyes closed was impossible, you had to be alert at all times.

One of the inmates sat on his bed...

Inmate: She was here again?

Ndumiso:....

Inmate: Still don't wanna take that offer? I made enough money before coming here it'll last us for a while.

Ndumiso: Leave.

Inmate: Come on Ndu.

Ndumiso: One more word and I'll spend the night in solitary.

He raised his hands up surrendering and got up. He clenched his jaws breathing heavily thinking about their offer. It was a great one ofcourse and it sounded safe but still escaping wasn't a solution. He wasn't stupid, someone else was watching him.

Trying to escape was definitely going to land him in the hot waters.

At Ndumiso's house...

MaZikhali called a young boy who was walking with two older boys and walked to him. The boys held him back as he tearfully tried to push them off.

Boy 1: Granny said you must stop going to that woman or else she'll beat all of us.

They held his uncombed dirty afro and pulled him dragging him away. MaZikhali upped her pace as the boy cried walking away as his torn pants fell down exposing his buttocks. The boys laughed at his tiny penis as he covered it with his hand whilst the other held his hair. He tripped on his pants and fell on his knees crying as they released him and laughed running away as she approached behind them. She picked a few stones and hit them then picked him up and pulled his falling pants up walking back to her house locking the gate behind her.

She placed him on the couch and went to prepare bathing water for him.

She dished up for him and warmed the food then went to bath him.

He applied petroleum jelly on him and wrapped him with a big towel and started feeding him.

She finished and poured juice for him then went to take out his clothes in his room.

She sighed sadly looking at them, he was probably going to wear them for a few hours before they took them off.

She reached for her phone and called Ndumiso's lawyer...

Unathi: Hello.

MaZikhali: Mr Ndunakazi how are you doing?

Unathi: I'm fine ma is everything okay?

MaZikhali: When is my son coming out. You said by this time everything will be promising. Why are you quiet? He needs to get out so that he can get his son back.

Unathi: He will I'm doing the best I can.

MaZikhali:(tearfully) Please ask him to allow me to visit him. I need to talk to him about his son.

Unathi: I'll tell him even though I don't think he'll agree.

MaZikhali: Okay.

Unathi: Yes I'll see what I can do regarding his son.

MaZikhali: Thank you.

She hang up and wiped her tears then took ointments and bandages to the living room.

She glanced at the watch on the wall and went to dress him up. It was only a matter of time before they arrived with the police and claimed that she had kidnapped their grandson.

She opened the cartoon channel for him and placed him on her lap caressing his cheek until he fell asleep.

She smiled emotionally looking at his dark lips, the child was the exact copy of his father!

At Thubelihle's house...

He got off the phone with Unathi and continued eating whilst sending a text to someone. Regardless of what went down between his parents

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he was innocent and his living condition was not good.

Even though Ndumiso tried acting tough but that was stressing him.

He needed to find a way to help him. Hopefully taking them to court was going to work.

At Thembalami's friend...

She sat on the couch and rested her feet on the armrest heaving a sigh.

Friend: Nothing again?

Lami: I don't know what is going on with him. He has no visitors except his friend and lawyer but he still refused to see me.

Friend: But I still find it strange that you're hell bent on meeting him after he raped you.

Lami: I want us to talk about Ndumiso Jnr. He needs to take responsibility for his son.

Friend: He's in jail not on a business trip. How is he supposed to take responsibility?

Lami: He has rich friends, they're supposed to do something.

Friend: No you're supposed to take care of your son and stop following your rapist like a confused soul. This is not even a Stockholm syndrome, it's madness!!

She went out and she took a deep breath closing her eyes as her phone rang.

Lami: Ma.

Her mother: Ndumiso is missing.

Lami: What?

Her mother: I fetched him from MaZikhali and brought him here and now I can't find him. Apparently he went to the river with others to swim and now we can't find him.

They suspect he drowned or something might've took him.

Lami:(sat up) What thing mama? My son can't swim, that river is dangerous. Strange things happen there, my son wasn't supposed to go there.

Her mother:....Yes...someone just found his clothes, maybe he got inside.

Lami:(tearfully) Ma!

Her mother: I'll update you, everyone is looking for him.

She hang up as Lami got off the couch and ran to the bedroom to pack her bags...

In the river...

The guys quickly dived to the river bank and got out as a crocodile appeared at a distance. Everyone ran away others pulling their kids as police cars approached. They jumped off the cars and walked to the scene. Lami's mother went to them and explained what happened. One of the officers quickly made a few calls as she cried looking at the clothes in her hands. She might've disliked him because of his parent's sins but he was still his grandchild.

Officers spoke amongst each other for a while then started asking questions whilst waiting for help to arrive.

In the prison...

Two guards pushed Ndumiso to an office and stood next to him. He angrily looked at them as the office chair turned revealing a man in a black suit.

Him:(foreign accent) You can leave us.

They got out leaving Ndumiso rooted in place. He has never seen that before and he wondered what was going on. He had been behaving well the past few weeks.

Him: Ndumiso have a seat....I must say, rejecting that offer was a smart move.

Ndumiso: What?

He scoffed and shrugged as he stared at him in awe...

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In Prison....

Ndumiso: You're the one responsible for my sentencing?

Him: Are you asking because you need an answer or..?

Ndumiso: What do you want? Why am I here?

Him: I want you.

Ndumiso:(annoyed) I know that. What for?

Him: I need someone like you in my team. I've been watching you since varsity and I must say I'm impressed.

Ndumiso: You're still not saying anything.

Him: I need you in my team. I want someone who can help us gain access into highly secured buildings. Nothing new you're used to it.

Ndumiso: Thuba is the one who sent you?

Him: He doesn't know. If he did he wasn't going to agree. I flew from LA because I wanted to see you personally. I was highly impressed with your last mission before returning to KZN.

Ndumiso: I'm not doing it.

Him: You stand to gain a lot.

Ndumiso: More than you? I'm not stupid. I get to gain 10% whilst you get 90%. And besides I'm not about that life anymore.

Him: You need us. We can also get you out of this hell hole.

Ndumiso: Who came to who? If I needed you I would've flew to LA but I don't heck I don't even know you. How can you need someone you don't know?

Him: This is a great opportunity. A lot of organizations have seen you and they all want you and....

Ndumiso:...Keeping me in prison was the only way to keep me safe. I'm not doing it.

Him: But...

Ndumiso: Yey! I said no.

He got up and walked to the door.

Him: We can help you find the people who killed your woman and you'll also get to reunite with your son.

Ndumiso: What? People?

Him: We can help each other. Look we could work well together. Atleast think about it. Call me when you're done.

Ndumiso: Is it people I know?

Him: Bye Ndumiso.

They opened for him and he walked out as the man reached for his phone and made a call...

Voice: General is everything okay?

General: He's not budging.

Voice: Did you atleast threaten him?

General: You don't threaten someone like him. He was going to reject the offer out of spite and let me do my worst.

Voice: What are we going to do?

General: I'll think of something. I won't lose him like that. Tell Rich and 360 I'm coming with him before the end of the week.

Voice: Are you sure?

General: 1500 is already undermining me. Getting this guy will help me restore my dignity. Tell them he's coming. I'll try him again tomorrow.

Voice: Don't come on to hard we don't want him to learn about our desperation.

General: You underestimate this guy. He knows that already hence whatever plan I might come up with to hide my desperation will be futile. Sharp we'll talk tomorrow.

He hang up and brushed his long hair back.

At Ndumiso's house....

A police van pulled over by the gate and MaZikhali stepped out tying her gown. She placed her hand on her forehead protecting her eyes from the bright lights.

The police stepped out as she opened the gate and went to them.

MaZikhali: You again?

Police 1: Sawbona ma.

MaZikhali: What have I done now?

Police 2: Ma we're looking for a child. A young boy...

MaZikhali: I kidnapped him again? That woman took the baby earlier today. What do you want from me? There are serious

cases out there but you're always here harassing me to hide your incompetence. I'm sick and tired of you.

Police 1: Cha ma it's not like that. The baby is missing and he was last seen in the river but we would like to investigate everyone who had any contact with him today.

MaZikhali: Missing how? He left here with his grandmother. What was he doing in the river?

Police 1: He followed the boys who were going for a swim.

MaZikhali: In the afternoon? And you believe that? They did something to my grandson. Why did they fetch him when they knew they were not going to look after him?

Police 2: We don't have those answers we just wanted to know if you didn't see anything or at least hear anything.

MaZikhali: No. Where are they right now?

Police 1: In the river people are still searching for him.

MaZikhali: I'm going

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wait for me.

Police 2: But ma...

MaZikhali: I'm coming with you. That's my grandson don't tell me about that crazy woman.

She went to lock the door and went back to them....

In the river..

Hours later everyone was exhausted others were sleepy since it was late. Thembalami appeared running towards the police gathered around the car crying.

Thembalami: Where's my son? Have you found him?

Police: And you're?

Thembalami: Her mother. I was in Durban to look for a job and I heard he's missing.

Police: Oh. Mam we've been looking for him for hours but there's nothing and unfortunately noone can get inside because there's a crocodile in there.

Thembalami: So my son was eaten by crocodiles?

Police: We didn't say that. Maybe he's out there we'll look into your case for now there's nothing more we can do. We need to leave.

Thembalami: But you haven't found my son.

Police: I'm so sorry mam. There's nothing we can do.

They spoke amongst themselves and got into the cars then left.

She sat on the rock and screamed shaking her head as her wig fell off revealing her uncombed relaxed hair.

Her mother went to her and held her as she fell down kicking and screaming.

Thembalami:(crying) This is my fault mama. I should've...should've...mama....my son. I want my son.

The elders shouted calling others and asked them to go home.

Elder 1: There's nothing we can do now. It's late we're also not safe. We'll come and look tomorrow for now let go back home.

They all nodded and started dispersing. MaZikhali thought of going to Lami and give her a piece of her mind but thought

otherwise. She reached for her phone and called her husband then continued walking with others.

At Thubelihle's house...

Thubelihle looked at his laptop and sighed thoughtfully leaning back with a frown. He leaned over again and clicked his tounge...

Thubelihle: F\$ck!!!

The building had one guard outside and 4 inside. Taking them out was easy but hacking their security system was impossible. There was noone perfect for the job out there.

Everyone was either good in using their hands or they were already working for someone else.

He had no other option but to sit that one out.

He called someone sipping on his coffee...

Voice: Yes.

Thuba: Is it safe?

Voice: He refused. He doesn't want to escape.

Thuba: But the stay there is not good.

Voice: He doesn't care.

Thuba: Can't you convince him?

Voice: Are we talking about the same person? The only way to convince that one is to get into his head.

Thuba: That's impossible.

Voice: Talk to him. Maybe he might agree. You know him better he's your friend.

Thuba:(sighed) He refused.

Voice: I'll try him again. Sure.

He hang up and he breathed into his hands then rubbed his red eyes as his phone rang...

Thuba: Yes.

Unathi: The child is missing. Do you have anything to do with it?

Thuba: You give me way too much credit. Ofcourse I don't.

Unathi: You sure?

Thuba: Yes. What happened to him?

Unathi: I don't know. Look, try and find him. Ndumiso doesn't need this.

Thuba: Maybe he needs to get out. Everything is crumbling down with him inside. We're losing money.

Unathi:(chuckled) You gotta sit this one out.

Thuba: We're talking about a merchandise worth more than R20 mil

Unathi: R65 mil actually and it's a pity he's the only one who can hack into that system undetected. A few have tried and failed. After a month they'll start distributing it.

Thuba: What if we...?

Unathi: 101

Thuba:(defeated) Blood bath.

Unathi: Sit this one out champ....look for that kid. I'll check on that guy tomorrow.

He nodded and clenched his jaws then exhaled resting his elbows on his lap with his chin over his fists

In prison...

In his cell Ndumiso laid on his back and stared into the darkness as General's offer echoed in his head.

It was a great offer actually. Despite his involvement in his case all the evidence pointed to him and one way or the other he was going to get punished for it.

He was also going to avenge his girl. Maybe that might give him closure.

But joining these things was like selling his soul to the devil.

He might stay behind the computer and sit in the car whilst they went to do all the work but if things went South he was going to be forced to use a gun. He wasn't a saint per se but killing innocent people wasn't part of the plan.

They were going to steal stolen merchandise or illegal ones for that matter so he didn't care about it but the guards were innocent!

He huffed and looked besides him. Living in that hell hole wasn't ideal to him but damn!!

He let his thoughts wonder for a while and finally reached a decision...

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At Thembalami's house...

She sniffed seated on bed and wiped her tears. She couldn't stop thinking about how Ndu was rejecting her. Even in prison, he didn't want her!

She lifted her eyes to the door as her aunt walked in. She shook her head looking at her.

Lami: Auntie please.

Her aunt: Did you see him?

Lami: I went to look for a job.

Her aunt: You're talking to me. I know you. Why do you keep on following him? Aren't you worried that people are going to find it strange that you keep on following your rapist around?

Lami: I don't care about people anymore. If they call me for that job I'm leaving. I can't live my whole life following Ndumiso around. He doesn't want me anymore I need to accept that and move on.

Her aunt:(chuckled) You only realized that now?

Lami: Auntie!

Her aunt: What? It's true. He never wanted you. That's why you got him arrested for a crime he never committed. Got pregnant for him and lost his baby due to negligence.

Lami: They'll find him.

Her aunt: They? What about you? Why didn't you take the emergency pills as instructed by the doctors if you knew you won't love the baby.

Lami: I didn't think...

Her aunt: You never think that's why. I came to call you. We need to go and look for your child.

Lami: I can't. I'm expecting an important call.

Her aunt: What are people going to say?

Lami: I don't care.

She laid down as her aunt clapped once and got up leaving her. She exhaled and rubbed her eyes.

She badly wanted to make things right and confess but she was scared of going to jail. That child was better off dead it was useless anyway. She never wanted him, she only wanted to get his father to love her and the fact that he didn't even want to see her saddened her.

Her phone beeped, she reached for it under the pillow and read the text, "One of my friends needs a maid, you available?"

She smiled and replied, "Yeah. When can I start?"

"Did you find the baby? You can come when you're free."

"Yes they found him. I can come back today."

"Okay I'll let them know."

She wiped her tears and got off bed happily. She was sad at first but then she realized that maybe losing him wasn't that bad.

She was going to be able to try and get her life in order without worrying about a baby. His father wasn't coming out for the next 12 years anyways so she was safe.

At Ndumiso's house...

MaZikhali got off the phone with her husband and sighed sadly. She didn't want to believe that something bad had happened to her grandson. He was still out there probably scared.

The incompetency of their police was discouraging her but she had faith, for her son. He wasn't happy about being tied to a woman like Thembalami but he loved his son.

She slowly knelt down and started praying for his safety...

In Prison...

He walked across the corridors followed by a guard whilst still thinking of that offer. It was a great offer yes

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but not ideal enough. They're the ones who kept him behind bars anyways so the 'getting you out of jail' card wasn't working on him.

They had to cut their losses and let him be so that his lawyer could get him out.

He was going to find Nhlahla's killers on his own.

He wasn't selling his soul to the devil! That was never part of the plan. He wanted a peaceful and normal life. He stole because he needed money for his tuition fees but not anymore,

he had no reason to continue. He wasn't about that life anymore.

The bars locked behind him and he scanned his eyes across the room and spotted Unathi seated at the far end. He walked up to him and pulled the chair sitting down as he squared his shoulders resting his forearms on the table.

Ndumiso: I hope you have got good news for me.

Unathi: Our application was not found on the system so we have to re-apply again.

Ndumiso: What?

Unathi: I guess it's high time we tried other alternatives. I've never come across a case like yours. It's the smallest but yet too complicated.

Ndumiso: Let it be.

Unathi: What do you mean?

Ndumiso: I don't want that appeal anymore. I'll serve my sentence.

Unathi: Are you crazy?

Ndumiso: Maybe I am.

Unathi: You do realize that when you get out your son will be a teenager?

Ndumiso: I know.

Unathi: Why are you being selfish?

Ndumiso: I'm being selfish?

He angrily banged the table earning a few stares. The guard approached and Ndumiso raised his hand brushing him off. He stepped back still looking at them.

Unathi: Could you please stop that. Stop pretending like you're cool with this situation. It's frustrating.

Ndumiso: Must I go crazy and throw tantrums to show that I'm not fine. How is that gonna help? I've shared a cell with people who used to cry every nights but they're still here. Being emotional about your situation doesn't change it. Let it be and stop coming here too. I won't need your services anymore.

He got up and started walking away.

Unathi: Your son is missing.

He stopped walking.

Unathi: He's probably scared, hungry and cold wherever he is. You grew up with your father in your life but he has to grow up with a bitter woman who put his father in jail. Not only he has that he also has an ungrateful father who would rather stay in jail than go out there and protect him. His only sin was to run faster than other sperms because come to think of it he never asked you to have sex. You're here behaving like a spoilt brat knowing very well that you have someone who needs you out there. His mother is probably gonna find a man and settle down with him. With a bitter and angry child with daddy issues by their side they will probably get frustrated with him and maybe abuse him. Pray that they keep that abuse to minimal because if it happens that they choose to bend him over you'll pay for it.

You're stubborn and heartless, he's probably worse. I hope he cut your balls and slit your throat and watch you choke on your blood because you're nothing but a selfish moron with an empty pride!

He picked his briefcase and got up as he swallowed and went to stand next to the bars. They opened for him and he got in and went to his cell...

At Lami's friend....

Later that day they got into a car and drove out. Being a maid wasn't a fancy job but atleast she was going to get money and that was all that mattered.

An hour later they drove through the gate and parked in the driveway behind three other cars.

They stepped out and went to the door carrying her bags.

They heard loud laughter inside the house, she turned to her friend who smiled at her...

Friend: Relax, it's her boyfriend and their friends.

Thembalami: Ok.

She straightened her dress and took a deep breath as the friend knocked once and entered.

The laughter died down as they looked at them. Lami slowly lifted her head and looked at the guys seated on the couches with their girlfriends. Her eyes fell on Nkosinami seated on the chair pressing on his phone. He lifted his eyes and saw her. He dropped his phone shocked and everyone turned to him....

Nkosinami: It's nothing.

Friend: Ok. Siza this is Lami, Thembalami she's the girl I told you about.

Siza: Oh hey Lami. Don't mind these people you'll get used to them.

Friend: No intro?

Siza:(stuck her tongue out) No!

She stood up and went to take her bag and directed her to her room.

Nami exhaled and brushed his face. He wasn't going to allow her to work there, Never!

In Prison...

During supper Ndumiso played with his food whilst deep in thoughts. Their food was horrible but that day it was worse.

He was failing to eat knowing that his son was out there alone. What if he turned up dead like Nhlahla?

Was he going to live with himself knowing that he lost yet another baby?

For him he was going to do it. He was taking that offer.

Atleast that way he was going to sleep better at night knowing that he was safe and cared for.

Ndumiso: I hope I'm not late.

The inmate seated besides him turned to him and he got up ignoring him and went back to his cell.

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At Thubelihle's house...

Later that night

He locked the door and went to place the sleeping baby in the bedroom. He changed his clothes and pulled the covers over him then walked out after switching off the lights.

He went through the list he received from his lady friend and bit his lower lip thoughtfully. Staying with a baby seemed like a full time job and a helper was going to come in handy.

He brushed that thought off, those were too problematic, he didn't want someone who might hurt the baby.

He put the list on the counter and reached for his phone calling Ndumiso. He had to know that his son was okay....

His phone rang rang unanswered. He sighed and went to switch off the lights then went to his room.

He was going to try again the next morning.

In Prison...

His phone vibrated, he reached for it and silenced the call when he heard footsteps. He switched off the phone then got off bed.

The guard brought the lights to his face blinding him, he squinted his eyes and put his hand over his eyes blocking the light. They pulled him after cuffing him and led him to an office...

They pushed him inside and left. General revolved the chair facing him as he sighed and took a sit in front of him.

Ndumiso: You're the one who took my son?

General: Evening to you too. No I didn't, I don't touch women and children.

Ndumiso: It was coincidental?

General: I don't know...have you thought about my offer?

Ndumiso: Yes. I'll do it.

General: You know after this there's no turning back?

Ndumiso: I know but I need to find my son first.

General: Fine by me.

Ndumiso: Where do I sign?

General: Relax.

He pressed on his phone for a while and then got up and went to bang on the door. A guard walked in.

General: Remove the cuffs.

Guard: What?

One of their superiors walked in with his hands deep in his pockets...

Superior: It's okay.

He removed the cuffs and went to the door

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he held his arm and whispered,

Superior: You know the drill, this is a classified case.

Guard: Crystal boss.

Superior: You may leave.

He walked out.

Ndumiso: We're leaving now?

General: Yes. Tomorrow your new lawyer will file for appeal at the Court of Appeal by the end of the year your case will be dismissed.

Ndumiso: I'll stay in prison for another year?

General: No. You're leaving but nobody has to know about it. Your friends and family will not be allowed to visit you anymore. The guards will cook up something, everyone has to believe you're in prison for the time being.

He swallowed as a cold chill ran down his spine, this was getting heavier by each second.

They shook hands and General led Ndumiso out...

At Thembalami's workplace...

Siza placed another bottle of wine in the table and threw herself on the couch.

Siza: One more for the road.

Friend 1: I'll need a doctor's note tomorrow. I can't go to work looking like this.

They laughed as Lami came from the bedroom and went to the kitchen to get water. Nami saw her and looked at his drunk friends.

He excused himself and went to the kitchen.

Nkosinami: What are you doing here?

Thembalami: Drinking water.

Nkosinami: Don't patronize me. You know what I'm talking about. What are you hoping to achieve?

Thembalami: Look let us just let bygones by bygones. I won't say anything if you don't.

Nkosinami: Say anything...? Are you crazy? Why would you say anything because there's nothing to tell? Stop this madness and go back home.

Thembalami: Not happening. I need this job.

Nkosinami: If you don't leave I'll tell Siza the type of girl you're.

Thembalami: Oh please! That was long time ago. You can't punish me for something that happened donkey years ago.

Nkosinami: Siza deserve to know the truth. What if you accuse her boyfriend of rape when things don't go your way? You can't work here.

Thembalami: I can't tell her. She won't understand.

Nkosinami: Vele she won't. Who would? You're crazy and evil. You don't deserve to be here. Siza deserve better.

Thembalami: Please don't tell her.

Siza walked in on the conversation and looked between them hoping to find out what they were talking about.

They got startled by her as she balanced on the wall. They looked at each other both wondering how much she heard.

Nkosinami: Siza... I didn't see you there.

Siza:(to Lami) You don't have to say anything. I can't have a person like you working for me. I don't trust you.

Thembalami: I...I'm.. sorry It was long time ago. I didn't think it was important to tell you.

Siza: I can't. You can't be trusted. Please leave my house tomorrow.

Nkosinami: Siza it's...

Siza:(raised her hand up) Thula wena!

Thembalami: It's not what you think. I'm not entirely evil. He was wrong I was just retaliating. He wasn't supposed to go to prison. I messed up I know.

Siza: So when we fight here you'll go to the police?

Nkosinami turned to Siza and snorted realizing that she didn't hear what they were talking about. She was just reaching and Lami was playing right into her trap.

Thembalami: I won't. You're a woman.

Nkosinami: Lami shut up!

Siza: So you knew her and pretended like you didn't in front of us? What was that?

Nkosinami: Aike angeke phela ngizwe ngawe. I won't report to you with everything happening in my life.

Siza: So conspiring with my helper against us is right?

Nkosinami:(sighed) Lami tell her the whole truth.

He went out leaving them as they stared at each other for a while.

Siza: I'm waiting.

She took a sip and then started telling her everything...

In General's car...

Ndumiso put on a beanie over his head and rubbed his palms together.

Ndumiso: I think I know what to do to in order to find my son.

General: That's not happening. We'll look for him on your behalf. You need to go for training and psychological evaluations then start working on your assignments. We need to be fast because we have less than a month before your first assignment. You don't need any distractions so you'll need to cut off communications with the outside world.

Ndumiso: Noted.

He got inside the car and General drove off. He rolled down the window looking outside, at long last he was finally free!

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At Thubelihle's house...

He rinsed their bowls in the sink and went to bath him in the bathroom. He finished and went to dress him up then combed his afro as he grinned flinching in pain. He paused and wiped his tears and then went to the living room with him where he opened a cartoons channel.

He thoughtfully looked at his hair, a hair cut would suit him better but he might look cute in dreadlocks. Just like his daddy, he needed to find a way to get his documents because staying with him was also risky. Sending him back wasn't an option either, he was better staying with him. He didn't know anything about babies yes but there was a first time for everything.

He tried Ndumiso's number again and it still rang unanswered. He sighed getting worried.

He picked his car keys standing up.

Thubelihle: Come on let's go. We need to be somewhere.

At General's house...

They disengaged the alarms and walked in as General sped off leaving Ndumiso and Rich.

Rich placed a duffel bag on the coffee table then dropped the keys on the couch unzipping his jacket.

Ndumiso yawned and popped his knuckles exhausted. They drove the whole night and to say he was tired would've been an understatement.

Rich: Your room is the second door on your right. The bathroom is opposite your room.

The kitchen is that side(pointed at the kitchen)

My office is at the far end of the passage, I don't need you there.

Ndumiso:(bored) You done?

Rich: You need to eat healthy and drinks lots and lots of water. Hit gym to stay in shape, the gym is that side(pointed at the gym) You need to do a lot of exercising, it's very important. I take it they told you about cutting off communication with the

outside world. Failure to do that will not only put you in danger but your family too. We have cleaners who are one ping away.

He picked the duffel bag and walked to his bedroom then stopped whilst looking at his watch.

Rich: It's 6:43am by 10:00am you need to be up. Someone will come and get you for your psychological evaluation. That's where they'll check your mental fitness for all of this....the person you're assigned to is very strict and brutal. Try to keep calm and try by all means to keep your sanity intact...I don't know if you get me but after those evaluations a few come back still the same.

Ndumiso: What is that supposed to mean?

Rich: His ultimate goal is to mess up your sanity, break you till you lose your mind. We don't need compassionate people so the first step is to make sure your sanity is not intact. You may stay behind the computer but shit happens all the time so everyone needs to always be alert and ready for anything.

Ndumiso: Why are you telling me this?

Rich: I'm assigned for you because I saw you first and from my observations

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You're better off sane. Once you lose your mind you will turn this whole world upside down.

Ndumiso:(side smiled) What if I wanna do that?

Rich: Think of your mother and son, what will happen to them when you go crazy?... I'm going to sleep...Remember, focus on the best moments of your life to keep sane even if you feel like shitting your pants....see you after a week.

Ndumiso: I'm going for a week?

Rich: Yes if you don't shut out from the world. Then you'll go to Liberia for intense training. After that you'll come back to SA and stick to what you know better, technology and learn how our systems work. I hope you easily get the hang of things when it comes to that because that's what keeps you off the radar. I can't hold your hand everytime.

Ndumiso: What do you mean 'shut out'?

Rich: If it gets too much to handle your mind basically shut down. I'm being modest here shit that goes down there is too brutal, those evaluations are our ways of turning you into something you're not. You'll do what we say without having to worry about consequences.

You can hack into a security system and clean out whatever shit on your way without mercy then leave the building like nothing happened. You probably think we want that but that's not how we do things. Hurting civilians is always kept to minimal but you can end up killing them only because you can....our rules are fucked up but there's nothing we can do.

Ndumiso:(sighed) When will I get my son?

Rich: We'll look for him. You'll get the report when you get back. And if you want they can bring him here for confirmations...You don't know how powerful you're right now. General isn't returning to LA until you're done with your training and he rarely does that.

He looked at the time and sighed then got inside his bedroom.

Ndumiso went to his and laid on his back fully clothed.

What did he get himself to?

His head was buzzing with crazy scenarios. What if they actually succeeded in messing him up?

He always heard about other agents going for training and coming back mentally disturbed.

What if he came back with multiple personalities or worse came back a complete different person?

He cursed the day he met Thembalami. Within a blink of an eye his life has been turned upside down.

He reached for his phone and saw Thuba's missed call. The phone had no signal, he was going to get rid of it. He had no use for it anyway.

He took a pillow and covered his face until he eventually dozed off and slept.

At Siza's house...

She took a sip of her strong black coffee and looked at Thembalami who was rubbing her sweaty palms together. Her brother, Sbekezelo looked at Thembalami waiting for an answer.

Thembalami: I can't change my statement now. It's too late.

Sbekezelo: You have to. This is an innocent man we're talking about. I understand your reasons but you have to do the right thing.

Thembalami: I'll go to jail.

Sbekezelo: Not if he see how sorry you're. He sound like a reasonable person. If you say he didn't harass you or anything then he won't get you arrested. We can go with you.

Siza: He's right this is unlike you. If you love him like you say then do the right thing and then you'll keep your job.

She thoughtfully looked at them. Ndumiso was reasonable but he hated her what if she changed her statement and then he got her arrested?

But then Siza and her brother sounded too sure and they saw her as a nice person not evil.

Thembalami: I'll do it.

Siza: Huh?

Thembalami: Yes. I'll change my statement.

Siza went to her bedroom to take her bag before she changed her mind.

That situation hit home for her because she lost her twin who was falsely accused of rape.

She hated women like Lami will all her might. After her confession she was kicking her out, her male friends weren't safe with her around.

At the police station...

Hours later Siza pulled over in the parking lot and stepped out. Thembalami breathed into her hands and followed her inside.

They assisted the last person on the line and Siza looked at her. She slowly walked to the counter.

Police: Mam how can we help you?

Thembalami: I'm...(cleared her throat) I'm here about the rape case I opened 4 years ago.

Police: Who are you?

Thembalami: Thembalami Mhlongo.

Police: What about the case?

Thembalami: I...I..saw...

Siza: She lied,

Thembalami:(shut her eyes) Yes I lied. Ndumiso never raped me.

Police: Ndumiso?

Thembalami:(crying) Ndumiso Mdletshe.

Another police heard her and quickly went to them....

Police 2: You lied?

Thembalami: Yes.

Police 1: This case was yours right?

Police 2: Yes.

He left them as the other police pulled a file and grabbed a pen.

Police 2: You said you lied?

Lami: Yes I was wrong I know.

Police 2: Oh you do realize that you broke the law and for that you will get punished?

Lami: Yes. I'm sorry.

Police 2: We'll look at the case again and get back to you.

Lami: You're not releasing him right now?

Police 2: No there are procedures that needs to be followed. But as soon as we're done with the paperwork he'll be released. You have to bare it in mind that he's not in the holding cells anymore. He's in jail so it's a lengthy process.

Lami: I see.

Police 2: Yeah we'll call you...Excuse me.

He walked away. On his way he teared off the paper and dropped it on the trashcan.

2 WEEKS LATER

At Ndumiso's house...

MaZikhali placed her plow in the storeroom and went to wash her face in the basin next to the tap. She went to her house and started preparing to go to town.

An hour later she sat in front of the dressing table tying her headwrap around her head. Her phone rang, she squinted her eyes and frowned at the unsaved number then placed the phone down continuing with her wrap.

She finished and stood up walking to her closet as her phone rang for the second time.

She ignored it and dressed up before taking her handbag and walked out.

She had to get a few things in town for her son and then go visit him. She was going to see him the following day but that didn't prevent her from being happy. He didn't look good but witnessing with her eyes that he was still alive was enough.

At Thubelihle's house...

Thubelihle tried MaZikhali's number again and sighed when it rang unanswered. He thought letting her know was the best decision since Ndumiso didn't want any visitors anymore.

He didn't know why he would do that, they never did anything wrong to him and according to his sources, He was still alive but moved from his previous cell.

He dried little Ndumiso's dreadlocks and brushed his hairline then smiled holding his shoulders. His complexion was clearing up, he was more beautiful than before.

He picked his backpack and held his hand leading him out as the door opened in front of them.

Unathi closed it and blocked them, he saw the baby and chuckled in disbelief.

Thubelihle: Can we please pass?

Unathi: No, what is this?

Thubelihle: A pet, now move.

Unathi:(angrily)This is not the time to be sarcastic. Do you realise what you've done?

Thubelihle:(sighed) What are you doing this side?

Unathi: I'm meeting a client. I didn't tell you because I suspected that your stubborn ass will do something like this.

Thubelihle: Well my stubborn ass saved this kid. If it wasn't for me he would be dead!

Unathi: And you decided to play God with his life and save him from the Angel of Death?!!

Junior tightened his grip around Thuba's hand looking between them as they exchanged words in a harsh manner.

Situations like that scared him, everytime when words were exchanged like that he always ended up getting a slap and God knew a slap from a man was more painful. He preferred his mother's over his grandfather's. He was still scared of Thuba and that strange man made things worse as his lips trembled. He pressed his little legs together as his stomach turned into knots.

Thubelihle: I was going to tell Ndu about his whereabouts.

Unathi: You're selfish! Don't stand there and pretend like you care about that baby. You 'saved' him because you know he's your ticket into getting those millions.

Thubelihle clenched his fist and raised his hand. Junior covered his face with his hands crying as he wet his pants.

They both turned to him and Thuba crouched in front of him and gently removed his hands from his face. F!ck they had totally forgotten about him

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he wasn't supposed to witness that.

Thuba: I'm sorry. I'm not going to beat you I was just...

Unathi: We were trying to act. You know Zig and Sharko right?

He slowly nodded still crying.

Unathi: We want to appear on TV like them. Uncle Thuba will be Sharko because he's ugly. We weren't fighting. Big guys don't fight they act okay?

Thuba gave him a 'really' look. He ignored him and continued talking to Junior until he eventually calmed down.

Unathi: Tell Ndumiso about him maybe he might change his mind.

Thubelihle: I will.

Unathi: I'm serious. Because if he finds out first, he'll never trust you.

Thubelihle: I know and I'll try.

He opened the door..

Unathi: Get him counselling too that behaviour is not normal.

Thubelihle: He's a kid.

Unathi: I have 7 I know what I'm talking about.

He nodded and dropped his car keys on the couch leading Junior to his bedroom.

At Thembalami's house...

Khanyisile knocked on the door until she stopped. Thembalami laid on her bed feeling lazy to get out of bed.

She was angry and disappointed in herself. Now that she was thinking deeply about it, he did mess up Ndumiso's life. There was a possibility of him getting killed in prison and she didn't think of that before lying about him.

Khanyisile: Friend open up it's me...Lami?...Friend we'll find Ndumiso and bring him home and you'll get another job....please don't do anything stupid in there.

She clicked her tongue and pulled the bed covers over her head. Just thinking about her life brought sadness into her heart filling her eyes with tears.

At the bus station...

A car parked in front of MaZikhali and Msindazwe's colleague stuck her head out smiling at her...

Colleague: Sawbona ma. Mrs Mdletshe right?

MaZikhali: You are?

Colleague: I'm sent by Mr Mdletshe to come and fetch you.

MaZikhali: Oh.

She stepped out and placed her bag in the boot and opened the door for her then got inside. MaZikhali's phone rang in her bra as the car drove off.

MaZikhali: Hello.

Thubelihle: Hello ma. You're speaking to Thubelihle, Ndumiso's friend.

MaZikhali: Thuba, how are you doing my boy?

Thubelihle: Ma, I need to tell you something. It's about Ndumiso's son.

MaZikhali: What about him? Have you found him?

Thubelihle: Yes. He's staying with me.

MaZikhali: You found him in Mtuba and now he's with you in Joburg? Basically you took him without informing us?

Thubelihle: I didn't think...

MaZikhali: You didn't. So you're also playing games with my son's life? Do you know how worried I was because of that boy? Why does Ndumiso always choose the worst people as friends?

Thubelihle: I'm sorry...

MaZikhali: Stop saying you're sorry because you're not. You did this on purpose don't patronize me by your fake apology.

She hang up and rested her head back closing her eyes as her heartbeat picked up.

At General's apartment...

General downed his scotch and clenched his jaws as the bitter taste burned his throat causing his body to come alive. He bit his inner cheek looking at 360's house in the big desktop computer. He paced up and down and glanced at Ndumiso who laid on bed facing up and quickly went to connect his equipment.

His wristwatch beeped showing a red light and moments later his phone rang next to the laptop at the far end of the desk. He picked his eyes still fixed on the computer...

General: What is it?

Voice: The site in Liberia has exploded.

General:(Got up) What?!!

Voice: The place was surrounded by landmines.

General: The f!ck!! We've never had this problem before who would do something like this?

Voice: Apparently your guy is going to cause us more problems than he's worth. The Intelligence has been following him for a while now. They knew him before he was sentenced.

General: We saw him first!

Voice: They know! Now the new recruits are supposed to wait until we find another place. We also lost a number of agents during the explosion.

General:(sighed) I'll fix this.

Voice: Other superiors aren't happy with this. 1500 is having a field day. Fix this!

General: I will.

He hang up and reached for the laptop smashing it against the wall.

No matter what, he wasn't losing him to the Intelligence never!

At 360's house.

He unplugged his equipment and looked at Ndumiso laying unconscious on bed and sighed frustrated. He has tried everything to bring him back but nothing was working.

He had to admit though, he was a rare kind!

The last time he failed was when he was working with their previous hacker.

Maybe it was their thing.

But still it was too much, that was supposed to last for one week and he feared that the longer he stayed unconscious there might be a possibility of him waking up with an amnesia.

He roughed up his blonde hair and connected his equipment again but stopped realising that doing it for the 3rd time might kill him.

360: Damn you Ndu! You have to wake up dude!

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At 360's house...

General looked at Ndumiso and turned to 360 his eyes filled with nothing but fury.

General: Why did you go too hard on him? I told you to let him go if he's not caving in.

360: I was on the right track and all of a sudden he fainted. G, we can find another person. We don't have to go to such lengths for one person.

General: That's not happening. I won't waste all these years for free, I'm not that dizzy. You'll bring him back like it or not. He didn't need his mental state altered in the first place he's a hacker for God's sake not a cleaner.

360: I know I messed up and I'll wake him up. It's not that deep.

He angrily grabbed the half full bottle of whiskey and smashed it next to him. He tensed up as the bottle shattered on the wall spilling the whiskey as the pieces rained to the floor.

General: It's not that deep? This person is an asset to this organization something I can't say about you. Wake him up and if you doesn't, I'll personally mutilate you and hang your head in the entrance in Afghanistan.

360: He's costing us!!

General: Us?!! You and who?

He clicked his tounge and walked out hurling insults in his home language.

Meanwhile in the car General accepted a call...

General: What?

Voice: The higher ranks requested a meeting with you.

General: About that explosion? Come on! I told you I'll take care of it.

Voice: It's not about that. You're failing the organization, nobody is safe, the Intelligence wasn't supposed to find out about that place and they did. Do you know what that means?

General:(sighed) I know. I will come.

Voice: The jet is ready.

He hang up. He clicked his tounge and then did a u-turn.

At Msindazwe's house...

MaZikhali wiped the sink and turned to her husband.

MaZikhali: I can't believe that boy. He's selfish.

Msindazwe: He has been a good friend to our son all this time we can't crucify him because of one misunderstanding. The child is better off with someone like him instead of his mother's family. With him we might even see him whenever we wants without being threatened. Be reasonable my wife, that boy has been good to our son cut him some slack.

MaZikhali: I just don't like...

He walked towards her and held her waist.

Msindazwe: Stop blowing things out of proportion. Atleast he's safe. Joburg might do him good

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call him and ask him to bring him here for atleast one week so that you can see him.

MaZikhali: I need to go back after seeing Ndu.

Msindazwe:(raised his brow) Stay with your husband for a little while, your house isn't going anywhere. I miss you a lot when you're not here.

MaZikhali:(blushed) You do?

He chuckled and kissed her.

Msindazwe: Yes. Let me go and change so that we'll both go.

MaZikhali: You're not working?

Msindazwe: No I'll go tomorrow.

His hand went under her skirt. She slapped his hand looking at the door. He turned to the door and smiled...

Msindazwe: Kahle mkami akukho muntu ozongena lana.

MaZikhali: You'll say anything to get me to agree. Go and change we're going to be late.

At 360's house....

Rich disengaged the alarm and stepped inside the house. He found 360 seated in front of the computer looking at the past videos when he was training the previous hackers. His head slowly dropped and he lifted it up blinking slowly looking at the screen whilst yawning.

Rich looked at the laptop next to the computer and turned to 360 in absolute shock.

He shook him. He snapped out of it and quickly reached for his gun placed next to his whiskey.

Rich pushed it off the table. 360 rubbed his face standing up.

360: It's you?

Rich: How is he doing? It's been 2 weeks now.

360: Still unresponsive.

Rich: Is he going to recover though?

360: Honestly I don't think so.

Rich: And you think this is a solution?

He pointed at the screen.

360: It's the best. He's useless anyway so using his DNA to produce agents with high IQ is going to work. We can get surrogates...

Rich:(snapped) This is not going to work and I'm not going to allow you to do that to him. As an officer in charge of him you're not doing that.

360: We actually stand....

Rich: 'We'? Don't patronize me. You won't take our recruits and turn them into your lab rats. You've been doing fine all along, why are you doing this?

He pinched his nosebridge speechless. He wasn't going to tell him about his theories, he wasn't going to understand anyway.

Rich: Take me to him.

360: What?

Rich: Take me to him. You think I have time for your greedy ass? The higher ranks are having a meeting tonight a lot of things are going to change after that. Do away with those thoughts or you'll find yourself in hot waters.

In Prison...

MaZikhali walked out of the gate and stood next to the road wiping her tears. She still couldn't believe that her son refused to see him. Msindazwe placed her head on his left breast rubbing her back as she cried.

Msindazwe: Ungabe usakhala mkami atleast he'll call us.

She shook her head and exhaled through her mouth wheezed finding it hard to breath.

Msindazwe fished for her pump in her bag handing it to her. She pumped into her mouth as their ride approached.

A couple walking past them looked at each and smiled admiring them as Msindazwe zipped her bag and wiped her tears with his thumb before opening the door for her.

The driver greeted them. MaZikhali looked out of the window ignoring him.

MaZikhali: He refused to see us after everything we've been through? I get that he's hurt and frustrated by being here but why shut me out? His own mother?

Msindazwe: Don't dwell too much on this you'll get sick.

She rubbed her eyes and rolled down the window.

At Thubelihle's house...

Thuba sat on the white fluffy carpet in the middle of the living room playing board games with Junior.

His phone beeped, he reached for it and glanced at the screen. It was a message confirming their appointment with the psychologist the next day.

A knock sounded on the door, he got up and went to the door his eyes fixed on Junior.

Thubelihle: I don't trust you. Don't cheat.

He opened the door and saw the police standing in his door step.

Thubelihle: How can I help you?

Police: We're looking for Thubelihle.

Thubelihle: What do you want from him?

Police: Man we're here in connection to a young boy which was reported missing in KZN.

Thubelihle: He's here?

Police: Don't waste our time.

They pushed him out of the way and walked in. They saw Junior seated on the carpet with his legs crossed and turned to Thubelihle who looked at them with a straight face.

Police: 'He's here' my foot, who is this?

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At Thubelihle's house...

Thubelihle: My son.

Police: Since when?

Thubelihle: Since I nutted in her mother. Please leave before you scare him.

Police: We need proof. We can't just take your word for it. A child went missing and all of sudden you have a child. Too coincidental don't you think?

Thubelihle: I don't care. What kind of proof do you want?

Police: Anything to show that he's yours. I don't believe you.

Thubelihle:(annoyed) Should I show you my dick?

Police: What for?(scoffed) You think we're joking?

He rolled his eyes and went to Junior's bedroom and moments later he came back holding a brown envelope.

He handed it to the police, he opened the envelope whilst looking at him.

He took out a birth certificate and looked at it...

Police: Ndumiso huh?

Thubelihle: Kwakmele ngimqambe ngawe umubi so?

Police: Cha..

He raised his hand up silencing him then went to open the door wider for them. He grabbed the certificate and envelope then showed him the door.

Thubelihle: Take your friends and leave my house. If you're bored don't come in here and disturb my peace go to Kota Hut or take a run and burn those calories.

They led each other out and he closed the door behind them. He dropped the certificate on the coffee table by the door and knelt in front of Junior who was looking at the door fearfully.

He ran his fingers in his locks and tied them up in a bun before picking him up.

Thubelihle: They're not going to take you away okay?

He knod his head.

Thubelihle: Now smile for me you look ugly when you don't.
What would you like to have?

Junior: ice cream.

Thubelihle: Food please.

Junior:(buried his face on his shoulder) Don't know.

Thubelihle: Okay I'll cook for you.

He placed him on the counter and went to rinse his hands. He turned to him as he rested his hands on the counter wiggling his legs like his father used to do everytime he was cooking.

Thubelihle: These two think I'm their cook.

He said to himself walking to the fridge..

At General's house...

Rich inserted the code next to the door and the book shelf slid open revealing a desktop computer and two laptops with a few listening devices in front of it. He pulled the chair and inserted the long pins then leaned back watching Junior sprinkling flour on Thubelihle's face then ran towards the living room giving him a clear view of his face. He was an exact copy of Ndumiso!

He smiled softly as Thubelihle chased him and poured the whole cup in his head. He gasped shaking his head as flour covered his whole face.

He stuck his tongue out to him and went back to the kitchen.

Junior ran after him and he placed the bowl on the counter and quickly lifted him up walking down the passage with his head hanging on his shoulder.

He shook his head and rewinded a bit since he couldn't see them as the camera was only planted in the living room.

He watched the video a few times then sighed sadly remembering his moments with his father before things took a turn for the worst.

He swallowed a lump in his throat and switched off the computer getting up from the chair then went out.

The double door slid close behind him and he went to the gym holding his phone in his hand.

At Thembalami's house...

Lami's father stood by Lami's door as the eldest son broke down the door.

It fell down causing dust as Lami's father walked in and looked around the room worriedly.

Him: Where is she?

Everyone shrugged looking at each other. He clicked his tongue and went out.

A car drove through the gate. He went to his house taking his phone from his pocket dialing her number. Her phone rang unanswered

he sighed and sat on the worn out couch thinking of her. She can't just disappear into thin air just like that. They've been

begging her to open the door for the past few days and now she was nowhere to be seen.

Meanwhile Lami's brother went to the car as Sbekezelo stepped out looking around the huge clean yard for any dogs.

Sbekezelo: Sawbona.

Her brother: Yebo, unjani bhuti?

Sbekezelo: Ngiyaphila. I'm looking for Mhlongo homestead.

Her brother: Is everything okay?

Sbekezelo: Can I see Thembalami?

Her brother: What for?

Sbekezelo: It's about her job. I've just realized that we weren't fair on her so I would like to make things right. Please.

Her brother: She's not here. I'll tell her to call you when she comes back.

Sbekezelo: Thank you.

Her brother: Is that all?

Sbekezelo: Ye..yes...thank you.

He got inside the car and left.

At General's house...

Rich ran on the treadmill with earphones plugged in his ears. His phone rang as he continued running until the treadmill slowed down and eventually stopped. He reached for his towel and wiped his face and neck then took his bottled water drinking.

His phone rang again and he picked walking out.

Rich: G.

General: Move that guy back in with you.

Rich: He's awake?

General: No.

He hang up on him and he frowned and then went to take a quick shower.

At Khula Village....

Thembalami walked along the road barefooted in her bra and shorts. She sang softly oblivious to her surroundings.

A car appeared in front of her just as a cow and its calf crossed the road.

The driver swerved the car to the side and went straight to her blinding her vision with the lights.

The tyres screeched as the car hit her and then stopped.

The driver stepped out and went to check on her, she looked at her unconscious body and licked her lips nervously as her heart pounded.

She looked sideways and then ran back to her car. She reversed and honked for the calf to pass then stepped on the accelerator driving off the bumpy road.

At 360's house...

360 jammed the cameras and prepared his syringes then picked his box walking to the room Ndumiso was occupying.

He quickly dropped the box and swallowed as his throat dried up looking at Ndumiso seated on bed looking into space. He saw the empty jug next to bed and the electrodes that were on his head besides him.

360:(nervously) You're up?

He turned his head in one swift move scaring 360 in the process.

Ndumiso: Where is my son?

360: Rich will tell you.

Looking at his face angered him as all the gruesome things he did to him replayed in his mind like a movie. He shut his eyes as his breathing pattern picked up but everything came flooding back.

360 tried to reach for his gun just in case something happened. Ndumiso jumped onto him before he could take it out and

started strangling him. He gagged slapping his arms off him as he tightened his grip blocking his windpipe.

He fell on his knees still trying to break free. He clenched his jaws looking into his eyes.

His face turned pale as his tongue protruded in his mouth with saliva dripping at the corners of his mouth.

Meanwhile Rich heard the commotion and got in.

He dropped his car keys then quickly went to them. He held Ndumiso's neck putting him on headlock. He released 360 and held Rich's arm as Rich dragged him towards the door.

360 coughed uncontrollably failing to bring his hand up as his limbs felt weak.

Rich released Ndumiso and quickly reached for his gun shooting the wall.

Rich:(angrily) What the fuck is wrong with you?!!

At General's house...

Ndumiso leaped up from bed breathing heavily drenched in sweat. He placed his palm on his chest as his heart pounded so hard he could swear it was going to come out from his chest.

He swallowed wetting his dry throat whilst breathing from his mouth trying to stabilize his breathing.

He looked around the room and quickly switched on the side lamp and then shut his eyes as the shadows that were 'moving' in the corners faded.

He got off bed and saw the pills by his bedside and pulled the drawer dropping them inside. Refusing to take them the night before seemed to be the worst idea ever. Those dreams was too scary, he was going to need those pills to cope or else he was going to drown.

He went to the kitchen to get water and drank straight from the jug then rested his hands on the counter dropping his head.

Ndumiso: F*ck!!

Meanwhile Rich leaned against the wall in the veranda with 360 who had a scarf wrapped around his neck.

360 turned to look at him as he looked ahead...

360: I spoke to General and he agreed. Everyone was shocked when they heard that he woke up and he's fine. Apparently it'll do us good. We've done this before it's nothing new.

Rich: Don't tell me about those things you turned into lab rats before! Those shit aren't humans. Those are your science projects!

360: I know but don't forget why they were created

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we couldn't find a normal human being with the level of IQ we wanted and now we've find him. We aren't letting him go only because you have got a soft spot for him! Stop being weak your recruitees aren't your kids neither are your responsibilities. Right now you have to think of the organization stop being a wimp.

Rich: I'm not. That guy has a family out there. He has a kid! If you wanted a lab rat you should've searched for someone with no family.

360:(furrowed his brows) Do you care about this guy?

Rich: I'm not going to justify that with an answer.

360: Good because we don't want a repeat of what happened the last time. In this line of work it's every man for himself no favors whatsoever if you fail to do your job they'll assign him to another officer.

Rich: You don't have to do that.

360: Good because he's not leaving here and that's final! The higher ranks have agreed on it so there's nothing you can do about it.

He walked to his car and drove out.

Ndumiso bit his lower lip and went to his room as his mind went wild.

At Hlabisa Hospital...

A woman sadly looked at Lami laying on bed still unconscious. The damage wasn't that severe and she wished she could wake up already.

She wasn't going to forgive herself if she died. She kept on assuring herself that at least she wasn't evil because she went back for her.

Lami moved her hand and tried to lift her heavy head off bed. She quickly went to her side and removed the oxygen mask looking at her tearfully.

Woman: I'm so glad you're okay.

Lami:(softly) Who are you?(coughed) Where..?

She gave her water to drink and brushed her hand before calling the nurse.

Lami looked at the strange woman fussing over her confused. Her foggy brain could now register where she was but she wasn't sure how she got there. The last thing she remembered was her refusing to open for her aunt who kept on knocking on her door.

She must've probably dozed off after that.

She closed her eyes as her whole body ached whilst her vision blurred because of the headache.

A nurse walked in.

Nurse: Goodmorning. How are you feeling?

Lami: How did I get here?

Nurse: You don't remember?

Lami: No.

Nurse: You were hit by a car. Fortunately it wasn't that bad because nothing was broken.

Lami: My body is sore and my head is banging.

Nurse: It's normal but you'll be fine. The doctor will be with you in a bit. He'll prescribe something for the pain.

She monitored her vitals and recorded everything in her file before walking out.

Woman: I'm glad...

Lami: Uwbani wena nokuba glad?

Woman: I'm Nonhle and I'm the one who found you on the side of the road.

At Msindazwe's house...

MaZikhali finished moping the house and scoffed in disbelief realising that all his clothes were clean and his bedding was changed and washed too.

MaZikhali: Izongthola kahle lendoda.

She went to remove the curtains and washed them before removing the spider webs on the wall and window frames.

Hours later her phone rang in her pinafore just as she finished cleaning the windows. She looked at the screen and clicked her tounge putting it back in her pocket.

Her phone kept on ringing until she got annoyed and answered.

MaZikhali: Yebo baba ka Ndumiso.

Msindazwe:(chuckled) Haa what have I done?

MaZikhali: I'm cleaning.

Msindazwe: I thought you were resting.

MaZikhali: So that you can bring your girlfriends to come and clean for you?

Msindazwe: Hayibo what is this about?

MaZikhali: I don't want to talk about it.

Msindazwe:(sternly) MaZikhali!

MaZikhali: Who washed your clothes and changed the bedding?
Are you cheating?

Msindazwe: Wee ayi kanti. The reason I called you is because I spoke to that boy and he agreed to bring the child here.

MaZikhali: I'm leaving tomorrow.

Msindazwe: Uhamba uyaphi manje? Angizwani nomuntu oqinayo njalo MaZikhali asingaxatshani swa nje ubala. He's bringing the child tomorrow.

MaZikhali: So I'm supposed to be...

Msindazwe: Please rest and stop looking for problems where they're not. I'll see you this afternoon.

He hang up and she sighed sadly looking around the room for something to keep busy with.

She couldn't help it but feel like her son was not well wherever he was. Maybe they hurt him inside that's why he refused to see them.

MaZikhali: God please protect my son.

At General's house...

Ndumiso: 3..2...1...Fuck!!

He finished doing the sit ups and dropped on his back on the yoga mat breathing heavily as sweat dripped down his back.

He stayed like that for a while as the room spun then got up. He put away the yoga mat and picked his towel walking to the bathroom.

Minutes later he walked to Rich's office. Rich opened for him and went to put on the code for him then went out as the bookshelf slid open. He went inside and sat in front of the computer as the doors closed behind him and the lights came on.

He swallowed as his heart pounded and rewinded the videos to look at his boy.

He smiled softly looking at the dreadlocks, it had to be the locks. Oh what a friend Thuba was!

His boy looked so much better than the last pictures he saw. He looked like those catalogue babies. Oh man Junior!!

The thought of not seeing him ever again in his life saddened him.

Ndumiso:(placed a fist over his mouth) No I have to be there for you my boy. I'll rather die than fail you again.

He went towards the laptop and looked at the computer for a while.

He then fast forwarded the video to the current time. The house was empty. He was probably at school.

He opened the unlocked laptop and sent Thuba a message before he cleared all the evidence and then streamed a few pornographic videos to throw them off.

Somewhere in Joburg...

Thuba drove to a restaurant to get takeaways as he didn't feel like cooking.

The psychologist told them a lot of things that left him feeling a bit under the weather.

He adjusted the rear view looking at Junior sleeping at the back with his backpack on his lap. He was such a strong little guy!

He pulled over in the parking lot and unbuckled his seatbelt as his phone beeped...

Unknown number: I know the way we parted ways on the 8th wasn't the best but I wanted to let you know that I've thought about it and I would like to be with you. I know you didn't move on and forget about the love we shared just like that. You know me too I don't just give up so I'm game.

My mom is meeting up with her business partner at Four Seasons in 3 days so I would like to meet up with you then. I'm aware of that kid you're staying with and I don't mind your relationship with him only if you can get him a nanny when we meet. It's not that I don't like him but I don't think bringing him will be ideal under the circumstances. You should bring a friend to mediate should things go South because you can be an arse if you want. Please don't invite me in your house because I won't come. I don't want Small to find me there or the neighbours to tell her. I know that psycho of yours she probably asked them to guard you....Natasha Miya.

He leaned back and re read the message for the second time.

Thubelihle:(frowned) Natasha? Who the f*ck is that?

He read it again and a smile spread across his face when he finally got it.

Thubelihle: Wow!!

33

At General's house...

Rich knocked on Ndumiso's door holding a laptop.

Ndumiso: Come in...

He closed the laptop and waited for him.

Rich: Do you have a minute?

Ndumiso: I'm listening.

Rich: Is there something wrong with your laptop?

Ndumiso: No.

Rich: So why would you stream porn on mine?

Ndumiso: Because I can.

Rich:(sighed) I didn't mean it in that manner.

Ndumiso: I'm busy

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do you mind?

Rich: No. You're leaving in a week everything will be set by then.

Ndumiso: When am I coming back?

Rich: I don't know. You'll probably finish your training abroad. We can't risk moving you back and forth.

Ndumiso: I see.

Rich: That's all.

He turned to leave...

Ndumiso: I don't like being trapped in a corner. I know you probably own me because I'm here with y'all instead of prison but I'm nobody's puppet.

Rich:(confused) What?

Ndumiso: Exactly that.

He continued with what he was doing as Rich watched him until he eventually gave up and left.

He clicked his tongue and bit his inner cheek trying to concentrate.

At Thubelihle's house...

The following day Thuba zipped Junior's suitcase and held his hand leading him out.

Junior: How long am I going to stay there?

Thubelihle: A week when you don't behave yourself you'll stay for the whole year.

Junior:(shocked) Haa!

Thubelihle: Yes so behave yourself and I'll fetch you sooner.

He strapped him on the backseat and pinched his cheek as he pouted folding his hands with an attitude.

Thubelihle: Big guys don't pout.

He got behind the wheel and reversed out whilst dialing Msindazwe on the way...

At Msindazwe's house...

MaZikhali put on a peanut butter on her soft porridge and stirred whilst giving his husband an evil eye.

Msindazwe: Inkosi impela umuntu uyoze eginqike neymoto namuhla.

She ignored him and started eating.

Msindazwe: Kodwa mkami I understand you're angry at me but what sin did my manhood commit?

MaZikhali:(scoffed) Ai asazi.

Msindazwe: I'm not cheating. Why would I cheat on you? The woman who washed those clothes stays across the road. She's a single mother of five and she wash for everyone in our neighborhood.

MaZikhali: Kuyanda she's single now? Don't worry I'll also become single when I go back. There are a lot of single men back home too.

Msindazwe: Don't do that please. You want me to die of stress? Why would you scare me like that?

MaZikhali:(shrugged) I'm just saying.

Msindazwe:(sighed frustrated) I know and I'm sorry. I'll do it myself next time because you're not comfortable with it. Now can I please get one for the road? You can get angry again after that and I won't trouble you.

MaZikhali: Eat your porridge or you'll be late.

Msindazwe: I still have an hour before I leave. You can ask around I only asked her because I was lazy to change the bedding and that white bedspread was too much for me....

His phone rang in his pocket. She looked at him...

MaZikhali: Nangu omunye osingle ekufonela.

Msindazwe:(impatient) Yini?

Thuba: Mr Mdletshe it's me. You said I must let you know when I'm on my way.

Msindazwe: So early?

Thuba: Yes.

Msindazwe: Okay I'll let my wife know.

Thuba: Okay.

He hang up and looked at his wife with pleading eyes. She picked her bowl and went to place it in the sink.

Msindazwe: Thubelihle is on his way. Ndu will be here for the whole week. I won't survive a week.(looking at his watch) 20 mimutes is gone already.

MaZikhali:(laughed) Kahle bo 20 minutes!

Msindazwe: I'm serious. I'll be quick.

MaZikhali: Okay be quick.

He quickly got up and paced behind her as she went to the bedroom.

Msindazwe: Say no more!!

At Hlabisa Hospital...

Lami's father walked in chatting loudly with Lami's brother.

Father: I can't believe this. Who would want to kill my child?
She doesn't trouble anyone.

Brother: You can't say that without hearing her side of the
story. Maybe she was...

Father: Yey!! I know my daughter! Why would she hit herself
with a car? Does that make any sense to you?

Brother: No but...

Father: You're not talking back at me right?

Brother: I'm sorry.

Lami heard them before they reached their ward and looked at
other patients embarrassed. She should've known that calling
him was a bad idea. He just had to embarrass her!

They stepped in and looked at the hospital beds in a row searching for her. They saw her and walked to her. Her father sat down holding his knobkierie as her brother pulled the curtains.

Father: How are you doing my baby?

Lami: I'm fine father.

Father: You can walk right?

Lami: Yes it's just minor bruises here and there but the doctor said he'll keep me here for a few days whilst he run some blood tests.

Father: You're fine why are they keeping you here? The next thing they'll say you have a few days to live as if they're Gods. These people don't have lives and they lie too much using big terms that make someone feel like they're dead already.

Lami: They're not like that dad.

Father: They're. So what happened?

Lami:(sighed) I don't remember. The last thing I remember I was sleeping in my bed and I woke up here.

Son: There was a guy at home looking for you.

Father: Awume wena ngamadoda angasile.... How are you feeling right now?

Lami:(chuckled) I'll be fine.

Father: You should before they kill you.

Lami:(chuckled softly) Dad can I have a minute with my brother?

Father: Okay, I'll see you again.

She smiled and he got up leaving them together.

Brother: Your father.

Lami: Yooh tell me about it. So who's the guy that was looking for me?

Brother: He didn't say the name but he looked rich. I think he was from Durban though judging from his car.

Lami: Who could it be?

Brother: He said it's about your job.

Lami: Maybe it's Siza's brother I'll call him when I get time.

Brother: Yeah please do that.

At Msindazwe's house...

Later that day Thuba parked in front of the house and stepped out as MaZikhali met them halfway.

Thuba went to get the suitcase in the boot and then opened up for the sleeping Junior.

He picked him up and MaZikhali's lips trembled as she set her eyes on her grandson with his cute dreadlocks.

MaZikhali:(crying) Oh my baby! Thank you Lord.

She took him from his arms and carried him inside as Thuba followed behind them holding his suitcase.

She sat on the two seater couch touching his oily cheeks

MaZikhali: Thank you. He looks well taken off.(chuckled tearfully) He looks like those children on TV. He has locks like his father.

She wiped her tears.

MaZikhali: His father is going to be so happy seeing his son like this. Thank you so much for this. May God bless you abundantly.

Thubelihle: Thank you ma. Don't stress it's nothing. He's a lovable child.

MaZikhali: Yena akasokolisi but once he fully gets used to you. I'm afraid you'll age before before time. He's his father's son.

Thubelihle:(chuckled) I'm ready....Where do I put his bag?

MaZikhali: I'll show you.

She got up and went to place him in the bedroom then went to get his bag.

Minutes later she dished up for him and they both sat in the dining room eating whilst chatting.

At Small's house...

Thubelihle made a call to his lady friend whilst seating on bed in his sweatpants.

Voice: What have you done Thubelihle?

Thuba:(chuckled) Hawu am I that bad?

Voice: Too much. So what's up?

Thuba: I have got a job for you.

Voice: For me? Is that guy with dreadlocks out?

Thuba: Akhona wee that's Ndumiso not that guy with dreadlocks.

Akhona: Ayi suka he has dreadlocks right?

Thuba: I give up. He's not out but I need you.

Akhona: I'll wait for the full details.

Thuba: Let's meet tomorrow I'll tell you everything for now I'm in Durban.

Akhona: You're still with that shortie of yours?

Thuba: Akhona weee leave my woman alone.

Akhona: Woman? Wenana. Levels.

Thuba:(laughing) Tseg yezwa.

Akhona: Ayi sharp.

He hang up and smiled placing his phone besides him as Small entered holding her black coat and her laptop bag.

Small: You should've told me you were coming.

Thuba: And risk you alerting your toy boyfriends about me.

Small: I'm not your girlfriend Thuba. You don't own me.

He got up and went to her.

Thuba: If you wanted to be my girlfriend you should've told me and we would've made a plan.

Small: No I don't want to.

Thuba: You sure?

Small: Yes.

Thuba:(faked a smile masking his disappointment) That's good because I do have a girlfriend.

Small:(disappointed) Oh.

Thuba: Yes. I ran you a bath.

Small: Want to join me?

Thuba: I'm fasting Small.

He removed his pants and got on bed reaching for his phone.

At General's house...

Rich tried to access Ndumiso's laptop with his computer but failed. He has been busy with it the whole day surely there was something big going on in it.

He leaned back thinking of their last conversation. That was surely a threat but why would he threaten them all of a sudden?

He shook his head and tried again. He chuckled in disbelief when he finally accessed it.

Rich: This guy will die of masturbation!

Meanwhile Ndumiso popped his eyes out looking at the screen. He blinked and looked again. If somebody else had figured how much the merchandise in that building worth a lot of lives were going to be lost because wow!

Ndumiso: These guys are too smart yeses!!

He looked at the time and cleared everything.

He frowned looking at the pornographic videos. Rich will keep himself busy with them.

He got up and stretched himself and then walked out yawning.

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At General's house...

Rich dropped a file in front of another agent and went to his office. He leaned over scanning his eyes through the file and looked at the time on his watch.

Ndumiso came from the gym holding a towel and a bottle of water. He saw him and greeted him walking to the bathroom passing Rich in the passage.

Ndumiso: Please connect 360 in an hour.

Rich: Is everything okay?

Ndumiso: Yes just do that.

Rich: Okay.

He went to the living room where he placed an Id, passport and a bank card.

His watch beeped and he searched his phone in his pockets.

Rich: Your ride is here. Goodluck.

Agent: Sure.

He packed everything in his backpack and then left.

An hour later Rich connected Ndumiso to 360 and went out talking to the General on his phone.

Ndumiso sat down as 360's face appeared...

360: It's you? What is it?

Ndumiso: Can we meet tomorrow?

360: With me?

Ndumiso: I'm talking to you, aren't I?

360: I'm just suprised. But I'll come preferably early in the morning because I have a few people coming over tomorrow.

Ndumiso: See you then.

He disconnected and stood up going to the kitchen.

He drank three glasses of water calming his nerves.

The following day was going to be big. He was supposed to make sure nothing went wrong because one mistake he was dead. He had to get out of it alive, for his son!

At Small's house...

Thubelihle stepped closer to Small as she swallowed stepping back until she reached the wall.

Thubelihle: Let me find men's stuff in this house again I'll kill you.

Small: I...

Thubelihle: Shut up! I'm not opening a debating consent here I'm telling you. If you dare disobey me I'll make you regret it. And you won't do anything about it.

Small:(crying) I'm sorry.

Thubelihle: You should and stop crying for nothing. I'll slap you and give you a reason to cry. You weren't crying when you were bringing men owning cheap watches here. Wipe those tears and stop annoying me.

She wiped her tears and innocently looked at him as he stared back at him unmoved by her tears. He wasn't going to stress himself with her whoring tendencies when he had important things to stress about.

She held his arms and stood on her toes, he leaned over and kissed her then touched her coochie. He separated her folds with his fingers and swallowed feeling her wetness as her clit throbbed.

Thubelihle: I'm coming back in a week we'll go testing together then.

Small: I'm ..clean..

Thubelihle: I wasn't asking you. I've been loyal and you weren't so we're going to test.

Small: I can't chase potential boyfriends for a fuckbu...(gaspd) uhh....

He slid his finger inside her and rubbed her clit with his thumb whilst softly speaking against her mouth his minty breath filling her lungs.

Thubelihle: Okay don't chase them away I'll kill them myself.

He French kissed her cupping her breasts still fingering her as her body tensed up. She curled her toes breathing heavily as he went faster grunting in her mouth with his deep voice.

Thubelihle: Ohh...babe...

He pulled out his fingers still rubbing her clit and broke the kiss looking at her face as she spasmed holding onto his arms.

He straightened looking at her. She slowly opened her eyes.

Thubelihle: I wasn't joking babe. It either you break things off or I do the job myself.

The seriousness in his tone got her heart racing.

Small: I'm old now. Have you ever seen someone being a fuckbuddy for over 10 years?

Thubelihle:(smirked) It's 8 years

4 months and a few days. Don't worry you'll be the first one.

Small: At home...

Thubelihle: I don't care! You're not two timing me. When everything settles I want you to meet my buddy....Get dressed you'll be late.

He walked out...

At Hlabisa Hospital...

Lami looked at Sbekezelo speaking to her. He finished and shook her, she blinked and forced a smile.

Lami: Oh...sorry, yes you're right.

Sbekezelo: About what?

Lami: What you were saying.

Sbekezelo:(sighed) You weren't listening. I said you can come back if you want. We've reconsidered our decision because it's not fair to fire you based on your past. We've all done nasty shit

before that doesn't mean we have to be crucified forever. And besides you have a son to raise right now so we believe you'll not do shit like that again.

Lami: I won't.

Sbekezelo: So what do you say?

Lami: I'll take it. I really want to build my life.

Sbekezelo: Perfect. When you're fine you'll come Siza will be expecting you.

Lami: Thank you for trusting me.

Sbekezelo: I hope we don't regret it. Let me leave you so that you can rest.

Lami: Okay.

He walked out taking his phone and called his sister.

Sbekezelo: She agreed.

Siza: Mxmn am I supposed to be excited? She's your damsel in distress not mine.

Sbekezelo: She's not my damsel in distress. We were being unfair on the poor girl.

Siza: Ayi suka. You want her and let me tell you something, it'll end in tears.

Sbekezelo: Yes of joy you little devil.

Siza:(laughed) Little devil? I'll remind you.

He rolled his eyes and hang up walking to the exit.

At Akhona's house...

Thubelihle leaned over placing his forearms on the table as Akhona attentively listened.

Thubelihle: I've been working on this plan for a whole year so I'm certain it's going to work. Not that heavy compared to our previous jobs.

Akhona: So your friend will escape and then go back?

Thubelihle: That's not yours to know. By 8 pm tomorrow we have to be there. After 10pm the guards are said to have been multiplied.

Akhona:(exhaled) That's heavy. So it'll only be the three of us?

Thubelihle: No but you won't see the others.

Akhona: Why?

Thubelihle: They're not yours to see.

She huffed feeling undermined. She understood that what they were talking about was huge but treating her like a bimbo was rubbing her off the wrong way.

But then the money was great and if they pulled it off she was going to be able to resign and open a business or maybe join her sister and open a surgery.

At General's house...

They finished with their training and went back to the car.

Rich: You did great today.

Ndumiso: Oh.

Rich: Yeah I can't wait for you to leave I miss my wife.

Ndumiso: You have a wife?

Rich: Yes and you were my last candidate for the year.

Ndumiso: Must be nice.

He rested his hands on the bonnet and turned to him.

Ndumiso: How would you feel if they were to keep you here and not allow you to go back home?

Rich:(after a long silence) Your only sin was to have a higher level of IQ and be greater than the person who trained you. Now everyone wants a piece of you and only you can get yourself out of this mess.....You can let them keep you in the lab and work the computer in there, only get to go out when they need your services away from the lab or you can fight to go back home. Your son should be motivation enough to leave this place. He probably has your brains and once you stay here he'll be in danger.

Ndumiso: I can't just leave.

Rich: Ofcourse you can't but you can fight them. You're too smart. Use your brains, show them that you're better off out there than here.

He got inside the car and he brushed his face and followed him observing the surroundings around the main entrance a few meters away from them.

He drove to the second gate and it slid open and he drove through as Ndumiso briefly closed his eyes. His safety depended on that merchandise.

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The Following Day

Rich quietly looked at Ndumiso laying on the couch facing upwards. He has been quiet since the previous night and it was alarming. Maybe it was about the meeting that was going to take place between him and 360.

He opened his mouth to speak but decided otherwise. The main gate opened as the desktop at the far end of the room beeped indicating.

Ndumiso's heart pounded as he glanced at the watch on the wall.

Minutes later 360 stepped in carrying a backpack.

360: Good day.

Rich: 360.

Ndumiso sat up straight and looked at Rich who looked at 360 before disappearing down the passage.

Ndumiso: 360

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Please have a seat.

360: You called me.

Ndumiso: Yeah.

360: I'm listening.

Ndumiso: I don't like this animosity between us. You're my superior in a way and I wasn't supposed to attack you like that.

360: You nearly killed me.

Ndumiso: After you tried first but that doesn't matter no more. I was out of line. You were just doing your job. I'm new here and the last thing I want is to start beefing with the likes of you.

360: Are you being serious right now?

Ndumiso: Can we die out the issue?

360: I don't trust you.

Ndumiso: I didn't say trust me. I said can we die out the issue.

360:(pinched his nosebridge) Yeah sure.

Ndumiso: In a rush?

360: Not exactly.

Ndumiso: Okay. Drinks and snacks maybe.

360: What?

He got up pulling the sleeves of his long sleeved tshirt.

Ndumiso: I'll take that as a yes. I'll ask Rich to join us.

He went to his bedroom and then went to the kitchen.

360 suspiciously looked at him moving around the room. He always knew that after what he did, the agents always wanted to kill him and he was always ready. This Ndumiso guy wasn't too smart after all.

Minutes later he came back with three plates and went back for their drinks.

Rich pretended like he was concentrating on TV as 360 looked at him.

Ndumiso: Guys come on. Why the awkwardness? On second thoughts I'll have something stronger.

He went back to the kitchen...

360: Do you trust him?

Rich: I was starting to but right now I don't know.

360 quickly exchanged the plates and sat back innocently.

Rich: I'll have that something stronger not this food. I don't want to...

He kept quiet when he saw him appearing.

Ndumiso: Still good?

Rich knod his head and changed the channel to a sports channel as he sat down taking a bite...

Ndumiso: So 360 how long have you been here?

360: More than 15 years.

Ndumiso: I see.

He took a sip of his drink and leaned back watching TV as Rich poured himself a glass of whiskey.

Ndumiso glanced at the watch and took a deep breath as awkwardness blanketed the room.

360 started eating whilst engaging on a forced conversation with the guys.

Being together in one room with Ndumiso made it difficult for him to relax.

At Msindazwe's house...

MaZikhali gave paracetamol to Junior and gently laid him on her chest. He had been burning up since the morning and she was getting worried since he just fell sick out of the blue.

Junior: Am I going to die?

MaZikhali: No you won't. You're probably coming down with flu if you're not feeling better tomorrow I'll take you to the doctor.

He knod his head and closed his eyes feeling drowsy.

At General's house...

Rich yawned standing up and went to his bedroom.

Rich: I'm coming back.

They nodded as Ndumiso slowly closed his eyes sleeping.

360 scoffed in disbelief and got up and went to drink water in the kitchen. He shook his head and washed his face in the sink as his vision blurred.

He tried to swallow but his mouth was dry. He staggered and balanced himself on the counter looking down still shaking his head feeling dizzy.

He took a few steps forward and melted on the floor.

Ndumiso laid still for a while and then got up walking to the kitchen.

He lifted the heavy 360 and dragged him to the couch then cleaned up.

The delivery guy from uber eats announced his presence in the main gate.

He wore his mask and changed his tshirt to a poloneck then put on a black leather jacket.

He looked at himself in the mirror and smiled impressed. He packed a black leather jacket and black gloves on a backpack.

He took a handgun and opened the gates for himself then jogged out after switching off 360's phone.

Later That Day...

He drove past the gate at Four Seasons and pulled over in front of a white cressida.

Thubelihle looked at the Uber eats bike and thoughtfully looked at the time before opening the back door recognizing his back.

Ndumiso got inside and Thuba drove off leaving the bike behind.

Thuba: You look different.

Ndumiso:(chuckled) I feel different... Nkosazane.

Akhona: Why are you?..never mind how are you?

Ndumiso: Better.

He changed to his tshirt and put on a holster and inserted his weapons before putting on his jacket then leaned back.

Thuba: Don't sleep please.

Ndumiso: Mxm.

He reached for an iPad and did a few things as Thuba pulled over in the parking lot.

Akhona: This is a hotel?

Thuba: Kind of but no.

Ndumiso jammed the CCTV and all the panic buttons then set the alarm.

Ndumiso: We can go.

Ndumiso stepped out and went to take out the suitcase from the boot putting the iPad on it and led her inside holding her waist as Thuba followed behind them.

They checked in at the reception desk and went to the lift after receiving the keys. Their rooms were on the second floor.

Ndumiso looked at his watch and bit his lower lip as the alarm went off. Akhona held onto the wall panicking. He took out the iPad and pressed on it as the lift slid open on the 6th floor.

They looked at the glass walled long corridor and saw the guards going down the stairs. They walked along the corridor until they saw the emergency exit.

He placed his thumb and the scanner vibrated denying access. He pressed on the iPad and looked at the long numbers and symbols then inserted the pin before the system could shut down.

The door slid open and they got in as it closed behind them.

They saw the 5 most expensive paintings in the world on the crystal white wall and went to them.

Ndumiso: They're supposed to be behind those paintings. We have less than 10 minutes before the voice activated system start working again.

Akhona: What are we looking for?

Ndumiso looked at Thuba annoyed.

Ndumiso: Are we gonna have a problem?

Thuba: Akhona awume tu...No we won't.

They removed the paintings and placed them in a suitcase after scanning them. They placed one of them on the floor and continued with their search as their nerves sky rocketed.

Ndumiso looked at the painting with a tracker.

Ndumiso: Where did you get this one?

Akhona showed him.

He ran his palm over the place and it dinged showing green lights.

Ndumiso: Put on the codes.

Thuba went to put on the code after he called it out and a door length space opened revealing two huge diamonds placed nicely on the locked glass with three necklaces besides them.

Akhona: All of this belong to one person?

Ndumiso: You sound even more stupider saying that.

Akhona: I was...

Ndumiso: Pick that painting and drop it on the floor.

She did as instructed and it broke and a small key came out. They picked it up and went to take the diamonds...

Thuba zipped the suitcase and Akhona looked at the necklaces they left behind.

Akhona: The necklaces...

The timer on the screen turned red and Ndumiso paced to the door opening and went out as Akhona quickly grabbed the necklace and followed them....

At Msindazwe's house...

MaZikhali woke up from her nightmare and looked besides her as her heart pounded.

Msindazwe got in carrying Junior.

Msindazwe: He's burning up again. We should take him to the hospital....Are you okay?

MaZikhali: I had a scary dream...I...I..This is not good.

Msindazwe: Something is wrong. This can't be a coincidence. I can feel it.

MaZikhali: We need to pray and then we can take him to the hospital.

He nodded and went to her side of bed kneeling down and placed Junior on his lap and they joined hands praying...

On the road...

The white cressida disappeared through the night as Ndumiso held his breath looking behind them.

When they reached the T-junction a car appeared behind them and Thuba increased the speed...

Ndumiso: Shit!!

He saw a necklace on Akhona's pockets and angrily pulled it out slapping her.

Ndumiso: What is this?

Akhona:(held her burning cheek) I...I liked it.

Ndumiso: Screw that! This thing has a tracker.

Another car appeared in front of them as the tyre slasher slashed their tyres.

Thuba swerved the car off the road and head to the screen wall failing to control the car as gun shots rang out.

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On the road...

Their car hit the wall and Akhona screamed.

Two guys stepped out from the car that was in front of them and started shooting the pursuers.

The uber eats bike appeared and the driver went to the other car and started shooting the pursuer in the passenger seat on the shoulder taking him by surprise. He fired another shot aiming at his head as Akhona and Ndumiso stepped out opening the doors at the back.

They started shooting. Ndumiso went down as a bullet missed him by a few inches.

The passenger door opened and the shot guy fell off. Akhona aimed at the driver and the bullet grazed his head, blood spurting everywhere as he drove off with the door opened.

They dragged him to the car and went to the other car.

Ndumiso: Leave that necklace.

She left it and he held her hand.

Ndumiso: I'll take you home.

Thuba placed the suitcase in the car and met up with Ndumiso...

Thuba: Thank you for this.

Ndumiso: Always. Thank you for taking care of my son. I'll forever be grateful for that.

Thuba: No need to thank me...You going back?

Ndumiso: Yes.

Thuba: You don't look like a prisoner.

Ndumiso: I'm not a slave, I'm not marked.

Thuba:(chuckled) Fair enough...(pointed at Akhona with his eyes) And?

Ndumiso:(smirked) Bye bro. I'll come back for that champ.

They hugged as Thuba tearfully clenched his jaws and let go.

Thuba: Sharp. Please come back. You son will ask about you as time goes on.

Ndumiso: I will...I promise.

He took the backpack and got on the bike with Akhona. The guys honked saluting him and drove to the opposite direction as police cars appeared behind them...

At Akhona's house...

Ndumiso parked the bike by the garage and they went inside.

Akhona: I'm good, You can leave.

They heard sounds by the door. He reached for his gun and went to the door as she admired his broad back.

He opened and looked sideways then closed turning back..

Ndumiso: There's nothing.

Akhona: Please take off the mask.

Ndumiso: Excuse me?

Akhona: Never mind.

She dropped her eyes and he unzipped his jacket and pulled the mask off stepping closer to her still holding the gun.

Her heart pounded as his cologne suffocated her.

She stepped back slowly until she was against the wall. He looked down at her and licked his lips then pointed the barrel at the buttons of her coat.

Ndumiso: Take it off.

She swallowed at his orgasmic tone and slowly unbuttoned it and removed it. His breathing picked up as he looked at her black leather skirt and white jumpsuit revealing her caramel cleavage. His dick slowly expanded in his pants as she bit her lip looking up at him.

His lustful look turned her on so bad she felt her clit throbbing with needy.

The gun in his hand made things worse and the fact that he just escaped from prison gave her a near orgasm experience. Oh Ndumiso!!

Ndumiso: Now I'm going to fuck you cause well it has been long overdue.

Akhona: Ok...

Ndumiso:(placed his lips on hers) Shh! Don't talk.

The cold metal came into contact with her skin and she sucked in a breath and started sucking his bottom lip and then slowly went down and unzipped his jeans taking out his black circumcised dick.

She opened her mouth and sucked the tip of his dick. He hissed feeling the warmth of her mouth.

He grabbed her hair and she flattened her tongue taking him into her mouth as he started moving his waist tapping on her throat.

She gagged and held onto his thighs for balance her eyes looking up at her.

He grunted going faster as she started rubbing her clit gagging on his dick.

Ndumiso:(sternly) Don't!!

She stopped and he slid out and she caught her breath still looking at him as he scratched his head with his gun looking at her innocent face that got his dick oozing with precum.

He went back in and fucked her mouth grunting. He tapped on that throat a few times as she gagged with tearful eyes struggling to take all of him in.

Ndumiso: Fuck!!

He threw his head back tightening the grip around her hair and shot his thick load in her mouth. She swallowed all of his cum and he held her up and kissed her hard rubbing her coochie his thumb on his clit. She moaned in his mouth gripping his muscled arms.

Akhona: Oh...My God

She broke the kiss and pulled her closer towards her as her inner walls tightened. She whimpered with her eyes closed feeling her own ecstasy building up.

He saw the need on her face and stopped then turned her around bending her over in her heels. He lifted her skirt and reached for a condom in the back pocket then placed his gun on the floor rolling the condom on.

He parted her pussy lips with his fingers and lowered himself blocking her entrance with his erection whilst biting his lower lip.

He slowly penetrated as she gasped feeling him stretch himself in.

Ndumiso: Aahh...

He pulled out and went in again popping his mushroom head inside.

He pushed further in filling her up. She licked her lips as pleasure and trickle of pain shot through her.

He slowly started moving enjoying his warmth as she moaned softly holding onto her feet.

He held her waist and moved in and out looking down at his dick coated with her juices.

He rubbed her clit still inside her and her legs vibrated as she spasmed around his black dick.

He fucked her through her orgasm his balls slapping against her ass.

He slid out and slammed into her again causing her to cry out his name.

Akhona: Ndumiso...

He tightened his grip around her and went faster and harder his movements turning more forceful as their moans and grunts filled the house.

Sweat went down his spine as he upped his pace tapping that g-spot. She whimpered painfully losing her balance.

He turned her around and picked her up placing her legs on his forearms. She wrapped her arms around his neck inhaling his scent as he bent a little and slid her on his dick.

He thrust inside her moving his waist sideways hitting all corners.

She buried her face on the crook of his shoulder curling her toes as tears fell from her eyes.

He spanked her ass fucking her. Her muscles seized as she released.

Akhona:(breathlessly) Oh Ndu..I love you so much.

He clenched his jaws and tumbled over the edge with a loud groan. He stilled in her and twitched inside her.

He finally recovered from his orgasm and went to place her on the couch.

Ndumiso: Where is the bathroom?

She pointed at the bathroom and dropped her head on the armrest panting. He went to clean himself up and went out.

Ndumiso: Akhona wee?

Akhona:(eyes half closed) Mhhh?

Ndumiso: I'm leaving come and lock up.

Akhona: Okay.

He put on his mask and his jacket then picked his bag leaving.

She got up and stood by the door looking at him driving out. She leaned against the frame taking a deep breath with a smile.

She watched him until he was out of sight then went back inside.

At Thubelihle's house...

He parked inside the garage and leaned back taking a deep breath.

That was heavy and easy at the same time.

A clean job that made him feel unsettled or maybe it was because he was expecting too much.

It was good to have his boy back in the game even though something was off with him. He was too impatient and the fact that he looked better than the last time he saw him was questionable.

Thuba: Atleast we're safe.

He thoughtfully went inside and packed his bag before going back to his car.

The time read 9H56PM by 5AM he'll be in Durban.

He started the car and drove out...

At General's house...

Hours later the General walked through the main gate calling 360.

His phone was still on voicemail.

He upped the pace until he reached the second gate. He opened and went in as messages flooded his phone...

He stopped by the house and received a call.

General: Yes.

Voice: So you went behind our backs with that guy?

General: 1500? What are you talking about?

1500: They invaded the place and took everything. All the paintings are gone. The diamonds too.

General: There was only one diamond.

1500: Apparently they were two. Whoah if you didn't then who did?

General: I don't know.

1500: Where is he?

General: He's here.

1500: That means there's someone out there who's good just like him. He's the only one capable of doing a job that clean. We'll get to the bottom of this.....There's a lead though apparently they took one of the necklaces.

He hang up and General shook his head. Chances of getting those things were slim to none. Now that they were not secured anymore, everyone was capable of getting to them.

He sighed and got inside, he frowned seeing 360 passed out on the couch. He went to the bedrooms and found Rich sleeping then went to the last one. He opened and found it empty.

He went to the office looking for him and he was not there. Beads of sweat formed in his forehead as he searched all the rooms for him. He searched the CCTV, it only showed the office.

General: No...No...No!!!

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At Action Bolts...

Thuba walked through the reception area holding his bag and greeted a few workers.

The receptionist finished typing on the computer and stood up pulling her skirt and went to him as he pressed the button next to the lift.

Receptionist: Your messages sir.

Thuba: Thank you.

Receptionist: Ummh..the lift is not working today you'll have to use the stairs.

Thuba: Okay. Please call the maintenance guy to fix this.

Receptionist: Thank you sir.

Thuba: Stop....Okay fine.

He went to take the stairs to where his office was located in the 2nd floor.

He arrived in his office and went to drink water and then attended to his messages.

He looked at the time and sighed wondering where his PA was. She was probably late again.

A while later she came in without knocking and placed her hand on her chest....

Thuba: Whatever Senzi please cancel all my meetings for today and tomorrow.

Senzi: Boss I'm really sorry.

Thuba: It's okay, really...I'm leaving for a meeting in 15 minutes so I don't have time. Where...

Senzi: In my desk sir. I will bring it. Did you find someone to look after the young one?

Thuba: Nop I'll take him with me. It's only for a few days so he'll be fine.

Senzi: I can look after him. If only you can give me a few days off.

Thuba:(sighed) And what are you going to do when he's at school?

Senzi: Nurse my back obviously. Phela wena uyi slave driver. Yoooh I'll relax on my couch and put cucumber on my eyes with those white face masks like they do in the movies.

Thuba: No.

Senzi: What? That boy likes me and my grandson why don't you allow him to visit. I won't ask for a raise if you do this.

He exhaled and gathered his things as his phone rang...

Senzi: Please son..

Thuba: Okay. Yoooh.

She smiled putting her hands together in a praying manner causing him to shake his head in disbelief. That woman was something else.

Maybe hiring someone in their late thirties wasn't a great option because wow. She was showing him flames.

Thuba: Hello.

MaZikhali: We have arrived.

Thuba: Where?

MaZikhali: In your house.

Thuba: Now?

MaZikhali: Yes. We wanted to be early.

Thuba: Okay I'll be there in two hours.

MaZikhali: Okay.

He hang up and stood up looking at the article about his friend on the newspaper.

Everyone was looking forward to his appeal.

He took a deep breath, if that didn't work they needed to try other alternatives. He couldn't have him rot in jail and have his son growing up without a father.

He knew that pain and it wasn't something he wished for that little boy.

He has been his pillar of strength because if it wasn't for him he wasn't going to try and change his ways of living. But still it was time for him to come back and take over, watch his son grow. He was growing up , he even had a crush for God's sake!

Always taking two lunches to school for his girlfriend

Advertisement

Oh Junior!

At Siza's house....

Thembalami finished washing dishes and went to the storeroom passing Siza on the way.

Siza: Thembi.

Lami: Yes.

Siza: That guy...what's his name? Nduduzo...He applied for an appeal.

Lami: So?

Siza: You changed your statement, why didn't they drop the charges?

Lami: I'm here working for you not the justice system how am I supposed to know?

Siza: Don't act smart with me.

Lami: Siza awungyeke. I did what you requested of me can you please allow me to do my job. Thank you.

Siza:(narrowed her eyes) If it wasn't for Sbekezelo I would've long fired you.

Lami: Mxm.

She proceeded to the storeroom as she went to the living room to get her bag and went to work.

At Nkosinami's workplace...

Nami knocked on the CEO's office and got in.

He lifted his eyes to him and pulled the drawer reaching for a brown envelope as he sat down.

CEO: I believe you're doing good.

Nami: Yes.

CEO: That's great. Ummh it's no secret that your work here has been...ummh...rubbish if I'm being honest. You've turned into a liability and we can't keep a person like you here.

Nami: But sir..

CEO: Let me finish...I tried to tolerate your behaviour and gave you countless warnings hoping you'll change because honestly I liked having you on my team but no you kept on going on and on with your nonsensical behaviour and I've had enough.

Nami: I'm sorry.

CEO: You're costing me money and I'm afraid I'll have to let you go.

Nami: Just like that?

CEO: Yes just like that. I won't even write a recommendation letter for you because there's no company out there that deserve such a horrible civil engineer.

Nami: Wow....Okay.

He pushed the letter towards him and pointed at the door.

He remained seated still digesting the news.

CEO: Should I call security to come and assist you?

Nami: No I'll leave on my own.

He got up and went to his working station as his throat dried up. He swallowed wetting it as his eyes itched.

At the Airport...

Ndumiso went down the stairs followed by two guys. He shoulder bumped with the guys and stepped back holding his luggage.

He took a deep breath looking around. He was back in the soil of his forefathers, something that was only a dream a year ago.

He couldn't wait to see his boy face to face for the first time in five years. He was probably a grown up by now. Was he though?

Maybe not but the kids of today grew up like they were being watered.

Meanwhile Rich looking at his watch and looked around then spotted him walking towards him wearing all black his dreadlocks let loose. He looked nothing like a guy who was in jail with all those muscles and tatoos in his arms. His walk screamed power, like he owned the world.

He wondered what he was going to tell his friend because he was definitely going to ask him. Afterall he wasn't stupid.

Rich: Here's thee guy.

Ndumiso: Rich.

They shoulder bumped and Rich nodded his head.

Ndumiso: What's up?

Rich: What's up is your ass drugging me. What the fuck was that?

Ndumiso: I don't know what you're talking about.

Rich: You know and it's no coincidence that shortly after that....

Ndumiso: Coincidence or not I don't care. I didn't drug you. I had no reason to so please....Where is the car?

Rich: If you say so.

He clicked his tongue and walked past him.

He had serious things to worry about, like the possibility of his boy rejecting him not a grown ass man grasping at straws telling him about the things he had no proof of.

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At the hotel....

Thuba got off the phone with Senzi and put on his watch then walked out.

He knocked on the next room and entered. He found Ndu's parents standing as his mother fixed the jacket her husband was wearing.

Thuba: Goodmorning.

MaZikhali: Morning. We need to pray before leaving.

Msindazwe: Do you pray?

Thuba: Ahh...sometimes.

Msindazwe: Weeh I knew it.

He rubbed his palms together nervously. MaZikhali asked them to join their hands together and started praying then they left....

At Court of Appeal....

Ndumiso walked into the courtroom and looking at his parents and friend on the front row.

His mother looked at him tearfully and bit her lower lip trying to control her emotions as his father stared at him with nothing but sadness. He looked at the cuffs in his hands and swallowed. His only son has been reduced to that and the woman who was responsible for that was out there enjoying her life.

He dropped his eyes squeezing his wife's shoulder as the court proceedings began while everyone waited impatiently for the part they were all longing for...

Judge:(concluding)....The suspect has been acquitted...

His mother gasped placing her hand on her chest and fainted.

Everyone looked at her direction as her husband picked her up walking out with her with Thuba behind them.

Ndumiso looked at his father leaving with his mother as his heart pounded.

God knows he wasn't going to take it if something bad happened to her.

Meanwhile outside...

Msindazwe got at the back with his wife as opened the first two buttons of her shirt fanning her face with his hands.

Msindazwe: Please drive faster.

He nodded and stepped on the accelerator driving to the nearest clinic...

At Siza's house...

Lami looked at the live video on Facebook and her heart skipped a bit when the judge concluded.

She logged out and searched for acquitted. She dropped the phone when she found out. She didn't know where Junior was and she couldn't predict how he was going to take the news.

The house phone rang and she went to answer still shaken...

Lami: Hello.

Sbekezelo: Babe, I just saw the video. How are you feeling?

Lami: I'm scared. This is the very same person I sent to jail and now they just released him. Honestly I was more safe when he was in jail.

Sbekezelo: I'm sure he won't do anything to you. He won't risk going back to jail just like that.

Lami: I hope so.

Sbekezelo: Please don't stress. I'll see you later.

She nodded and hung up.

At the clinic...

Msindazwe sat on the chair as the doctor scribbled something on the file.

MaZikhali: I can go back home?

Doctor: Yes you were shocked. But please take it easy, someone in your condition shouldn't stress too much.

Msindazwe: Condition? Is she pregnant?

MaZikhali: Pregnant at my age?

Doctor: No. Since you have hypertension, next time you can die.

Msindazwe: Awu.

MaZikhali: Hayibo nayi imhlola! Ufuna ngimithe? UNdumiso engathini nje?[Good grief! You want me to fall pregnant? What will Ndumiso say?]

Doctor: The nurse will come and see you then you can leave....Excuse me.

She walked out as MaZikhali looked at Msindazwe fuming in anger.

Msindazwe: Calm down. You'll faint again.

MaZikhali: Call my son I need to see him.

Msindazwe: I'll call him.

MaZikhali: Now before you start thinking about replacing him.

Msindazwe: I wasn't. I was joking.

He shook his head and got up.

At the hotel...

Rich pulled over at the parking lot.

Rich: I'll bring your things to you.

Ndumiso: Thank you.

Rich: Yeah goodluck.

He fist bumped with him and stepped out.

He walked across the lobby towards Thuba who was standing by the staircase.

Thuba swallowed and engulfed him in a tight hug which he gladly received. They broke it and he stepped back looking around.

Ndumiso: That was so gay.

Thuba: Tsek, follow me MaZikhali is waiting for you.

Ndumiso: There's that one again?

Thuba: Yep.

They went up the stairs to their room.

Msindazwe opened and stood still looking at his son.

Msindazwe: Ndumiso.

Ndumiso: Baba.

He shook his head and stepped aside allowing him to enter.

He saw his mother seated on the chair eating.

She placed the fork down and stood up walking towards him. She touched his face and arms then busted into tears crying as he held her.

MaZikhali: My son...Thank you God for bringing him back to us.

Meanwhile in Thuba's room...

He laid on his back with his eyes closed and his phone rang under the pillow.

Thuba: Hello.

Akhona: Thuba it's me.

Thuba: What do you want?

Akhona: I heard that Ndu's out.

Thuba: So?

Akhona: I was wondering...

Thuba: Sisi wee go and wonder elsewhere. We aren't friends you have no reason to call me and ask me nonsense. If you want him call his phone and leave me alone.

Akhona: I was just...

Thuba: That's what I'm saying. If you're bored call your friends and leave me alone. We never call each other unless it's important. Stop behaving like a sexually starved bitch and stop calling me. You'll get us killed with you carelessness, Nxa!

He hang up and continued closing his eyes.

At Nkosinami's house...

His girlfriend

Thabile walked into the bedroom and found him sleeping. He shook him and stood by waiting for him to wake up.

Nami: What?

Thabile: The nappies are finished, you said you'll buy them yesterday.

Nami: I bought them a few weeks ago.

Thabile: I didn't say you didn't, I said they're finished.

Nami: So what am I supposed to do because I told you I was fired.

Thabile: That's not my problem. You're the one who was drinking like a fish tryna act cool going to work drunk. I want nappies, I don't care if you sell your kidney or that unfaithful dick, I don't care.

Nami: You see that mouth is the one that drove me to the bottle.

Thabile: Okay but you need to buy nappies for your daughter. I don't care about your insults.

She walked out as he stared at the ceiling tearfully. Everything was piling up. He was practical drowning and nobody seemed to care. He needed a break, being a father was nothing like he has imagined.

He couldn't tell anyone because they were going to judge him.

Was it possible to hate your own blood like that?

At Thubelihle's house....

Ndumiso held a usb in his hand then inserted it on the laptop and then placed his fist over his mouth looking at the screen.

He had to find something to do with his time and unfortunately he didn't see himself working for someone else. Starting something afresh in his 'broke' state wasn't ideal too. That usb was the only shot at having something legitimate in his name without having people asking questions.

An engine went off outside, he quickly closed the laptop and stood up then went to look at himself in the mirror.

He straightened his tshirt and went to the living room popping his knuckles.

Meanwhile Thuba turned to Junior who was seated at the back playing games on his phone.

Thuba: Junior! I'm talking to you. Put that thing away.

Junior: I'm sorry.

Thuba: It's okay....ummh...you remember your father right?...The one who was away on business...I told you about him.

Junior: The one on the pictures? Is he back?

Thuba:(knod his head) Yeah he's back.

Junior: He came with my money?

Thuba: Aaah..I'm not...Yes he has money.

Junior: Where is he?

Thuba: Inside.

He unstrapped the seatbelt and tried to open the door. Thuba unlock it and he got out running inside the house.

He tripped and fell on his knees on the veranda. He got up and dusted his knees and knocked on the door.

Thuba shook his head chuckling and opened for him holding his bag.

He found him standing in the middle of the room with his hands in his pockets. He halted in his steps looking at him, he was too tall and scary.

Thuba: Wena futhi? Kuzokubulala ukuqina.[You again? Being forward will kill you.]

He went towards him and crouched in front of him holding his arms. He ran his fingers on his hair and sighed as his eyes burned. He looked so much like him, he was looking at the younger version of himself. He even had his dark lips and his weird eyebrows.

He looked at his face and smiled briefly recognizing him as his little heart pounded. He smiled nervously and picked him up.

Ndumiso: Uyaphila Msindazwe?

Junior:(shyly closed his eyes with his hands) Yebo.

Thuba: Ndu where is...

They both turned to him and he sighed...

Thuba: I meant you not Junior....Never mind I'll look for it.

Ndumiso: Ey udizzy yerr.

Thuba:(laughing) Leave me alone.

They went to sit on the couch.

Junior: Why did they refuse to let me call you?

Ndumiso: Where I was they didn't allow phones.

Junior: But you were making money for me?

Ndumiso: Who told you that?

Junior: Uncle Thuba and MaZikhali they said you're away on business and you're making money for me.

Ndumiso: Yeah I was but now I'm back.

Junior: Are you going to leave again?

Ndumiso: No I won't.

Junior: So you'll take me to school? My friends will be so happy for me when they see that I also have a father.

Ndumiso: I will.

Junior:(looked up narrowing his eyes) What else?...Ayi I don't know what to ask now but you can carry on speaking.

Ndumiso:(chuckled) And say what?

Junior: Anything. I don't want you to leave and you won't leave when we're speaking.

Ndumiso: Junior I won't leave.

Junior: I don't trust you...where is my money anyway?

Ndumiso: In the bank.

Junior: I need it. My friend has a birthday on Monday. When is Monday again?

Ndumiso: Next week.

Junior: Oh I need to buy a present for her.

Ndumiso: It's a girl?

Junior: She's beautiful.

He busted out laughing as he furrowed his eyebrows confused. He got up with him and went to the kitchen where he found Thuba preparing food.

Ndumiso: You still love cooking? I wonder why you're not married since you're romantic.

Thuba: I'm hungry that's why I'm cooking.

Ndumiso: (placed Junior on the counter) Useqonyiwe lo?

Thuba: Yep and uyabheja umtanakho.

Ndumiso: Apparently the friend has a birthday.

Thuba: today?

Ndumiso: On Monday.

Thuba: Mxm he doesn't know his but knows her girlfriend's?

Ndumiso: Let him be....Boy you can go and change.

Junior: I can't dress myself.

Ndumiso: What?

Junior: Please come and help me.

He looked at Thuba.

Thuba: Go and help him. He thinks you're going to leave.

Ndumiso: He's clingy.

Thuba: I told you that he knows about you and was looking forward to your arrival. Now go and help him change.

At Sbekezelo's house...

Lami laid her head on his lap and he sighed leaning back.

Sbekezelo: I was thinking.

Lami: Mmh?

Sbekezelo: We need to request a meeting with that guy and explain what happened to his son.

Lami: You think he'll listen?

Sbekezelo: We need to try. You can't live in fear. Sooner or later you need to talk to him.

Lami: He'll probably strangle me to death and your sister will be very delighted when that happens.

Sbekezelo: She's not that bad. It's just that Siza doesn't forgive easily.

Lami: Forgive what when she's not the one who was arrested? She's a bully.

Sbekezelo: You won't get it (cleared his throat) babe.

Lami:(laid on her back) Yes.

Sbekezelo: Have you thought about finding school?

Lami: Yooh I'm too old babe and my mind is not like before.

Sbekezelo: I'll help you. You can't work for my sister for the rest of your life.

Lami: I will start a business.

Sbekezelo: What kind of business?

Lami:(sighed) I'll see....How did the conversation shift from your sister to being about me? Hayi suka!

She got up and went to their bedroom and he sighed pinching his nosebridge.

Later That Day...

Thuba walked through the last building for the day and went to the receptionist.

He saw everyone walking up and down like headless chickens as the phone rang non-stop.

Receptionist: Bhut wami I'm sorry for the chaos. You're also here to see the CEO?..please sit there he'll be with you in a few...(picked the phone) Mnotho Constructions how may I help you?...You're going through.

He sighed and went to sit on the couch. That might be his lucky day.

A man walked to the receptionist holding his car keys and she pointed at him.

He turned to him and went to the lift as he stood up following him.

They got off the lift and they went to his office.

CEO: How can I help you?

Nami: I'm looking for a job.

CEO: A job...wh..

A woman walked in holding a laptop followed by another guy.

CEO: Did you find something?

Guy: Mr Biyela I didn't get anything it seems as if the system has crashed.

Mr Biyela: Reboot, delete

do whatever you need to. Our competitors can't find out about this. Get the whole team on it if you need to.

Guy: Nothing is working. We've been at it the whole day.

Mr Biyela:(loosened his tie) What are you saying to me?

Guy: Sir, I'm sorry to say this but it looks like we're under cyberattack.

Mr Biyela: No that's...(to Nkosinami) Eh baba there's no job unless you can get us out of this mess.

Nami: I'm just a...

Mr Biyela: If you're not an IT Technician than you're also useless....Please leave.

He sighed and left.

At Thubelihle's house...

The same evening Ndumiso slowly untied the rope around his wrist and slowly got off Junior's bed then tiptoed to the door.

Ndumiso: Thuba I'll be back.

Thuba: You're leaving?

Ndumiso: I'll be back before you wake up.

Thuba: You going to Akhona?

Ndumiso:(frowned) Who's that?...That girl, no I'm going somewhere else.

Thuba: I know you. Don't do anything that's going to send you to prison. Go and sleep.

Ndumiso: I'll be fine...Where are your keys?

He took his car keys and left...

An hour later he stood by their old friend's bed, Mandla.

He looked at his girlfriend and rolled her eyes then slowly shook him.

He jumped off bed startling his girlfriend as he woke up and screamed. He slapped her across the face and turned to him.

Ndumiso: Tell her to shut up.

Mandla: Ndu, what are you doing here?

Ndumiso: To see you. We're friends right? I came to chill with you.

Mandla: At this time of the night?

Ndumiso: Blame the insomnia.

He pulled the dressing chair and sat on it.

Mandla: You're scaring my girlfriend dude. She's pregnant she'll miscarry.

Ndumiso: Seems like scaring each others girlfriends is our speciality.

Mandla: Dude please leave we'll talk in the morning.

He reached for his gun and pointed at the girl.

Ndumiso: Let that cover go. I want to see you.

Mandla:(nervously) You can't do that man. This is my girlfriend.

Ndumiso:(sternly) Smindlo uzongbhora...Are you letting that cover go or kanjani?

She swallowed and wiped her tears peeling the bed cover off her body.

Anger engulfed him upon seeing her tummy.

He got up and went to her and ran the barrel on her tummy. Her body went cold as she looked at her boyfriend. He tried to reach for his guy seeing Ndumiso's eyes on the tummy.

He shot his arm his eyes still fixed on his girlfriend. Her heart pounded so hard her hands shook as she wet herself.

Ndumiso: Start your nonsense again I'm shooting the unborn one.

Mandla: Ndu ntwana we're friends. Why are you doing this? If you have something against me let my girlfriend go and deal with me man to man.

Ndumiso: If you say man to man you mean yourself? You call yourself a man?

Mandla: That's irrelevant.

He circled her nipples with the barrel and went up to her neck.

Ndumiso: Why did you kill my woman and my kid?

Mandla: What?

Ndumiso:(calmly) I'm expecting an answer not another question.

Mandla: I don't know what you're talking about. Please let my woman go.

Ndumiso: Oh she'll go.

He reached for a knife.

Ndumiso: You'll take her out. Since killing defenceless woman is your speciality you'll do the honors. Just like how you did to mine. If you get it wrong I'll shoot your arse.

Mandla: Please don't do this. They're innocent.

Ndumiso: That's the best part but then an eye for an eye so...sweetie any last words to your man?

She swallowed huge lumps as her stomach turned to knots. Mandla started sweating realising that he was serious as his arm bled profusely.

Mandla: I'm sorry.

Ndumiso: Tell that to her not me.

Mandla: It was a mistake. I was sent for someone else and I mistaken her to that person. By the time I realized it was late.

Ndumiso: I don't know because I wasn't there and in order to forgive you I'll need you to demonstrate all of that for me. Luckily u my sister lana is available.

Mandla: The police will arrest you.

Ndumiso: I appreciate the care but let me worry about those wena show me or do you need a little push?

He bit his dry lips as goosebumps covered his body.

He stepped back and shot the headboard a few centimeters away from her. Her heart skipped a bit and she fainted.

Ndumiso: Relax we'll wake her up. I want you to look in her eyes as she take her last breath and then feel the pain I felt when you killed my girlfriend. If you don't then it's fine but one thing for sure by sun rise that thing will be dead and you'll do the honors.

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At Mandla's house...

Ndumiso got off the phone and put the gun behind his waist.

Ndumiso: The emergency services are coming. I did you a favor cause in your line of work they were going to kill them anyway.

He shook his head his bloody hands holding the sides of his head as tears streamed down his face.

Ndumiso: For what is worth I know everything but the fact that you killed her is the reason why she's dead today.

He glanced at her body laying motionless on bed with stab wounds all over and raised his brows then walked out before the police found him on the scene.

Mandla tilted his head up feeling his world coming to an end. He had his suspicions about that girl but he never looked into it.

He should've known that she was his friend's girlfriend. He was too stressed out since his bosses were not happy about him killing the wrong person.

They had to send another person to execute to correct person which costed them more time and money.

Thuba was probably the reason he found out, he's the only one who knew that he once went to KZN. What was he thinking though?

Those two were too close for him to hide something like that from him.

He slowly crawled towards her side and held her cold hand kissing it.

Mandla: I'm sorry my love...I'm so sorry please forgive me....I didn't know.

He rested his forehead on bed and cried louder.

Sirens wailed at a distance bringing him back to Earth. That son of a b*tch wasn't bluffing, he really called the police on him.

At Thubelihle's house...

The next day Junior woke and looked around then remembered his father. He got off bed and went to look for him.

He went to Thuba's room and knocked on door. He opened for him.

Thuba: Champ. Is everything okay?

Junior:(tearfully) Dad left us again.

Thuba: Did you check his room?

Junior: No.

Thuba: Go and check.

He ran to the guestroom as he went to his room. He ran him a bath and made his bed before taking out his clothes.

Ndumiso came holding Junior's hand and yawned greeting him. Junior ran to the bathroom to brush his teeth.

Thuba: What time did you get back?

Ndumiso: A few hours ago and Mr here won't let me rest.

Thuba: Let him be.

Ndumiso: How when I need to go to Durban today?

Thuba: You can't.

Ndumiso: I know but I have to. I can't stay here all day and wait for him to get back from school.

Thuba: You need to convince him that you'll come back because he doesn't trust you.

Ndumiso: I will try and reason with him.

Thuba: I hope you're not going there to hurt his mother.

Ndumiso: You don't have to show up to every fight you're invited to. Lami and his boyfriend are probably expecting me to go crazy and demand answers. I won't do that. I just want a peaceful co parenting because my son needs her in his life.

Thuba: Peaceful and that woman in one sentence. I would advise you to talk to her and ask for the full custody then when

she wants to see him she can but forget about peace when that woman still breaths.

Ndumiso: I'll try that. Hopefully it works. I don't want to be responsible for my son growing up with mommy issues, in everything I have to consider his feelings.

Thuba: I see...go and bath him daddy.

Ndumiso: Do I have to?

Thuba: Yep. You'll call me if you decide to leave. No matter what don't allow him to trick you into leaving with him and believe me he can. So stand your ground.

He nodded and stretched walking to the bathroom.

At Siza's house...

Thembalami finished her morning chores and laid on the couch pressing on her new phone. She searched for business ideas that could make her a lot of money but required less planning.

She clicked her tounge and closed the tab when she found none. Everything looked too much and she wasn't prepared for any of that.

She went to tik tok and watched a few videos then went on You Tube.

She sat up and watched more videos realizing that she can also do it.

Open her own channel and make money.

Lami: Story times?..No...Makeup tutorials maybe? ...I don't know how to do it...Cooking tutorials?...I'm supposed to cook fancy foods.

She sighed and went to look for content ideas on the internet. She smiled and laid back comfortably motivated scrolling on her phone until the alarm rang.

She got up and went to take the laundry outside then started ironing whilst humming to a song happily.

On the road...

Ndumiso pulled over in front of a red traffic light and turned to his left. He saw a beautiful woman on the passenger seat looking at him. Their eyes met and she quickly looked ahead as he snorted and turned to the front. The green light came on and he drove through as his phone rang.

Ndumiso: Hello.

Akhona: Ndu it's me.

Ndumiso: Who's you?

Akhona: Akhona.

Ndumiso: What do you want?

Akhona: Can we meet?

Ndumiso: No.

Akhona: Please. We need to talk.

Ndumiso: About what?

Akhona: About us.

Ndumiso: We only had sex nothing else, There's no us.

Akhona: I know but can we meet and talk.

Ndumiso: We aren't friends what is there to talk about?....I'll get back to you sharp.

He hang up and blocked her number then pulled over in front of Mnotho Constructions.

He went straight to the lift and got off the 4th floor where the CEO was occupying the whole floor. He walked past his PA and knocked on door.

Mr Biyela: Come in!!

He got in and closed the door behind him.

Mr Biyela: Hebana what do you want here?

Ndumiso: Easy

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sit down. I want us to talk business.

Mr Biyela: I'll call the police on you.

Ndumiso: Ofcourse you'll but sit down.

He sat down and he handed him a usb then leaned back as he slowly inserted it on his laptop.

It only had two files.

He clicked on the first file and saw the sex tapes of him and a few of his employees in his office.

Ndumiso: Continue looking. I can give you space if you want.

Mr Biyela: What kind of nonsense is this?

He switched on the aircon and fanned his face with his hands.

Ndumiso: You'll love the next one.

Mr Biyela: Why are you doing this? You rejected me why are punishing me? Is it because I'm not interested in you anymore?

Ndumiso: Are you clicking on the last one or you want to die of curiosity?

He swallowed and clicked on the file and he popped his eyes out looking at company's documents.

Ndumiso: Don't try acting smart because once you click on those documents your laptop will shut down.

Mr Biyela: Okay. If it's the apology you want I'll give it to you. I'm sorry for getting you arrested. I was scared that you'll expose my sexuality.

Ndumiso: I don't want your apology.

Mr Biyela: Then what do you want?

He turned the chair around and got up sliding his hands in his pockets.

Ndumiso: Mnotho Constructions.

Mr Biyela: I can give you a job. I know it's not easy for an ex con to find a job out there.

Ndumiso: You're not listening. I said Mnotho Constructions not a job.

Mr Biyela: Over my dead body.

Ndumiso: Inkani ngeke ik'size. Whether you agree or you don't I'll get this company. I'm giving you a chance to name your price because when I take it forcefully you'll cry cause ngoythenga ngemali ye Hennessy mina.

Mr Biyela: Please. I've just opened a branch in Joburg, this is my sweat, blood and tears...

Ndumiso: And your ass. But still I'm not moved. You shouldn't have undermined me nor used your power against me. In your next life you'll never repeat this kind of mistake again. Your victim might be your downfall, am I your victim though?

Whatever you want to call me....You can keep the usb those videos might come in handy....I'll see you tomorrow

Mnotho...konje you call each other lover boys?(smirked) Mr Biyela great job you did with this company. Sadly, life is a vicious cycle.

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At Sbekezelo's house...

Later that day Sbekezelo took off his pants and placed them on the dressing chair and got on bed where Nami was seated pressing on her phone.

Sbekezelo: Have you spoke to him?

Lami: No. I don't know where to start.

Sbekezelo: You need to call him and set up a day for us to meet.

Lami: Us?

Sbekezelo: Yes us, I won't allow you to meet him alone. What if he hurt you in my absence? And besides I don't trust him.

Lami: You have to trust me.

Sbekezelo: I do that's why I said I don't trust him. He's a guy afterall and your ex ontop of that.

Lami: Jealousy doesn't suit you.

Sbekezelo: Mxm jealous of a jailbird? Never.

He propped his elbow on a pillow and looked up at her.

Lami:(laughed) Okay I believe you but still you have to trust me.
I love only you.

Sbekezelo: Look at me blushing.

She rolled her eyes and placed her phone on the pedestal and laid down pulling a blanket over herself.

Sbekezelo: You said you have got something to tell me.

Lami: Oh I have thought about what I want to do.

Sbekezelo: Oh okay, what is that?

Lami: YouTuber.

Sbekezelo: Are you serious?

Lami: Yes. I can get a pet and create videos.

Sbekezelo: What kind of pet?

Lami: A dog or a cat. No a dog.

Sbekezelo: You hate dogs babe.

Lami: I'll learn to love it. I mean there are a lot of people doing jobs they don't like.

Sbekezelo: You can't compare a serious job and being a YouTuber.

Lami: You're supposed to support me and be my cheerleader but you're here dragging me down only because I'm not educated. This relationship is one sided because you think you're better than me. I support you and stand by you all the time but you can't even do a simple thing. That is to lend me an ear. Remind me why are we in a relationship again if we're not even equals?

Sbekezelo: I didn't say I don't want to support you. I want to make sure that you're sure about what you want before you start. You think being a YouTuber is about sitting in front of a camera and taking videos? It's not. Stop being lazy and invest in the foundation of it all, proper planning. You can't come onto me gun blazing forcing an idea down my throat that you probably researched about during your lunch break. I'm not dragging you down but you have to wake up and stand on your own. You won't be a maid your whole life. And honestly you not being educated is irrelevant. You can't lift that card everytime we get into an argument as if you're doing something to change it because you're not.

Lami:(sat up) Wow, so that's what you think about me?

Sbekezelo: I'm being honest here and don't try and manipulate me into feeling guilty about it.

Lami: If this is about the things you've done for me please let me know so that I'll refund you. It's clear that you want to dictate how I should live my life because of your money.

Sbekezelo: Refund?(scoffed) Don't even go there...(sighed) You're making a mountain out of a molehill but if it makes you sleep better at night, do it. Get a dog and take videos it's your life afterall.

Lami: Vele I'll do it. Ngeke unglawule wena.

Sbekezelo: Wow okay!!

He raised his hand up surrendering and got off bed.

Lami: Where are you going?

Sbekezelo: To get a snack

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or I'm not allowed to since I'm educated and you're not?

At Thubelihle's house...

Junior rested his elbows on the counter and looked at Thuba moving around the kitchen.

Junior: Are we having pap and sour milk today?

Thuba: No.

Junior: Dad loves them.

Thuba: Because he's lazy to cook.

Junior: Let me call him and tell him.

Thuba: Yuuh sivelelwe!

He stuck his tongue out and got off the chair and went to his bedroom as Thuba's phone rang.

He wiped his hands and picked...

Thuba: Hello.

Mr Biyela: Thuba talk to your friend.

Thuba: Hello to you too. I had a wonderful I hope yours was great too.

Mr Biyela: I don't have time for pleasantries. That boy was here threatening my business. You brought him here when he was desperate and now he want my company? My company?!! I will be damned!!

Thuba: Am I supposed to know what you're talking about ?

Mr Biyela: He was here threatening me to give him my company.

Thuba: For free?

Mr Biyela: No but I'm not selling.

Thuba: Negotiate a price and sell.

Mr Biyela: I'm not selling. Not when I'm doing this good.

Thuba: So why are you tripping? He gave you an offer just like everyone out there why are you causing unnecessary drama over it. Is there something I should know?

Mr Biyela: No, he's not giving me an offer but he's threatening me. He's basically putting me in a corner and I don't like that.

Thuba:(sighs) What do you want me to do?

Mr Biyela: Talk him out of this or else I'll retaliate and he won't like it.

Thuba: Is that a threat?

Mr Biyela: No just a reminder that coincidences are very much possible cause I don't do well with bullies and that jailbird is being a bully

Thuba: Okay.

He clicked his tounge and hang up on him. He looked at his phone and chuckled in disbelief. Ndumiso was unbelievable!

At the hotel...

Ndumiso came from the shower wearing a towel around his waist and went to apply lotion on his body then put on his pants.

His phone received a video call, he took the laptop from the table and went towards the bed picking...

Ndumiso: Video call?

Thuba: Say hey to him so that he'll leave.

Ndumiso:(smiled) Hey Junior.

Junior:(covered his eyes with his hands) Daddy.

Ndumiso: You still good?

Junior: Yes.

Ndumiso:(laughed) And he blushed.

Thuba: Junior?

Junior: Okay...Dad you'll read me a bedtime story right?

Ndumiso: I..

Junior: I told you to take a few books with you and you promised me.

Ndumiso: I'm joking. I'll do it.

Junior: Thank you.(looked at Thuba's face) Yooh okay bye. I love you dad.

Ndumiso: I love you too Junior.

Junior: No I'm not Junior to you, I'm your boy.

Thuba looked at him and smiled in admiration. Maybe it was time for him to make a baby. Being a dad wasn't that bad.

Ndumiso: Okay ngyakthanda nami mfana wami.

He nodded happily and got off Thuba's lap then ran to the living room.

Ndumiso: What's up?

Thuba: What is going on between you and Mnotho?

Ndumiso: What did he tell you?

Thuba: That doesn't matter. I want to hear your side of the story.

Ndumiso: Okay. I want that company.

Thuba: By threats?

Ndumiso: No a little motivation.

Thuba: Why that one because he told you he's not selling? Why are you putting the lives of your loved ones in jeopardy?

Ndumiso: He threatened my family? He's reaching.

Thuba: You're threatening him!

Ndumiso: I'm not asking it for free but I'm buying it.

Thuba: Can't you open your own company and let him be?

Ndumiso: With what money in my 'broke' state?

Thuba: We'll see what story we can sell?

Ndumiso: What story Thuba wadlala ngami? I can't even apply for 'funding' since I'm an ex con and no company out there will fund my business idea since I've only worked for a few months and ontop of that I have a criminal record. There's no-one I trust to front for me....Basically I can't do anything without raising questions. You're better because you've never been arrested and a bolts company is not that dramatic. I want a construction company and you need money to get that off the ground...This is the only shot I have trust me.

Thuba: We can say I lent you.

Ndumiso: How much? I'm not risking the police on my back. And all eyes are on me since I'm out. They still haven't found the person who stole those things....Think about it. That Mnotho guy will have to be strong.

Thuba: Still, buying a multi million rand company is quite questionable.

Ndumiso: I have a plan on how to go about this without exposing myself....Trust me.

Thuba: I don't like your tone.

Ndumiso: You don't have to like it. I have a son who's turning 4 years in a few months, he's growing up. I can't just spend money woth no source of income and besides I'm getting old I

have to leave a legacy for my kids. Stolen or not, developing conscience will not feed my family.

Thuba:(sighed) I get you.

Ndumiso: Do you really? Because when that douche is threatening my family I won't smile and step back. I'll do him dirty too because one thing for sure I'll get that company whether he likes it or not.

Thuba: There has to be another way.

Ndumiso: Well I prefer this one.

Thuba:(deeply exhaled) I'm giving Junior the phone. Apparently you had an agreement I don't even know how you're going to go about reading a bedtime story whilst you're there but...
yeah

Ndumiso: Okay.

He reached for his book on the pedestal and laid on his stomach supporting the phone by the pillow.

Junior appeared on the screen.

Ndumiso: Lay down comfortable so that I'll start...(to himself)
Lengane iyanglawula le.

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At the restaurant...

Lami looked at the time on her phone and sighed impatient. Ndumiso was about to arrive and Sbekezelo was still nowhere in sight. She rubbed her sweaty palms together and then rested her elbows on the table.

Sbekezelo got in and looked around searching for her then walked over when he saw her.

He bent and kissed her cheek then took a sit.

Thembalami: I thought you weren't coming.

Sbekezelo: I'm sorry, I was held up in a meeting. Have you ordered?

Thembalami: No.

Sbekezelo:(held her hand) Babe relax, he sounded calm over the phone I'm sure there's nothing to worry about.

She forced a smile. She didn't know what to think about him since he was always calm. He was that type to f*ck you up in

their calm state. Even though the presence of her boyfriend was supposed to calm her she was still nervous.

Ndumiso: Sorry I'm late, how are you?

He pulled the chair and sat down unbuttoning his suit jacket.

Sbekezelo: No problem we haven't been waiting for long.

Thembalami: We're fine.

Ndumiso:(looked at his watch) You called me.

Thembalami:(cleared her throat) Yes, it's about our son.

Ndumiso: You and who?

Thembalami: Me and you.

Ndumiso: What is he doing here then? Was he the midhusband?

Thembalami: No. He's my boyfriend.

Ndumiso: What is his business with Junior?

Thembalami: Please don't do this.

Ndumiso: Do what? You said we'll talk about our child so what am I doing wrong? Niqomisana ngengane yami?

Sbekezelo: No I want to make sure she's safe.

Ndumiso: From what?...Look I respect your role in her life but this is our child can you please excuse us?

Sbekezelo: Babe?

Thembalami: It's fine you can leave. I'll call you.

He gave him a death stare and got up kissing Lami on her lips then left.

Thembalami: I'm sorry.

Ndumiso: Why did you abuse my son?

Thembalami: I didn't. My mother did.

Ndumiso: What were you doing when she abused him? Clap hands and shake your fat arse?

Thembalami: No. I couldn't do anything. I didn't have money and you refused to take responsibility.

Ndumiso: And did what? Parade the streets with random women? Weren't you the one who sent me to jail?

Thembalami: I'm sorry.

Ndumiso: Ofcourse you do...(leaned back) I need full custody.

Thembalami:(swallowed) That's what I wanted to talk about.
He...He went missing last year.

Ndumiso: And?

Thembalami: The police are still looking. At home they suggest we bury...

Ndumiso: Bury what?...His clothes?

Thembalami: Yes. No-one can go missing for a year.

Ndumiso: You're not doing that nonsense.

Thembalami: But...

Ndumiso: I don't care about them....Look I know where he is hence I want full custody.

Thembalami: Why cause he is mine?

Ndumiso: Because he's also mine.

She leaned back thoughtfully. Actually that wasn't too bad.

Thembalami: Okay but on one condition...

Ndumiso: No conditions. You don't get to do that.

Thembalami: But I suffered alone. I gave birth to that child. Do you know how to push the baby out?

Ndumiso: You could've tried other alternatives instead of pushing him out...I'm not giving you money forget it.

Thembalami: So you want to separate us just like how you did with your friends.

Ndumiso: No. We'll call you and he can come and see you because honestly he still love you just sad that you hate him.

Thembalami: Nonsense...You want to play happy families with your girlfriends.

He sighed and stood up..

Ndumiso: Follow me. I want to show you something.

Thembalami: So that you can hurt me?

Ndumiso: I can do that here if I want to. Follow me.

He went out and she got up and followed him. He stood by the passenger side and opened for her.

Thembalami: Where is it?

Ndumiso: Get in.

Thembalami: No.

Ndumiso: Sisi weeh, get in the car.

She turned and walked back. He went to her and held her from behind leading her to the car.

Ndumiso: Stop attracting unnecessary attention and get in the car.

She swallowed and slowly got in. He closed and went to the other side and drove out as Sbekezelo watched them his heart pounding.

He started the car and followed them.

Ndumiso saw his car and increased the speed overtaking two cars then finally lost him in the traffic lights.

Thembalami: If you hurt me I'll scream.

Ndumiso: Is that a dare?

She shook her head.

Ndumiso: Good.

At Akhona's house...

She kicked off her shoes and went to sit on the couch after placing the shopping bags on the other couch.

Her friend peeked on the bags and leaned back taking off her shoes.

Akhona: I just need a long bath and my bed right now.

Friend: Sadly I'm doing a night shift I would've done the same.

Akhona: Sorry.

She sat up straight.

Akhona: Please borrow me your phone.

Friend: What for?

Akhona: I need to call someone.

Friend: It's in my bag.

She took it out and copied a number from her phone then called him. The phone rang unanswered, she sighed and put it back.

Friend: Still going crazy over the ex con?

Akhona: No...you won't understand.

Friend: Make me.

Akhona: How when you staying with your fiance at home? I'm the most unlucky person when it comes to relationships. This is my only chance at love.

Friend: But friend what's the rush? Love will find you.

Akhona: Just like it did to you? Stop lying to me. I'll make him my Mr Right you'll see. Watch and learn.

Friend: I don't like the sound of that.

Akhona: You don't have to because you're young

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engaged, have a baby and a good job. Basically you have got your whole life figured out and I on the other hand, it's bad. Very bad, my younger sisters are married and I'm not even in a relationship so don't judge me.

Friend: If you say so.

Akhona: Vele ngisho njalo.

She took the phone and tried calling him again...

On the road...

He pulled over on the side of the road and turned to her...

Ndumiso: When did I rape you?

Thembalami:...

He slapped her across the face. She screamed holding her cheek as she tasted blood in her mouth.

Ndumiso: When did I rape you?

Thembalami: You...you didn't.

Ndumiso: Why did you lie?

Thembalami: Nami asked me to.

Ndumiso: Remove your hands from your cheek.

She removed them.

Ndumiso: Why did you lie?

Thembalami: Nami asked...

He slapped her again.

Ndumiso: You lie I slap you. Why did you lie?

Thembalami: I was angry.

Ndumiso: You give me incomplete answers I slap you.

Thembalami: You told everyone that I had sex with you. You humiliated me and insulted me to your friends. When Nami gave me the recording, I was angry and hurt because I thought we were sorting things out.

Ndumiso: Lying about me was a solution?

She shook her head. He held her hands and slapped her continuously as she cried painfully her heart beating fast looking at his angry face.

Thembalami: I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

He released her and she covered her face crying.

Ndumiso: We're not fighting I'm fixing you. You have to thank my son because if it wasn't for him I would've done worse.

Thembalami: I'm sorry please forgive me. I was hurt because I love you but you hurt me.

Ndumiso: I'll never forgive you because you got me arrested based on lies. You should've asked me and I would've told you that he's lying. But that doesn't matter anymore.

Thembalami: I'll call him and ask..

Ndumiso: Whatever, get out.

Thembalami: What?

Ndumiso: Get out of my car.

Thembalami: You can't leave me here. Not after you took me...

Ndumiso: You don't want to get out?...Okay then, stay and tell me why you hired people to try and kill my girlfriend?

She quickly tried to open the door. He pulled her by her hair and banged her face twice on the dashboard.

Ndumiso: Yeka ukungjwayela sisi I'm not your friend. Now leave my car.

She got out and closed the door as he reversed and left her there.

She fell on her knees closing her eyes because of mild dizziness. She got up and walked to the middle of the road whilst crying as a car approached.

He pulled over in front of her and got out.

Sbekezelo: Lami...Babe?

He picked her up and placed her at the back.

Sbekezelo: Hang on my love I'm taking you to the hospital after that we're opening a case for that thing.

Lami:(softly) It's okay. Take me home I'll be fine.

Sbekezelo: That's not happening. He's supposed to pay for what he did.

Lami:(wiped her bloody face) No. You won't understand. Take me home.

Sbekezelo: It's either we open a case or I leave you here, choose.

43

On the road....

Thembalami slowly opened the door attempting to get out.
Sbekezelo closed it and locked.

Sbekezelo:(frustrated) Can you please respect me as your man?
Don't allow us to fight because of a baby daddy. Please babe.

Thembalami: You don't understand. I thought you understood how much I hurt him but you're proving me otherwise. This is nothing compared to what I did. I directed my anger to the wrong person over something that probably never existed. He spent years in jail because of me and you want me to send him back? Deprive my son a chance of having at least one parent who cares? I made a reckless decision and brought a baby I never wanted into the mix. I can't even be responsible for myself I can't take care of a baby and that's an honest truth. Now can you please let this go?...For once I'm choosing what's best for my son and that's his father, you can leave me if that makes me a bad person.

Sbekezelo:(sighed) I feel like you're allowing this guy to have power over you.

Thembalami: He doesn't....This isn't about me nor him but Junior. I really can't deal with your insecure ass right now, it's either you leave me or you take me home.

He swallowed and leaned back biting his lower lip tearfully, she just didn't care. The fact that there was a possibility of her leaving him for her baby daddy dried his throat up and gave him heart palpitations. His worst nightmare has come to life, she never cared about the baby until now as a matter of fact he wasn't even aware the child was still missing but one meeting and already she was acting like a mother of the year.

His girl was leaving him, he could feel it deep in his heart. He wasn't going to get her back should she leave him.

He pressed his fingertips on the corners of his eyes taking a deep breath.

Meanwhile Ndumiso looked at the side mirror and realized that it was going to take her a while before she got help. He became impulsive and lost it, she could send him back to jail and he didn't have to deal with things like that.

Junior! Junior! If it wasn't for him he could've dealt with her.

He clicked his tongue and did a u-turn.

His sperms had no timing, couldn't they choose a better womb?

A while later he approached the area and slowed down recognizing Sbekezelo's car parked on the side of the road.

Sbekezelo saw him and started the car driving towards him as he pulled over and waited for him.

He got out and went to his car.

Sbekezelo: You think what you did is good?

Ndumiso: What do you want?

Sbekezelo: You beat my woman in my presence. Is that how you were raised?... I get that you might think you're the best thing because you dine with rich business tycoons but that doesn't give you a right to undermine me as her man. That's my woman not yours. What you both had is over and if you continue like this I'll make sure I send you back to jail.

Ndumiso: You were not there. You're just grasping at straws by accusing me of things you have no evidence of....And I don't owe you any respect, you're her boyfriend not my mine... Please get away from my car.

Sbekezelo: You know...

Ndumiso: I don't know and I don't care...Step away from my car.

He rolled up the window and drove off leaving him standing there as Thembalami pretended like she didn't see them.

At Action Bolts....

Thuba straightened his tie and sat on his chair talking to Akhona on the phone...

Thuba: ...Don't start with me. You were not the only decoy, there were others and we fucked them whenever we wanted there's nothing special about you. Stop acting crazy!

Akhona: I just want the address you can't speak on his behalf....The fact that you kept me around and took me with to the last one is because you trust me.

Thuba: You mean when you nearly got us killed?

Akhona: I know and I'm sorry.

Thuba:(sighed) You know what, I'll send it.

He hang up. He didn't care what they did to him because clearly using his manhood to think was his speciality.

His phone beeped, he opened the message from Small and pulled the drawer whilst reading...

"I went to the doctor, I'm 9 weeks pregnant."

Thuba: What!!

He waited for the picture to load as his heart raced.

It was a positive pregnancy test.

He forwarded it to his friend and then called him....

Ndumiso: Dude are you serious?

Thuba: F*ck I didn't even call to confirm. What if she was pulling my leg?

Ndumiso:(laughed) She wasn't...So the little old you made a baby? Hebanna! Sex is serious kanti?

Thuba: Let me call her back

this is the perfect time to marry her! I don't want this co-parenting nonsense! Not with my child!

Ndumiso: I'm hurt.

Thuba: You're co-parenting too? I didn't know.

Ndumiso:(laughed) The wrong one made a baby.

Thuba: Tsek. As soon as she says yes I need to pay lobola for....How does that work for people like me?

Ndumiso: We'll make a way. Don't think about that. Just celebrate the news. Call the mother then I'm sure she's panicking.

Thuba:(forced a smile) Yeah I suppose she is.

He hang up and heaved a sigh leaning back.

Another text popped up,

"I took the morning after, I swear?"

"I know. Have you told your parents?"

"I told my mother, she's not impressed 😊"

"Because of my upbringing?"

"I'm sorry."

"It's okay. I'll call you, I have a meeting to get to"

He logged out. He couldn't lie about his parents since they knew he grew up in the streets. He was alone in this.

At the hotel...

He walked to the parking lot where his car was parked holding a file and his cellphone.

He stepped in and dropped everything on the passenger seat as his phone beeped.

He looked at the dashboard and then pulled the compartment. He clicked his tongue and requested an uber stepping out.

He took his things and packed them in a bag then stood by waiting after making a call.

Thuba sent him a text, " I don't know when did we start f*cking the girls we work with but you did and she's losing it. She's on her way there if she hasn't arrived already. Sort this out before it lands us in the hot waters."

He shook his head and went to his ride. Akhona was getting on his last nerves and he wasn't sure how much more BS he could take from her.

At Sbekezelo's house...

He dressed her wound and closed the kit then rested his elbows on his lap looking at her.

Sbekezelo: Why is it easy for you to act right with this guy but not with me?

Thembalami: I'm not doing this with you again.

Sbekezelo: Is there still us or I'm reaching?

Thembalami: Get me that tutor and I'll go back to school.

Sbekezelo: Just like that?

She took a deep breath and got off bed walking to the closet where she pulled her old dusty bag and went to the bathroom. He wet her face cloth and started wiping off the dust as he followed her.

Sbekezelo: What are you doing?

Thembalami: Leaving. I'm moving back with your sister, nothing I ever do nor say is good enough. We've been talking about the same thing for hours and I'm tired. You don't trust me and it actual sad....So I'm leaving.

Sbekezelo: Why are you so quick to leave whenever we have an argument? Don't I mean something to you? Our relationship?

Thembalami: I don't have time for this.

She walked back to their closet and started packing. He went to lock the door and put it in his pocket.

Sbekezelo: If you try and leave I'll kill us both. I gave you everything but you don't want to appreciate it. I've been begging you to act right but your baby daddy's presence is enough for you to get your sh*t straight?...You think I'm a fool? I don't allow you to play me like that. You want to drop me and go play happy families with that rude jailbird? Over my dead body!!

She stopped packing and looked at him as he laid on bed and closed his eyes.

Thembalami: Okay I'm not leaving then...I'll stay only if you stop talking about Ndumiso. It's not funny anymore.

At Mnotho Construction....

Ndumiso walked inside the office without knocking and he popped his eyes out standing up...

Mr Biyela: What are you doing here?

Ndumiso: To give you this.

He pushed the file towards him.

Ndumiso: Sign that I'm not negotiating anymore not after you tried to kill me...If you try your nonsense and object this, I'll go and pick up Zuzi after her netball practice. Who knows maybe I might even take her for a spin in my car, the one you tempered with.

Mr Biyela: Can't I atleast sell a portion of my share?

Ndumiso: No. Maybe if you proposed that before your little stunt I would've agreed but now that's not going to happen....Read and sign.

He sat down and brushed his face defeated then read through the contract. After a while he raised his eyes to him.

Mr Biyela: You don't want me to announce the sale?

Ndumiso: Yes. For atleast 6 months. I'll pay you obviously.

Mr Biyela: Why not start yours because you have money?

Ndumiso: I don't want to.

Mr Biyela: This is a lot of money.

He handed him a pen...

Ndumiso: Ink on the dotted line then.

He took a deep breath before taking the pen and signed his life away.

He pushed it towards him and covered his face with his hands as tears welled up in his eyes.

Ndumiso: Thank you.

At the hotel...

Later that day he got off the phone with the receptionist and looked at the screen of his laptop.

Ndumiso: So you're crying?

Thuba: Ayi wena! No I'm not.

Ndumiso: Thank God imagine seeing you cry...I'll talk to my father about it. I'm sure he'll agree to help you...Just don't allow them bully you when it comes to that kid. That's our kid.

Thuba: I hear you.

Ndumiso: Don't worry. You have me now stop acting like you have no family. We'll deal with those people. You'll get your woman...How much are we paying for someone so small?

Thuba: Everything they want.

Ndumiso: They can't overcharge us. Their daughter is too small and short. It's like you're with a baby.

Thuba: Leave my woman alone atleast she's sane.

A knock sounded on the door...

Ndumiso: That's one of my psychos...Call my boy for me...

Thuba: Don't touch her, you can't have her crying rape.

Ndumiso: I won't.

He went to open the door.

Ndumiso: How can I help you?

Akhona: Can I please enter?

Ndumiso: No you can't.

Akhona: But...

Ndumiso: No.

Akhona: We need to talk.

Ndumiso: Look I spent years in jail because of a woman like you. I won't risk with you, I'll just kill you. Continue acting psychotic and following me around like a lost puppy I'll put a bullet between your eyes and you won't believe it....leave and never come back, try and blackmail me about the jobs we did together I'll make sure I pin everything on you and look at you taking the fall for all of us. You're actually crazy if you think after that one sex we'll date. I was excited that we pulled that off and mad horny because it has been years without sex, If you

gave me a dog I would've fuck it and still came but I chose you and that's it!! Get over it and stop annoying me!

He shut the door on her face and went back to his laptop...

He took a deep breath and wore a smile.

Ndumiso: Junior.

Junior:(smiled back) Daddy!!

3 MONTHS LATER

44

At King Shaka International Airport...

Ndumiso buttoned his black suit and stepped down the private jet. He took a deep breath as the fresh air fanned his face and walked to the car parked nearby.

He got at the back and greeted the driver as the car drove to their office.

At Mnotho Constructions.

He hang up and walked to the entrance, he passed a few candidates called for interviews waiting by the reception.

The elevator dinged and slid open, he stepped in and pressed the button going up and caught a glimpse of Nami joining the other candidates holding a brown envelope.

He was sure that was him even though it was confusing to him seeing him coming for an interview because the last time he checked, he was working.

He got off on the 2nd floor and walked to the Manager's office where he found him going through a plan of a certain project with their architect.

Ndumiso: Morning.

Them: Mr Mdletshe.

Ndumiso: There was noone at the reception, is the client here?

Manager: I think so. I can go and check.

Ndumiso: It's fine, you don't have to. Where are those files?...Where is your PA?

Manager: She's probably busy assisting Imi with setting up the boardroom for the interviews.

Ndumiso: I see.

He walked around the desk and searched for the file amongst the pile scattered on the table.

Manager: Here it is.

He paged through it and thanked him before walking out.

The building was busy, other clients were requesting his presence as the CEO. A lot of employees were fired the past two months which led to clients getting agitated. He couldn't disclose the truth to the media except cooking up lies which weren't much believable to others.

A lot of employees were unqualified for the jobs they were doing and he wasn't going to have that in his company. As much as it was unfair to them since they sacrificed a lot to secure those jobs but he was running a business. He needed qualified and skilled people to help him take the company to greater heights.

Now there he was flying across provinces to assure the difficult clients who thought they breathed flavoured oxygen, asking to see him was unnecessary, according to him but since they gave him money he had to prioritize them and give in to their 'ridiculous' summons.

He glanced at his watch and bumped into someone sending the box she was carrying flying to the floor.

Woman: Sorry, Gosh! I wasn't looking.

He crouched and picked the broken picture frame and a file. He looked up at her...

Ndumiso: Baby girl

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do like they do in the movies and help me pick these things.

Woman:(confused) Oh sorry!

She helped him and got up as he picked the box and handed it to her.

Woman: Thank you.

Ndumiso: What's next?...Oh we exchange numbers and end up dating then later on get married.

Woman: Really now?

He put his hand in his pocket.

Ndumiso: Yes....Or they're lying? I bet not I mean we bumped into each other, picked up your stuff together whilst looking at each other's eyes so yeah.

Woman: Wow!

He handed his business card to her...

Ndumiso: I'm rushing to a meeting, please call me, if you don't I'll pop up in your doorstep and I'm sure you won't like that.

Woman: He continues!

Ndumiso:(glanced inside the box) Goodbye....Thandiwe Sokhulu.

He walked to the open boardroom leaving her stunned.

Thandiwe: Who the hell does he think he is?!!

At Siza's house...

During her break she looked at her books and sighed feeling more dumber than ever.

She pulled her History script and looked at mark, 62% it wasn't bad according to Sbekezelo but she knew she was supposed to perform better.

That was history, a subject that most people considered the easiest.

She placed it back and laid on the couch relaxing. She felt like giving up but his happiness got her thinking otherwise, he has been a great boyfriend so far. Definitely out of her league but he loved her regardless.

She just had to teach herself how to love him right because when it came to baby daddy, that guy hated her with passion.

A message popped up on her phone. She reached for her phone and read the text, "Don't cook I'm taking you out."

She sighed and shut her eyes.

Thembalami: God please teach me how to love and appreciate him.

At Mnotho Construction...

Nami paced behind Ndumiso as he walked to his car in the parking lot.

He opened the door and turned waiting for him.

Nami: Ndu.

Ndumiso:...

Nami: I'm sorry for what I did. I have no excuse...(sighed) I'm really sorry. I really need this job please don't allow our differences to cloud your judgement about me...I need the money. I'm running low on cash and I also have a baby....Please help me.

Ndumiso: I'm not the one hiring people, the HR department is in charge of that.

Nami: I know that please...

Ndumiso: I won't mess up your chances of getting this job...I won't waste my time with irrelevant things like that angikho that dizzy.

Nami: Thank you. May God bless you.

He stepped inside and closed the door rolling the window.

Ndumiso: Life is a vicious cycle I hope this will teach you a lesson to not burn all the bridges just because things are looking up for you. Just because I let you be that doesn't mean someone else will do that...You won't always be this lucky.

He rolled up the window and reversed out as he stepped back and swallowed a painful lump in his throat. If only he became loyal to him, none of that would've happened. Maybe he was going to give him a better job. Life!!

45

Later That Day....

Ndumiso walked to the living room from the kitchen holding a bottle of beer. He sat down and took a sip before sending his eyes to the laptop in front of him.

He went through his emails and sighed thoughtfully when he saw the invite to a charity event, he was supposed to bring a plus one.

He couldn't think of anyone, his PA was out of the question. That was an evening thing and she was a married woman who recently came back from her maternity leave. He couldn't take her with.

He looked at his phone and returned Lami's call...

Lami: Hey.

Ndumiso: How can I help you?

Lami: Can Junior come and visit my family? My mother miss him and I kind of told her he'll come.

Ndumiso: He's not coming.

Lami: He's my son too. You can't keep him away from me.

Ndumiso: I'm not disputing that but still he's not coming. I don't trust your family. Especially your mother, that person used to abuse my son just for the sake of it so no.

Lami: I promised her!

Ndumiso: You shouldn't have.

Lami:(angrily) I hate you!! You're being petty and bitter for no reason.

Ndumiso: Still he's not coming.

He hang up and went back to his laptop.

He closed the tab and opened another one.

His mind kept drifting back to Thandiwe, why wasn't she calling anyway?

He downloaded Facebook on his phone and signed up before looking for her profile.

He referred to the laptop and filled in the correct information and her profile popped up.

She was beautiful, though her pictures didn't do any justice to her looks but she was beautiful just....He deeply exhaled discouraged, she was in a relationship, serious relationship for that matter.

He logged out and dropped the phone next to him then reached for a remote changing the channel.

At the restaurant....

Thembalami looked at her dress and the romantic setup on the table and forced a smile feeling underdressed.

Sbekezelo: How are you?

Lami: Good.

Sbekezelo: You sure?

Lami: I thought it was a normal dinner not...this kind of setup.

Sbekezelo: You came that's the only important thing.

Lami: I see.

He rubbed his palms together and exhaled nervously looking into her eyes.

Lami: Are you okay?

Sbekezelo: Yeah...yeah..yes. I'm fine. How is it going?

Lami:(raised her eyebrows) With what?

Sbekezelo: You...School

work...anything.

Lami: You're being weird.

Sbekezelo:(chuckled) Am I?...Didn't notice.

Lami: You're...but if you must know everything is coming along well.

He nodded as she avoided his eyes. She couldn't really say she was enjoying school and work. Siza made things difficult for her and school was more depressing. She was only doing it to make him happy.

He leaned forward as the waitress came over with their food.

She placed Lami's first and then his and then went back.

He cleared his throat as she removed the lid over the plate and gasped looking up at him.

He slowly went down on his knee...

Sbekezelo: Thembalami Mhlongo please make me the happiest man and allow me to be your husband.

She looked at the other customers and back at him.

Lami:(knod her head) Yes.

He took the ring and put it on her finger and kissed her as the other customers cheered.

He sat on his chair and smiled holding her hand as she admiring her ring.

Sbekezelo: Thank you.

The Next Day....

At Siza's house....

Lami joined Siza in the dining room.

Siza: I heard about your engagement, congratulations.

Lami: Thanks, I guess.

Siza: That's the reason I wanted to talk to you....I don't want you hurting my brother, I've been looking at you and truth be told, you don't love him. You're just with him to secure the bag. You're forcing yourself to be with him and I'm not going to stand for that. He's been through a lot of shit before and I don't want you to take advantage of that.

Lami: You done?

Siza: Hayibo!

Lami: Nklayibo ini?!...my relationship with your brother is none of your business. I agreed to his proposal because I love him....I respect you as my employer kodwa musa ukungjwayela kabi.

She got off the chair and walked out of the kitchen, she stopped and turned...

Lami: And also just because you pay my salary that doesn't mean you have a right to put bloody panties in the laundry basket...Next time I'll throw them away because honestly that's pure disrespect and disgusting actually...Uyinuku nje futhi! Fire me if you want but come next month I'll throw those panties away if you fail to wash them during your periods.

She clicked her tongue and went down the passage ignoring her ringing phone.

At Mnotho Construction...

Ndumiso walked into the building chatting to the Civil engineer, Lihle....

Ndumiso: That was crap actually, I was just being modest.

Lihle: Really now? I'm sure you also made mistakes when you first started.

Ndumiso: I didn't...I was that good and besides I was fresh from varsity, very grateful to get a job considering I had no experience so I had to make sure.

Lihle: I see. Stress of finding a job after graduating is real.

Ndumiso: True.

He got his messages from the receptionist and walked to the lift as his phone rang. She excused herself and walked to the cafeteria...

Ndumiso: Hello.

Thuba: You're back.

Ndumiso: Yes.

Thuba: Can't you find someone to take Junior to KZN all the drivers here are busy.

Ndumiso: There's no-one here and the company's jet went back but I'll see what I can do.

Thuba: Call me if you don't find anything because his grandmother was looking forward to seeing him today.

Ndumiso: Okay.

He hang up and went to his office passing his PA in her working station.

Minutes later he went to the boardroom and found a few people inside as the cleaning lady placed the water bottles in front of them.

Ndumiso: Thank you.

He lifted his eyes to her as she walked to the door.

Ndumiso: Excuse me...

She turned and he frowned recognizing her as she swallowed hard her heart racing...

Ndumiso: Nothing. You can leave.

She nodded and left. Seeing Thandiwe there didn't make any sense. She resigned as the Accounts Manager in Durban only to come and work as a cleaner in the same company but different branch.

How was he supposed to forget about her when she was following her everywhere? Or was it the universe telling him something?

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At Ndumiso's house....

He ran on the treadmill for a while with earphones plugged in his ears until it eventually slowed down then stopped.

He got off and wiped his face and then took a sip on his bottled water walking out.

An intercom rang. He went to check and then opened for his new helper.

She looked around the house in awe as he looked at the time on the watch mounted on the wall.

Ndumiso: Mile right?

Mile: Yes, I was sent by the agency as I've said.

Ndumiso: I see. I'll show you your room at the back...They told you that I wanted a stay in right?

Mile: Yes.

Ndumiso: Good..

He took the contract from the counter and handed it to her.

Ndumiso: Read and when you're satisfied you'll sign.

She ran her eyes through it and quickly signed after seeing the salary.

Ndumiso: Since you signed without reading I hope you won't have a problem with the rules stated in there.

Mile: I don't.

Ndumiso: I don't want your relatives in my house, your boyfriend is not allowed in here, he can wait for you outside the gate and only when you're not on duty.

Mile: Why?

Ndumiso: I have a child here, you can't ask me that question...everything else is there, you'll read when you get time...I'll keep my copy and you'll keep yours. For now I'm alone Junior will be here in two weeks.

His phone started ringing.

Ndumiso: Excuse me...You can make yourself comfortable in the meantime.

He walked away as she swallowed reading the contract. It looked complicated with its ridiculous words. He was also intimidating, the thought of going against the rules gave her goosebumps.

The pay was great but the conditions were too much.

Ndumiso: I'll check the email when I get time and that is probably tonight or tomorrow cause I'll be busy the whole day....Just tell me what she is about.

Voice: Okay...So I found out that she resigned because someone sexually harrassed her at Mnotho Construction.

Ndumiso: As in rape?

Voice: No. I managed to get the footage of the whole thing.

Ndumiso: Who did that?

Voice: It's a complicated name, It's there in the file with the pictures and all...She reported it but the boss threatened her since it was his son who did that.

Ndumiso: I didn't know that.

Voice: It happened 3 months back so I guess that's why.

Ndumiso: Then why work for the same company if that was the case?

Voice: What?...I don't know. At the moment she's not working for anyone but running her own cleaning company...They recently got a tender in...Mnotho Construction again.

Ndumiso: So that's why she was there?...Wow! Thanks man.

Voice: Don't mention it.

Ndumiso: Oh...There's someone else I need you to check out.

Voice: Name?

Ndumiso: Mile...I don't know the surname I'll give you her picture.

Voice: Personal?

Ndumiso: Yes.

Voice: I'll here from you.

He hang up and looked at the time and walked back to the living room.

Ndumiso: The key to your house is in the key holder. The kitchen is that side and the bedrooms that side...I'll see you when I get back for now I'm running late.

She nodded and he went to his room.

At Thubelihle's house....

He got off the phone with Small and then drove out as the gate slid close behind him.

He picked his ringing phone and turned right joining the traffic.

Thuba: Mr Mdletshe, Goodmorning.

Mr Mdletshe: Morning, I've been waiting for your call. Have you and your fiance decided?

Thuba: We're waiting for her to give birth then we'll take it from there.

Mr Mdletshe: I understand.

Thuba: Is her family complaining?

Mr Mdletshe: Ofcourse they're, their daughter is pregnant so they want to make sure everything is still going as planned.

Thuba: I'm not planning on leaving her. Umkhehlo uzoba khona uma usetetile. Angeke unkosikazi wami eyoshiswa ilanga esgcawini nesisu esikhulu.

Mr Mdletshe:(laughed) I understand. I'll let them know when they call....Let me not keep you.

Thuba: It's okay

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Bye.

He hang up and continued driving...Atleast he had someone older to assist him with everything. Being undermined by Small's family was depressing him.

At Nkosinami's house...

He asked for a phone from their neighbor's boy. He handed it to him and he called his phone. It rang and he sighed thanking him and handed it back before walking back inside.

It was the second day since he went for the interview and they promised to call them the next day if they got the job.

It was clear to him that he didn't get it. Ndumiso probably made sure of it, so much for 'I won't mess up your chances of getting this job.'

He had to find a job within a month or go back home. Ndumiso was heartless, it was not like giving him a job was going to decrease his salary.

At Sbekezelo's house....

Lami sat on the stoop talking to her mother on the phone.

Lami: I'll come back in time for my lobola negotiations but for now I'm working and I can't just drop Siza like that.

Mother: Okay, don't go around telling people these good news or they might bewitch you. You know how your cousins are.

Lami: I won't ma.

Mother: Good, so your father asked about Ndumiso. Is he paying for him too?

Lami: He said he doesn't mind paying for him.

Mother:(happily) Really?!! That's great. I'll tell him...when is coming to see us anyway?

Lami: Mama let me call you later, another call is coming in.

She quickly hang up and took a deep breath sending a text to Ndumiso.

"I'm getting married and my fiance is planning on paying for Junior. It's the right thing to do since we aren't married."

She bit her lower lip as a reply popped up, "Not my son, keep dreaming."

She clicked her tounge frustrated and stood up walking inside the house.

At Mnotho Constructions....

Later that day Ndumiso hurried inside the building passing a few cleaners leaving the building.

He found his office slightly opened and stopped listening to the voice inside...

Voice: I've been busy and besides it has only been two days since I got here....We have got two huge tenders, I'm still holding interviews trying to get more cleaners and to top it all Mnotho Construction is a huge company....Love I am prioritising my health but I'll go to gym when I get time.

He looked at her rubbing her forehead frustrated whilst listening to the voice on the other end...

She looked at her chubby arms and sighed tearfully.

Voice: I said I'll go when I get time you don't have to be mean to get your point across....I'm not fighting with you I said I'll go....Okay I'll call you when I get home for now I'm cleaning the last office then I'll leave...I'm short staffed why aren't you trying to understand me? This is not about my weight anymore you just enjoy dragging me down and calling me names.

She hang up and rubbed her eyes then continued mopping. He cleared his throat and stepped in...

Thandiwe:(shocked) What are you doing here?

Ndumiso: There's a file I need for my breakfast meeting tomorrow. I forgot it during the day and besides this is my office I don't have to explain myself to you.

Thandiwe: I'm sorry. I didn't know.

Ndumiso: I didn't tell you.

Thandiwe: Excuse me?

Ndumiso: Nothing.

He looked at the wet floor and the file ontop of the desk.

Ndumiso: Please hand that file to me.

She sighed and took off the glove then took the file and gave it to him. He sucked in a breath looking at her huge curves swinging side to side. Chubby women were life and surprising

enough he liked them petite but that one, damn! There was something calm and soothing about her voice and personality. She had that beautiful innocent face which reminded him of someone.

Thandiwe: Your file...

Ndumiso: Thanks.

He looked at her reddish eyes.

Ndumiso: You know love isn't supposed to drag you down or make you give up anything of what you're in order to keep the relationship going. If someone makes you feel irreplaceable or like your feelings don't matter or you're dramatic for feeling what you're feeling then he's not the one for you....You deserve someone who's inlove with the idea of you and can handle the reality of what you're.....You're too beautiful and every man out there will be lucky to have you....There's nothing wrong with your weight.

Thandiwe:(tearfully) You don't...

Ndumiso: Everyone has already left...Finish up I will wait for you, it's already dark outside.

He walked out without giving her a chance to respond...

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At Nkosinami's house....

His girlfriend put on her earrings and zipped her jumpsuit as he quietly watched holding their baby.

Thabile: I think it's time we stopped taking her to the daycare since you're not busy.

Nami: One of my friends promised me something.

Thabile: Until that something comes up you'll stay with her.

Nami: That's not fair.

Thabile: What is not fair is staying with an unemployed man.... Honestly this relationship is a drag. You're a deadbeat father and it's embarrassing, so do us both a favor and stay at home, there's nothing productive you do with your time anyway. Using your savings to take care of your baby isn't being a man. You're useless and annoying with your constant whining and insecurities.

Nami: What am I supposed to do? I do my part, you should be grateful for that.

Thabile: Grateful for doing your job? Bhuti wee that's your baby, nobody is going to give you a medal for doing something that you're supposed to be doing in the first place.

She ran her lipstick on her lips as a car honked outside and then picked her bag.

Thabile: Don't forget to defrost the meat when you're done lazing around doing nothing the whole day.

She pecked her baby's cheeks and walked out as his phone rang. He picked and stood up walking towards the window.

Nami: Hello.

Voice: Nami, I got good and bad news for you my man.

Nami: Good news first.

Voice: The good news is that, I got you something with one of our clients. He deals with the maintenance stuff and he's willing to give you a job....I know it's not ideal for someone like you but I'll keep my ears on the ground for you.

Nami: What? Are you kidding me right now?...When is he expecting me to start?

Voice: You don't mind?

Nami: As long as they'll pay me I'm game.

Voice: Okay, that's a relief.

Nami: Bad news?

Voice: Nothing, I tried putting on a good word for you to a few friends of mine but no-one is hiring.

Nami: It's okay. I'll continue looking. When can I start?

Voice: Tomorrow. I'll send you his number and then you'll take it from there... Sharp chat later.

Nami: Thanks.

He hang up and smiled gratefully.

He looked at his daughter and brushed her cheek.

Nami: Thank you for being my inspiration.

At Ndumiso's house....

He parked his car in the driveway and hurried inside the house. Whatever it was that Mile called him for had better be good.

He got inside and halted in his steps looking at the man seated comfortably on his couch.

Man: Ndumiso, Pleasure meeting you.

Ndumiso: What do you want?

Man: You.

Ndumiso:....

Man: I know about the woman you killed. Well not killed per se but you had a hand in her death.

Ndumiso: Should I give you a medal for that?

Man: Your superiors aren't aware that you did that if they did you wouldn't be standing here with me.

Ndumiso:....

Man: Aren't you gonna say anything?

Ndumiso: Should I say something?

Man: Yes.

Ndumiso: Say what?

Man: What am I going to do with the information that I have?

Ndumiso: I won't ask that because there's nothing you gonna do with that.

He went towards him and rested his hand on the armrest looking at him in the eyes.

Ndumiso: I don't deal with hearsays

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I want facts and proof. And the fact is that the death of your wife wasn't a coincidence. The insurance payout was good, too good for a broke douche like you who was about to file for bankruptcy. Another fact is that if that piece of sh*t Mandla runs out of things to do and start talking about me to desperate people like you I'll deal with him....Now leave my house and never come back. If you're bored go to a club or call your lady of the nights ungazobhorekela la kimi...Sizwene?...Ngyakhuluma anginyi, sizwene?

He swallowed and nodded.

Ndumiso: You know where the door is right? Phuma ke.

He got up and walked out as he looked around the house and walked out through the backdoor where he found Mile sorting out the laundry.

He grabbed her arm and pinned her on the wall...

Ndumiso: I don't know if you're failing to read or you don't like to but I clearly stated in the contract that don't open the gate for strangers....If we have a problem like this again in future I'll drown you in that pool until you get back to your senses uyezwa?

Mile: Yes I'm sorry he said...

Ndumiso: Uyakuzwa lokhu engikushoyo?(Are you hearing what I'm saying)

Mile: Yes.

Ndumiso: Good.(released) Qhubeka uwashe ke. (Continue washing)

At Mnotho Construction....

He went through the plan with Lihle and nodded straightening himself.

Ndumiso: I'm impressed but I still need to go and see the building preferably tomorrow.

Lihle: That's a relief.

She said smiling as he walked around the desk to sit down.

Ndumiso: The client is also happy and that's what matters....You can leave.

She nodded and picked her clipboard walking out as his phone rang.

He looked at the unsaved number and deeply exhaled before picking...

Ndumiso:....

Sbekezelo: Hello, you're speaking to Lami's husband.

Ndumiso: I'm listening.

Sbekezelo: I wanted to apologize for how I went about with trying to pay lobola for Junior. I had no intentions of taking the baby away from you....Honestly I didn't know the whole story. Nobody told me you tried to pay and Lami's family stopped you....Now that I know the truth I won't go through with it.

Ndumiso: Okay.

Sbekezelo: No it's not okay. I don't want tension between us because we'll all be in Junior's life one way or the other so we can atleast try to be civil.

Ndumiso: I understand, I don't have a problem with you as a person but how you handle your family matters. You don't attempt paying for another man's child whilst he's still alive and very much present in the baby's life. What were you trying to do anyway? Pay for him and take a child that's legally mine to come and stay with you because of a few cows you'll pay to their family?...Awungiboni wena but since you've apologized I'll let it go and wait for you to start your nonsense again ngoba uvumela uLami ek'fake ehlathini.

Sbekezelo: I get what you're saying and I promise you we'll stick to our initial agreement.

Ndumiso: We'll see....I have to go, sharp.

He hang up and looked at the time then walked out.

In the parking lot he saw Thandiwe walking to her Honda fit and walked up to her.

Ndumiso: Nkosazane.

She quickly turned around startled and sighed in relief seeing that it was him.

Thandiwe: You scared me.

Ndumiso: I'm sorry.

She cleared her throat and stepped back.

Ndumiso: I'm going out for lunch wanna join me?

Thandiwe: I'm busy.

Ndumiso: I know.

Thandiwe: Huh?

Ndumiso: Never mind....Lunch? You'll find your car here when you get back.

Thandiwe: I need to get a few things at the mall.

Ndumiso: We'll get them on our way back. Let's go.

She looked at him running out of excuses and sighed...

Thandiwe: We can go.

He led her to his car and they left.

At the mall....

The left the restaurant and went to clicks after their meal.

She looked at him...

Thandiwe: You good?

Ndumiso: Yeah, why?

Thandiwe: You have stress lines in your forehead and you keep on clenching your jaws.

Ndumiso: It's nothing. I'm fine.

Thandiwe: No you're not.

She placed the basket on the trolley.

Ndumiso: I'm serious why would I be stressed?

Thandiwe: Don't know.

She started picking up a few cleaning stuff and saw a lady pushing a trolley in front of them.

Thandiwe: You see that lady?

Ndumiso: Yes.

She looked at her again as she stopped comparing the prices and whispered to him. He snorted and shook his head.

Ndumiso: Not happening. What is she going to say?

Thandiwe: Try...to prove you're not sad.

Ndumiso: I'm sad now not stressed?.....You know what? I'll do it but on one condition,

Thandiwe: What?

Ndumiso: I'll tell you when I'm done. You're not allowed to disagree because what you're asking from me is childish.

Thandiwe: Don't do it then.

He walked to the lady whilst she took out her phone to record them.

Ndumiso:(loudly) Nelisiwe?...Oh my it's you Nelisiwe Faith Sbiya! I'm so happy to finally meet you...can I take a picture with you?

Lady: I don't know...

Ndumiso: I'm huge fan of yours. I love your song leka Bafana. I can't believe this.

A few customers gathered taking out their phones preparing to take a picture with the 'Nelisiwe Sbiya'

She faked a smile and posed for the picture as he took a few pictures of them and shook her hand.

Ndumiso: It was a great pleasure meeting you Nelisiwe, I'll sure watch you on tv tonight.

He walked back to Thandiwe as more people gathered around.

Thandiwe:(laughing) That was good.

Ndumiso: Let's get out of here....Did you get everything?

Thandiwe:(knod her head still laughing) Yes.

He scoffed and went towards the till as she dropped her phone recognizing someone from the people around that lady.

Ndumiso: Let's go...What is wrong?

A guy approached them as her face turned pale.

Guy: Thandiwe what is this?...You said you're working while you're busy whoring?

Thandiwe: I wasn't he's...

Guy: Futeq! Sf*be you're cheating on me with this rubbish.

Ndumiso: Are you talking about me?

Guy: I'm not scared of you.

Ndumiso: You should be.

Guy: (swallowed)Thandiwe are you allowing him to disrespect me?

Ndumiso: Thandi let's go.

Guy: Thandiwe is my woman and she's not going anywhere with you!...Wena you think he love you? You think opening your fat thighs to him will make him love you? I made you Thandiwe, without me you're nothing but a useless s...

He stepped on his shoe and grabbed him by the collar...

Ndumiso: What was that?

Guy: I..I...

Ndumiso: Make that the last day you insult her like that you hear me?...And please use that 'making' ability into making yourself. You're disgusting!

He released him and he staggered back losing his balance but quickly held onto to the shelf next to him.

He held her waist and led her to the tills before more people could see them.

Minutes later they stepped inside the car.

Ndumiso: First boyfriend?

Thandiwe:(shyly) Yes.

Ndumiso: Make me your second.

Thandiwe: What?

Ndumiso: I like you and I would like to be your second boyfriend.

Thandiwe: Normal people don't say it like that.

Ndumiso: People are different....Be my woman for a month then after that you can leave.

Thandiwe: I can't.

Ndumiso: Find a way, I made a fool of myself calling strangers with celebrity names in public.

Thandiwe: Ndumiso...

He looked at her sternly his lower lip latched between his lips. Such a beautiful woman being associated with guys like that.

He didn't care about that anymore because he wanted her and one way or the other he was going to break all those walls around that caged and love her right.

Ndumiso:(started the ignition) You'll be fine.

A MONTH LATER

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At Ndumiso's house....

He walked Thuba and Small out. She got inside the car and Thuba looked at her rolling up the window then walked around the car.

Thuba: I found the buyer.

Ndumiso: For?

Thuba: The rest of the paintings.

Ndumiso: Are you sure about this?

Thuba: She's legit. I made sure.

Ndumiso: That's better.

Thuba: Relax...I won't do anything to fuck us over?

He nodded and looked at Mile going to her house at the back.

Thuba: She's beautiful.

Ndumiso: And you have a pregnant fiance.

Thuba: But you're not.

Ndumiso: My woman is inside there and you're match making me? Awungthathi serious yazi.

Thuba:(laughed) You think this is 365 days where you lock someone inside the house and give her 365 days to fall inlove with you?

Ndumiso: No it's not that's why I gave her 30 and I didn't lock anyone inside the house.

Thuba: You give yourself way too much credit.

Ndumiso: By this time next year I'll be standing on the altar waiting for her. I don't need to say more, you'll be there next to me so...

Thuba:(laughing) Are you serious right now?

Ndumiso:(stepped back) Bye Thuba, I'll see you when I get back.

He raised his hands up surrendering.

Thuba: I'm joking ngizothungisa wena mnganami.

He patted his shoulder and walked to the driver's side then drove out as he shook his head and went back inside the house.

He went to his room where he found Thandiwe seated on the dressing chair his wallet on bed with his gun next to it. He looked at his badge and the corner of his access cards sticking out of his wallet.

He cursed under his breath looking at her expression.

Ndumiso: You shouldn't have seen this.

He fixed everything and went to check his silver briefcase and he realized that he took it the day before. He took out his access cards and his badge and got on the chair inside his closet and placed it on the ceiling then went back to the bedroom.

She zipped the bag and put on her shoes.

Thandiwe: I'll request an uber.

Ndumiso: For what? Aren't we going to KZN?

Thandiwe: 30 days is over and just like I had assumed there was something shady about you. You're not who you said you were.

Ndumiso: So you're leaving?

Thandiwe: Yes.

Ndumiso: Put that bag down and sit down.

Thandiwe: I...

Ndumiso: Angzwani nomuntu ophaphalazayo. Ngithe hlala phansi. (I don't like forward people. I said sit down.)

She sat down pouting her lips.

Ndumiso: What do you want to know?

Thandiwe: Is that all yours?

Ndumiso: Yes.

Thandiwe: So you go around killing people?

Ndumiso: No.

Thandiwe: So I'm stupid?

Ndumiso: No.

Thandiwe: Then...

Ndumiso: Your questions are irrelevant. I have killed a few people but I don't go around 'killing' them as you say. I don't know what is going on in your head but please don't allow this to change the way you look at me... I'm still that person you met before... no hidden agendas or anything.

Thandiwe: You own a gun, what will happen should we get into an argument? Will you kill me or beat me up? People like you are trained to kill, am I even safe with you? What if I have people who're trying to kill me out there?

Ndumiso: You watch too many movies and no I won't kill you and you know that.

Thandiwe: I'm scared of you. I can't leave a toxic relationship and jump into another which is much more toxic than the first one.

Ndumiso: Don't be.

He leaned over kissing her and laid her on bed getting ontop of her. He wrapped her arms around his neck and he stopped.

Ndumiso: I love you and I'm not going to hurt you.

Thandiwe: I love you too.

Ndumiso: You sure?

Thandiwe: Yes I am sure.

He kissed her and helped her out of her dress and then took off his tshirt. She looked at his left breast and smiled not seeing the tattoo anymore.

She was probably the most dumbest woman at that moment, an entire own goal! He just confessed to being a murder but there she was trapped under him waiting to finally receive that d*ck with utmost pleasure.

The Next Day...

At Sbekezelo's house...

Sbekezelo went inside the house leaving Lami outside. Ndumiso fist bumped with Junior and closed the back door before turning to Lami.

Ndumiso: Was there something else?

Lami: Why her?

Ndumiso: Why not her?

Lami: She's not your type. She's too big and the more I see of her I can tell that she keeps on ballooning every week.

Ndumiso: I love her and you're starting to sound like a bitter baby mama which is annoying because you also have your flaws but no-one is picking on you....I'm a very reasonable guy but if you continue with your nonsense we'll have a problem. You're too forward and maybe your robotic boyfriend stands for that but I won't so stop spewing nonsense about my woman!

He got inside the car leaving her standing alone.

Ndumiso:(drove out) You heard her?

Thandiwe:(looked out of the window) Yeah.

Ndumiso: Look at me.

Thandiwe:(teary eyed) What for?

Ndumiso: Don't mind her. There's nothing wrong with you as I've said before. Stop crying about things you can't change. This

is how you were created and you can't change it. And I love you like that.

Thandiwe: Am I gaining instead of losing?

Ndumiso:(chuckled) No you're not gaining weight. We just checked yesterday babe. Don't worry, You're perfect like this.

She nodded and took a deep breath smiling through her tears.

At Ndumiso's home...

Later that day Nami stood with Ndumiso by their gate.

Nami: I heard you're here and I wanted to make things right with you before you go back to Joburg.

Ndumiso: What things?

Nami: I know you said you forgave me but I still feel guilty for messing up our friendship especially for a girl who ended up with neither of us. I hope one day you can forgive me and maybe be friends again. I'm older and wiser now.

Ndumiso: I forgave you for everything you did. I suffered a lot because of you yes but I did forgive you.

As for being friends no

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we'll never be friends again. Just because you have stopped being toxic it doesn't mean I should forget about the way you treated me before. It doesn't work like that. Some things can never be fixed no matter how much we try, you broke the trust and without that there's no friendship...I'm happy to learn that you're more wiser now but as for friendship that ship has long sailed bro....See you around.

He walked towards his house. Nami sighed when it finally dawned on him that he really messed and no amount of sorries were going to come to his rescue that time around. Atleast he forgave him.

He settled on the chair next to his father and smiled watching his mother seated under the shade with his woman. He blew her a kiss then turned to his father who chuckled shaking his head.

Msindazwe: You love her.

Ndumiso: Too much.

Msindazwe: I see.

Ndumiso: How did you know that Mom was the one?

Msindazwe:(smiled) I just knew. I won't lie to you and say she was the most beautiful or the most hardworking. I just knew, I had this unexplainable feelings towards her...She was....I just love your mother.

Ndumiso:(chuckled) You've got it bad.

Msindazwe: What can I say? I got the best one.

Ndumiso: I wish I can grow old with her like you did but I'm always unlucky.

Msindazwe: At some point you have to let her go and love someone else. What happened to Nhlahlenhle was bad yes but she's gone you have Thandi now and she loves you. Life is too short, love her fully and don't hold back and I promise you, you'll grow old together.

Ndumiso:(smiled) Yeah I have her now, my chubby thang!

He reached for his phone and sent her a text, "I love you Mrs Ndumiso Mdletshe. I don't know what the future holds for us but as long as I have my lil chubby thang with me I'm ready."

He looked at her as she read the text on her phone and then blushed licking her lips. Oh man, wasn't she just beautiful!

.....**The End**.....

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