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PROLOGUE

“Cela nimvikele angakhulewa. Le ndoda ayilungile izungezwa umoya omubi.” (Please prevent her from not falling pregnant. This man is not a good man he is surrounded by evil spirits)

“Wazi ngani wena?” (How do you know)

“Angingibuzi imibuzo eminingi cela nimuvikele. Kube bekuya ngami ngabe akagani nale ndoda umoya wami awufuni agane nale ndoda thizeni.” (Don't ask me many questions please protect her. If it was up to me I wouldn't even allow her to marry this man my soul is unsettled)

“Sizozama. Asithembisi lutho” (we will try. We are not promising anything)

“Ngiyanicela bantu abadala” (I plead with my elders)
They nod and disappear in the bright light that's shining from afar.

I wake up startled I look around me and I'm still in my room fuck this. The time on the mounted watch on the wall shows 18:25. This dream always invites itself in my sleep thrice in 3 weeks for the past 6 months. Same faceless people same conversation green grass with colorful flowers on the side the bright light blinding my eyes it's what I dream of I know that I'm supposed to be used to it by now but I'm not. It still bothers me till to this day sighs and my parents don't have a clue about it we go and consult and they always tell us that it means

nothing it's just a dream. What irritates me the most is that they keep on saying “prevent her from falling pregnant. Don't allow her to get married to that man.” I don't even know which man is that because I'm happily married I got married 8 months ago to my wonderful husband Lihle.

I disembark from the bed and step out of my room heading to the bathroom to rinse my face and brush my teeth.

“They can never separate you with your naps no matter how much they try” my mom says immediately I step into the kitchen I laugh sitting down. “Why would they even try separating me with them though? Naps save lives” I shrug.

“I'll remember that next time. So you didn't dream again?”

I sigh. “I wish.”

“Your father is very worried about you Zamo.”

“I know Mama I'm more worried by the fact that not even prophets & sangoma's know what it means.”

“And what I fear most is it becoming a reality. Your dreams are serious warning and to never be taken lightly.”

“Well even if it becomes a reality we still won't prevent it. But should it happen that someone comes and ask for my hand in marriage reject him kill him if possible because I'm not going to marry another man ngizabe sengiyahlanya.”

She laughs. “Hot oil will be waiting for that bastard.”

“You don't even know when that day will be. Anyway where is your husband?”

“He went out he didn't say where he was going.” I nod. “Want to help with the cooking?”

“Are you going to pay me?” I narrow my brow at her.

“Don't do me like that Zamo. Futhi ke I don't have money to waste I'd rather take that money and go and do my nails or buy myself some wine. Then you will tell me exactly what you are going to eat sisi.”

“Geez woman I was just saying. So what can I do?”
“Leave it I'll do everything myself.”

“Haibo sowukwatile njalo Mama?” (Are you angry now)

“I'm pissed.”

I laugh. “I'm sorry for pissing you off let me go and buy myself some goslo's & bashkwet. Need anything?”

“Anything you can afford will do.”

“Alright” I disembark from the chair and step out of the house. The sun has already set but people are still milling about and kids are still playing on the streets.

I get to the shop and buy what I need as I'm waiting in the queue to pay someone taps my shoulder I turn to look

I turn to look and it's some lady in her mid40s her skin is so flawless wish I had her skin but I'm proud of my caramel skin.

“Kuzomele ugane naye. Wuwe kuphela ongabasindisa basesi hogweni lapha udla labantwana futhi ke akulungi lutho. Lelakhaya lelo lizungezwe imimoya emibi” (you will have to marry him. You are the only one who can save them they are in hell he's feeding on the babies and everything is not going well. That home is surrounded by an evil spirit)

I look next to me thinking that she's talking to someone else but no she's talking to me as her eyes bore into mine searching for God knows what.

Are you talking to me?" I ask confused.

"Yebo. Ngikhuluma nawe uphoqelekile ukuthi ugane naye!" (Yes. I'm talking to you you are forced to get married to him) she half shouts.

"I don't know what you are talking about because I'm happily married I'm sure you are mistaking me for someone else."

"Nomzamo Khumalo."

"Great. You even know my name. Who the hell are you and what do you want from me?" I speak through gritted teeth.

"Ukuthi ngingubani akubalulekanga kodwa ngithi mele ugane nale ndoda. Nguwe k'phela ozibasindisa ungangitsheli ngo myeni wakho mina. Laleka Nomzamo uze ung'size uvume nakeza ekini azokucela lendodanyana yakho ayikuthandi vula amehlo. Ngizobuya futhi" (who am I is not important but you need to marry that man. You are the only one who can save them don't tell me about

your husband. Listen Nomzamo you better help me and agree when that man comes and asks for your hand in marriage that so-called husband of yours doesn't love you open your eyes. I'll be back) she disappears.

Sighs I wonder who was that woman and funny enough I wasn't scared of her but the conversation I participated in with her left a bitter taste in my mouth. Argh my turn comes I pay for my stuff and exit the shop. What did she even mean when she said "Lihle doesn't love me?" She was talking a lot of shit Lihle & I love each other dearly...

I get home and my father is back from wherever he went and he doesn't look too good. I look at my mother and her mood too has changed.

"Baba." I greet placing the things I went to buy on top of the table and sit down.

“Nom-nom my daughter. How are you?” He's not even smiling and him glancing at me like this implies that he comes bearing ‘bad news’ and I wonder what are those news.

“I'm well and you don't look well. What's wrong?”
My voice trails.

“Baby you will have to marry him.”

“Who is him and why must I marry him?”

“You will know soon enough the time will come. Just know that he is a wealthy businessman. You have no choice but to marry him only you can save them Nom-nom.”

“But I'm married!” I shout banging the countertop.
“I know Nom-nom. But it's what the sangoma told me not unless you want more innocent blood to be shed.”

“This is bullshit! Who am I supposed to save?”

“All in good time my baby all in good time.”

“I can't deal with this excuse me.”

“Zamo please go and think things through.” My mom pleads with me.

“Think what? There's nothing to think about! Or have you parents forgotten that I'm actually a married woman?”

“No Zamo. We haven't forgotten that but child this is—” I lift my hand ceasing her from talking any further and excuse myself.

What nonsense is this now? Who am I supposed to marry and save? This is bullshit I'm sure Lihle will think the same too their nerve...

“You are their only hope save them” a voice booms from out of nowhere. I swear I'm starting to become crazy because wow!

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INSERT 1

NOMZAMO

“Muffin I'm home!” My husband shouts all the way from the gate. I wipe my palms on the apron that I'm wearing and step out of the house to convene him halfway. He was away on a business trip for two months how I missed him...

“Hubby!” I throw my hands around his neck and bury my head on his chest as he wraps his hands on my waist. He smells of feminine perfume well of which I don't mind because she works with a lot of females in his department. All I know is that he's in the marketing department.

“I've missed you so much muffin” he twirls me around and I giggle as he puts me on the floor.

“I've missed you more baby. Let me get your luggage for you and why didn't you tell me that you were coming? I would've cooked a feast for you” his hand is around my waist as we saunter to the house.

He laughs with his baritone voice how I missed hearing it. I liked it when he growled in my ear I always giggle and I instantly get wet in between my thighs that's how much effect he has on me no matter indignant I am at him once he growls is game over for me. We met at a grocery store as I was busy shopping for baking ingredients I had a lot of orders around that time. Anyway he saw me and approached me he asked for my numbers since he was in a hurry I gave them to him and he called me later in the evening. We went out on a few dates before he asked me to be his I agreed since I already knew him. I knew how he gets when indignant when stressed or happy before we could even officially date. And as they always say the rest is history...

“I wanted to surprise you muffin and you are indeed surprised.”

I giggle. “Yeah I am. And I want to hear all about your trip and I want to know what you've brought for me. Let me go and run a bath for you so long I'm sure you need one.”

“Please muffin and I need to make a quick call to my colleagues and let them know that I've arrived safely I'll be with you shortly.”

I nod and head to the bedroom first putting his luggage on top of the bed then step out of it and head to the bathroom to run his bath. Our house is a 4 roomed house with 3 outside rooms that we are renting out to contractors. Once done filling up the bathtub I step out of the bedroom I find him laughing as he is still in a call with whomever. I tap him on his shoulder and he turns around a smile plastered on his face...

“Your water is ready” I mouth and he nods. I go back to the kitchen to check on my biscuits yeah I sell them with scones muffins and cakes at my usual busy intersection every morning. I also work as a housekeeper 3 times a week in some all-wealthy people hotel in town.

Now what am I going to cook for my husband? Sighs I didn't even buy groceries this month since I was eating at home almost every day home is 30 minutes drive I use a taxi to go there and my father brings me back late. I shrug and settle to prepare for him the last canned fish I had left & macaroni it's better than nothing and my husband isn't allergic to anything unlike me who's almost allergic to a lot of food hence I don't like visiting people. My phone rings on top of the bin bread I attend to it and it's my mother.

“Mama

“Hey baby. Are you still coming because you are 15 minutes late?” We were supposed to go out as a family we do family outings twice every week I have no any other sibling it's just me & me alone.

“I'm sorry Mama. I can't make it Lihle is back.”

“That's good news when did he come back?”

“It's been over 20 minutes now.”

“Alright I'm sure he's exhausted and wouldn't join us for dinner. Anyway pass my greetings to him.”

“I will Mama enjoy.”

“Will do. I love you Zama.”

“I love you too Mama.”

“Before I hang up are you going to tell him about the dreams?”

I sigh. “It'll be useless telling him he never takes me seriously. He always says I'm crazy I need to see a psychiatrist to check my mind or I stress too much when I tell him about them.”

“What? He must be out of his damn mind maybe he will believe you once they become a reality.”

“I guess let me get started with cooking talk soon.”

“Okay bye.” She hangs up.

“Was that your mother?” Lihle asks standing behind me wrapping his hands around my waist.

“Yeah that was her. She passed her greetings. You smell nice.”

“Yeah I'm going out” I turn my head and face him. Vele he looks all dressed up.

“You are going out?” I ask sizing him up & down.

“Yeah I'm meeting up with the gents.”

“What? Can't you meet them tomorrow? Today is supposed to be about us and you telling me all about your trip. I mean I even cancelled going out for dinner with my family just to spend the first night of you being back and probably get down & dirty.”

“I'm sorry baby but my friends invited me for some couple of beers and besides I will make time for you tomorrow. Call your mother and tell her that you'll be joining them.”

“Please Lihle. I've missed you and I'm your wife. You need to spend time with me tonight and you will see your friends tomorrow.”

“Since when do you control me Nomzamo? Now I can't go and meet up with my friends because of your selfishness? I will wake up next to you tomorrow morning don't annoy me!”

“Okay hubby. At least spend an hour with me then you will go and see your friends just an hour.” I never thought I'd see the day when I plead with my husband to spare me an hour of his time intja le qaluyiva.

“Don't be desperate for my time Nomzamo. I don't recall you being this clingy before I left.”

“This time is different because I miss my husband it's been two months without seeing you Lihle.”

“So what? You know what? I don't have time for this!” He lets go of me but I grab his hand as he attempts walking away. He gives me a pungent stare. “Let go of my hand.”

I release my grip from his hand. "I'm sorry baby."

He clicks his tongue. "See you later" he steps out of the house banging the kitchen door causing me to jump a little.

I close my eyes breathing in & out I'm not about to cry for Lihle. Yes I will spend time with him tomorrow as he promised me. My heart is heavy very heavy and thanks to him I will now sleep with a shattered heart. That man who walked out of here a

second ago is not my husband I don't know who it is because the man I'm married too could never talk to me or behave the way he did towards me like ever. He has changed but I hope his new behavior it's only for tonight and not more days to come because my husband loathes discerning me wailing. He always makes sure that he makes me happy maybe I'm just overreacting yes that's that. I'm overreacting.

25 minutes later I'm done cooking I dish up for the both of us I put his in the microwave and take mine then head to the lounge. I switch on the TV and a movie playing in Africa magic comes on the screen it's 3 hours long at least it will keep me busy until I've had enough of it.

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ENHLE

Our husband will be home soon and we haven't even started cooking being married in polygamy is the best

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being married in polygamy is the best it's nothing like what they show in the stories there's three of us and I happen to be the first wife married to him for 10 years with Lenah being the second married to him for 8 years and Nonkolosi being the 3rd married to him for 5 years. We are all in our mid30s and we are all housewives our husband refuses us to work saying that it's not our duty but our duty is to make sure that we do our chores as ordered by him and make sure that he is well-fed & taken care of. He takes care of us a wealthy billionaire he is we don't lack anything. The only thing missing in this marriage of ours are children we all don't have

children. Yet we fall pregnant but we all end up losing our babies miraculously when we reach 3 months. And funny enough our husband never allow us to mourn for them and I don't remember him shedding any tears for any of our pregnancies lost. He cheats a lot actually but we don't remember hearing that a girl came by here and claimed that he's pregnant with our husband's child like ever.

Well he has a son who's in his early 30s and he's so handsome. He once courted me and I told him straight up that I don't do men under my age I deal with 45 years and above men. He was hurt shame but at least I was honest with him I didn't want to lead him on only to hurt him in the end he deserves someone who will really love him for him broke as he is. I heard that he also tried courting my sister wives and just like me they also turned him down.

He just wasn't their type at least now he has found some girl who claims to love him but I doubt that she really does she just wants to get her claws on our husband. I discern how he gawks at him every time they come for their monthly dining bitch.

Anyway Mpilo is a 48 years old business tycoon and still very much sexually active. Sex is what we don't lack also as his wives he has stamina for days he makes sure that he satisfies all three of us in one night. He loves us all equally and maybe that's why my sister wives & I get along just fine we never fight we are like sisters. Unlike the other married wives of the Khuzwayo family we stay in the city not in the village like the rest of the wives who fetch water from the river to cook clean and do laundry for everyone living in the Khuzwayo homestead. Mpilo

doesn't want us to be slaves for his family and that made his mother to loathe us. She doesn't want anything to do with us and we don't mind because we don't care about her existence too. Mxm she even says we are cursed by her predecessors for disrespecting her.

“I've already defrosted the meat. Nonkolosi you can start with the rice and Enhle you can do mashed potatoes. Mpilo will be home soon and you know how irate he gets when he finds his food not ready” Lenah says stepping inside the kitchen changed into more comfortable clothes. Anyway she's always the last one to get done bathing.

“We shouldn't have gone and get our nails & hair done. I told you that Mavis has a long list of client's that she will attend first before she attends to us” Nonkolosi explains. Mavis is the best make-up artist in town she knows her work hence she always has many customers.

“What's done is done complaining won't help us with cooking fast before Mpilo gets home next time we will book an appointment two weeks prior” I tell them as I start peeling the potatoes.

“My sentiments too we can't queue as if we are not

the wives of the famous handsome business tycoon” Nonkolosi says.

“How can we cook without a bottle of wine?” Lenah asks striding to where the wine cellar is.

“How can we forget our 4th best friend?” I say giggling.

“Izidakwa zendawo (drunkards)” Nkolosi says we all laugh.

We continue doing our bits & pieces and we all glance at each other as Mpilo's car pulls up on the driveway. My heart beating erratically.

“Shit we are in deep shit” Lenah says starting to pace up & down.

“Calm down Lenah. I will explain everything to him as to why we commenced this late with the cooking” I tell the both of them trying to put them

at ease.

“You better at least he understands you” Lenah says.
I nod...

The door swings open and the husband steps inside and I hurry to him and take his briefcase as I slightly bow my head and slightly bend. Lenah & Nonkolosi also follow suits.

“Good evening Baba.” All three of us greet in

unison.

“My wives” he pats our backs and we all rise to our full-lengths. “I can see that you were already beginning with cooking” he says scanning the kitchen.

“Yes my husband. We were at the salon and time wasn't really on our side since Mavis's place was full hence we had to start late” I tell him.

“It's okay. You don't have to worry yourselves about cooking we are eating out this evening I've already made reservations for us. Go and get yourselves ready we are leaving in an hour Marshall will be the one taking us there” all three of us scream in excitement.

“Thank you Baba. Let us go and get ready then” Nonkolosi says clapping hands. Nonkolosi likes things out of all the three of us hence her sense of fashion is just wild but our husband never complains. And we are here for that.

“And I'll run a bath for you so long” Lenah says

taking the briefcase from me and they walk away hand in hand.

I switch off the stove and also head to my room to get ready. Going out with Mpilo comes once in a Blue Moon him telling us that we are going out it means he has won a tender that he was bidding for. Well I'm not complaining because he saved us a lot of work I detest cooking with all my heart the ladies know that too while Nonkolosi loathes washing dishes and Lenah loathes Cleaning & washing dishes. When we go out with Mpilo we make sure that we wear our best dresses and slay everything to show that we are wives of a tycoon and money is what we look like it's what we walk & eat daily.

★»★«

NOMZAMO

21:45 and Lihle ain't back and his phone rings unanswered I'm sure I've left him more than 50 missed calls. This is an unusual behavior from my husband I spoke to my mother a few hours ago telling her about Lihle and she told me that I'm always welcome back home if he continues with his behavior they didn't chase me away and him marrying me doesn't mean that he owns me or anything like that. She also told me to pray for peace and for God to alleviate my aching heart. Talking to her made me feel a whole lot better and now I can retire to bed without shedding tears I'll see if he will wake up next to me tomorrow morning as he promised me he will.

I rise up from the couch and head to the kitchen to make myself a cup of tea I always drink tea and read a book or two before retiring to bed. Reading keeps me sane and I like the fact that it increases my vocabulary and there are some lessons to be learned in these books. Currently I'm reading "Raven by Shantel Davies." I put in the ingredients as I switch on the kettle. I keep on peeping in the window hoping that he will drive through but nothing. Why are you stressing yourself about a grown man Zamo? Drink your tea read your book then your Bible pray then get into bed and sleep. Tomorrow is a hustling day for you...

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INSERT 2

NOMZAMO

03:30 my alarm rings waking me up sigh. I groan as I
flutter my eyes open and stir moving my hand on

the side of the bed and it's empty. Lihle didn't come back home last night he didn't keep his promise of him waking up next to me as he told me he lied to me. I waited & waited for him but he never showed up he didn't even try sending me a text assuring me that all is well he's safe wherever he is. He just ignored me the sadness clamps my heart again and I close my eyes breathing in & out. I disembark from the bed then kneel down & pray.

“Thank you God for waking me up

This morning and giving me another chance.

Thank you for the gift of life

Thank you for loving me

And may our day sail off smoothly

For every hustling individuals

Amen.”

I rise from the floor then go to the bathroom to wash my face & brush my teeth once done I head back to the room to wear appropriate clothes and off to the kitchen I go. I take out all the ingredients I will need for baking and start mixing. The time on the watch mounted on the wall reads 03:50 and by 05:30 I should be leaving the house and go to my intersection it's just a 5 minutes walk to the intersection by 07:30 my stock is already finished and I will have come back home once again to fetch more biscuits for the scholars and by 08:30 my stock gets finished again then I come back home and prepare for work. And if I'm not working that

particular day I try new cooking recipes if not that then I bury myself in reading books then in the afternoon I go and visit my mother. I don't have friends...

Hours later I'm already at my spot and the streets are starting to get filled and buses going in different directions to collect their people. My usual customers come and buy their favorites 5 m away from me an old lady is selling fat cakes how I love them and they are not too oily but lately she refuses to sell me some I don't even know why. Heck she even stopped greeting me altogether shocking.

“Hi how much are your muffins?” Ask one man I don't remember discerning in my area ever since I started staying here 8 years ago wearing a charcoal three-piece suit and he smells nice too but he's walking on foot or maybe he parked his car somewhere and decided to walk here it happens all the damn time.

“Hello muffins are R12” I tell him and he scratches his head. “Is everything okay?”

“Yeah well not really. I'd really love to buy them but I don't have money on me now and I'm job hunting.

So pardon me for wasting your time” he says already walking away.

“Wait” I call out to him and he stops walking and turning around to look at me. I take the 3 remaining packets (2 ultramel scones & muffins) putting them in a small plastic and take out R100 from my waist bag. I walk up to him. “Here take this” handing him the plastic and the money.

“No no I can't take this this is your hustle I'm sure you need it more than I do.”

I shake my head. "I don't need it but you do. See I know how hard it is to wake up every morning and job hunt all day the sun burning you only for you to go back home without any luck and companies promising to call you but never do because the second you step out of the door they hurl your resume in a trash bin. So you need this. You can't hustle on an empty stomach that's for sure. I'm only helping out making someone's day unexpectedly it's part of my life. Now you can border a taxi and good luck. I will put you in my prayers."

His eyes get filled with tears. "Th-thank you" he says.

I smile. "You are welcome" I turn around and saunter back to my spot.

I pick up my empty bucket and rush home to get more cookies the sun is already on the horizon and very soon the local schoolers will fill up the streets. I get home and take another bucket and I hear the bathroom tap water running he's back. Shesh I don't bother greeting him instead I step out of the house and go back to my corner. Today my stock finished up faster so this gives me more time to drink my second tea for the day meditate and go to work with a clear mind.

“Morning” he greets me immediately I step inside the house. He's making himself tea.

“Morning” I respond to him as I put the empty bucket behind the door.

“There's no bread.”

“I didn't buy it your last night's meal is in the fridge you can preheat it and eat.”

“Did you just say last night's meal?”

“I didn't stutter.”

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“So you are expecting me to eat food that slept in

the fridge the whole night?”

“Hehake but you used to eat food that slept in the fridge for two full days without complaining all these years. What's new now?”

“Because I'm a man and as my wife I prefer you to cook me a fresh meal I don't want yesterday's food!” He bangs the countertop.

“But I just told you that there's no grocery baby. I'll

do it when I knock off.”

“And what are you expecting me to eat the whole day?”

“There's some dumpling in the microwave you can eat it until I come back or you can go—”

“Bullshit!” He cuts me off. “You are useless I wonder what did I even see in you. You are fucking useless Zamo. Instead of trying to be a good

submissive wife you are just being more useless.
Damn it woman get your act together!”

I shake my head tears veiling my eyes. Who is this monster standing before me? This is not my husband this is not Lihle. I don't know who this is Lihle would never switch up on me like that. He'll never I'm his world he always told me that even before getting married to me. He promised to never hurt me intentionally h-he promised...

“But I am a submissive wife baby. I've never disrespected you or talked back at you you promised to never hurt me but now here you are

hurting me with your words.”

“Now what? You want me to nurse your wounds?” I shake my head. “Then you better make sure that you prepare me fresh food before you step out of this house Zama. I don't care whether there's grocery or not I just want food.”

“Fine I will start at the town then to buy groceries and I will buy you an already cooked meal before heading to work I'm sorry.”

“You are still here? Just go and buy the damn grocery. I don't understand why didn't you buy it all week. What were you doing? Busy whoring?”

“Is all that necessary? The insults you are spewing are they necessary?” I ask my voice is breaking I'm trying so hard not to cry. “You've changed Lihle. This is not you.”

“If it's not me then it's who? This goes to shows that you don't know me.”

“Ye-yeah I really don't—” I close my eyes. “I really don't know you but I don't think that this is the real you this behavior is not of my husband's.”

“Zama. You sound like an old woman right now just get me my food. Don't piss me off further than you've already done prepare yourself and go to town you are not going to work today we are going to spend the day together just like you wanted last night. Today it will all about us muffin” he brushes my cheek with his thumb.

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I shake my head and move away from him. “I will go to work excuse me I need to go and get ready to go to town” I attempt walking away but he gets hold of my hand and roughly yanks me to him. His eyes are filled with hostility.

“You are not going there or are you dating someone from your workplace? You have a boyfriend there that you promised you will see? Is that why you are defying me by forcing to go to work even when I told you not to? Am I not your husband?” He tightens his grab on my wrist causing me to wince in pain. “Answer me Zama.”

I shake my head. “No no I don't have a boyfriend” tears are already streaming down my cheeks. I tried holding the sob that just escaped my mouth but I couldn't. Lord knows I tried holding it in but I couldn't. The lump was just too much too clogged I had to let go. My heart is in anguish...

“Then you are not going to work end of discussion.”

“Ba-by please. I need to go to work you know that I need the money.”

“No Zama. I'm not going to tell you again because this time around I will not be this nice.”

“Why are you doing this to me Lihle? What wrong did I do to you to treat me the way you are doing right now? We were good before you left for this work trip of yours and our conversations over the phone were good too even though they started decreasing at some point. Yini what changed?” I ask my voice coming out as a whisper.

“Because you are a whore. Do you think I don't know what you were getting up to since I was away? You think I don't know that you were bringing different men in my house?”

I open my eyes in shock. “Wh-what?” I squint my eyes.

“Don't even try and refute it. Don't make me get physical with you. Actually you know what? I'll go to town myself and I will lock you here. Give me your keys and your cellphone. I don't want you keeping in touch with your mother and I will personally send an email to your boss stating that you cease

working with immediate effect!”

“What? No no. Please—” a backhand slaps ceases me from speaking any further I yelp.

“Your phone and keys now!” He roars. I retrieve them from my apron and hand them to him with a shaking hand. “Good” he propels me back almost making me fall and exits the kitchen.

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I rush to the door and bang it screaming when he turns the key locking me inside. I put my forehead on the door hands formed in fists lightly banging the door. “How could he do this to me?”

“That so-called husband of yours doesn't love you. Open your eyes.” The words of that old lady ring in my mind. Could she be the reason why my marriage suddenly turned out this way? It's her lightly banging the door. “How could he do this to me?”

“That so-called husband of yours doesn't love you. Open your eyes.” The words of that old lady ring in my mind. Could she be the reason why my marriage

suddenly turned out this way? It's her no doubt about that. But what is she hoping to achieve by turning my husband against me? Sighs...

★»★«

MPENDULO

My day started off unexpectedly great. I guess it's true when they say God will send people your way

to brighten up your day the least you expect it. All I did was ask how much a packet of muffins costs and she gave me 3 packets for free and topped it off with an extra R100 it's like she saw that I had no money with me and I left the house very early without eating anything. Furthermore I walked for 2 hours on foot heading to the firms to try my luck since I saw posts of general workers & operators on Facebook so I'm here to try my luck. I hope everything goes well I really need this job because if I don't get it then I might as well consider myself single. My woman told me straight up that if I come back without any good news then we are done I can't lose her. She's been patient with me for the past 4 years of being unemployed. She's working in one of the wealthy hotels in town as a housekeeper. But the way she earns yoh. One could say she works as the CEO of some money-making company.

My father is a very well-known tycoon. He has a fleet of cars lives in a mansion have a lot of tenders his wives are always going on vacations and to tell you the truth it's my first time seeing a polygamous marriage where women take each other as sisters rather than wives but I'm not complaining as long as he's happy. See I can always ask him for money but he once said; he can give it to me only if I agree that he sleeps with my girlfriend. I told him straight up that I'll never allow my woman to sleep with him phela that will mean I love money over her but yena she wanted to take the offer without asking any questions because according to her in her own words "a woman must be showered with gifts and be given money weekly to pamper herself." Mxm yet she works for her own money and I don't remember her buying me anything women. Well my grandmother does everything for me. My mother passed away when she gave birth to me may her

soul rest in peace.

My mind traces back to that woman who showed me that there are actually people who are still kind and can lend a helping hand without expecting anything in return in this cruel world of ours. I wouldn't mind getting married to a woman like her I swear to you I'll be the happiest man on this earth. I mean Khutso didn't even bother wishing me luck a whole stranger did. But there's only one problem she's married the big rock on her left finger is hard to miss I'm sure she's married to some businessman and she's selling the cakes just to push time or making side money for rainy days a woman with brains. Lenah and her sister wives can learn a thing or two from her I wonder who is she married to.

Anyway I drop off my resume after standing for 10 minutes in the queue I pray that I'm amongst the ones that will be selected for either position I'm not choosy. My friend lives around here I might as well go and visit him even if I leave late at least I have taxi fare and if I'm hungry the packet of scones will come in handy since I shared the other two packets with some of the job seekers. And yhey they are delicious very delicious I even directed them where she stands I didn't even get her name it's not like she knows mine but I will know her name before the day ends.

“Ek'se old eyes” we shoulder bump immediately he opens the door.

“Yah jou moer. Febe?”

“All good ntjaka flip?”

“100.”

He whistles shaking his head. “Where are my

manners? Step in boy hhey awusasho nawe” he opens the bottom door since it's those usual double kitchen doors.

“Arh I knew that eventually you will let me in” we both laugh. “Make us some tea I've brought scones with me.”

“Ek'se? When last did you come and visit me with something to eat? Hhe this is a miracle that nigga Jesus is surely coming back.”

I laugh. "Stop being dramatic" I shove the packet of scones in his chest and head to the lounge.

"Where's the girlfriend?" I ask tossing myself on his recliner.

"Which one?" He asks leaning against the door frame.

"How many do you have?" I raise my brow at him.

“It depends on who is asking and since you are a charmer boy I will not tell you their names but whoever you are asking about is either at her house if not home.”

I laugh. “You'll never change.”

“I know. Why should I change? I mean some of us are not ready for a commitment like you. Phela nina nithanda too much.”

“Ai ndoda I can't be jumping from pussy to pussy. There are lots of deadly diseases out there.”

“Whether you fuck one girl the fact is you will eventually die we are not immortals ntjaka. At least I will die a happy man” I shake my head. The kettle switches off. “Nazo.” He goes back to the kitchen.

I take the remote and switch on the TV Sean is such a cool person and he speaks raw he doesn't sugarcoat shit. It's fuck whatever with him. He lives in his own world and he can be unnecessarily mean if he wants to and girls love him gore. lyoh... Some girls are really brave guess it's true when they say

girls love dangerous boys.

“When did you get time to buy Zam-Zam's scones?”
Sean asks placing the tray on top of the coffee
table.

“Zam-Zam?” I narrow my brows at him.

“Yes Nomzamo. But I call her Zam-Zam she's one of
the best bakers we have around. Her coconut
muffins are my everyday dinner and her ultramel

scones are my breakfast I'm always her first customer.”

I did say that I will get her name before the day ends and I did. Earlier than expected even.

“Yeah her scones are the best. Anyway I didn't buy them she gave them to me for free and also gave me R100 on top then she wished me good luck with my job hunting.”

“Ncoah” clapping hands. “Couple goals bethunana.”

I chuckle. “Fuck you dude!”

He laughs. “I'm sure you are already planning your vows in that big head filled with water of yours.”

“Arh tsek. Besides she's married.”

“That's bad. You should come to me for lessons I even fuck married women they always come back for more & more. Well Zam-Zam is too loyal to that bastard husband of hers. Anyway she's such a cool chick and she loves helping people.” I nod... And we start eating.

But I can't stop thinking about her of which is stupid because I will never get to be with her. Hopefully by the time the sun sets she would've been long out of my mind.

★ » ★ «

ENHLE

We (me & my sister wives together with my husband) honestly loathe uninvited guests. People who just come announced and unfortunately for Mpilo's uncles and his mother we are not cancelling our plans of going out today is our spa day. But here they are with weekly bags standing on the doorstep glancing at me as if I'm some sort of a model or something. Of course I'm wearing a robe. It's 09:15 and I'm already drinking wine what's the big deal? This is my house I can do anything I want at any given time...

“Aren't you going to let us in?” Uncle Tom asks.

“Mpilo is not here. What are you doing here?” I stare at the farm Julia girl standing beside Belinda (Mpilo's mother) with her head dropped. “And who is this shabby-looking girl?” I size her up & down.

“Mxm such a disrespectful little girl!” Belinda says pushing me aside stepping inside the house and the others following her.

“Yhey this is my husband's house! You can't just barge in like you live here you even smell like goats!” I yell at them.

“Call Mpilo for me” Belinda orders me.

“I told you that he ain't around but you can wait for him if you like. He'll only be back after 17:00. Anyway let me go and get myself ready.”

“Ready? Ready for what?” Uncle Bheka asks.

“To go out with my sister wives” I respond to him.

“You are not going anywhere Enhle!” Belinda says.

“Uh uh. You are not my mother you don't get to tell me what to do and what not to do. Please don't

start with me I'm not in the mood” I tell her rolling my eyes.

“Why are you so disrespectful young girl?” She asks.

“I'm not doing this with you you are not here for me but for Mpilo. And if that girl is his new wife welcome home darling see yah” I say ascending the stairs.

I don't care how many wives Mpilo brings as long as

he will still treat us the way he does then I see no problem at all. Hopefully baby girl will give him a child if she fails too then Mpilo will be obliged to take another wife aye. I get to my room and open my closet. I'm looking for something exquisite to wear I want to turn heads everywhere I go... The door to my room flings open and my sister wives step inside looking all cute.

“What are those relatives of a devil doing here?”
Nonkolosi asks sitting on top of my bed.

“Guess they've brought the new wife” I respond to her shrugging.

“She needs some lot of work” Lenah says. “Lots of work!”

“Well you ladies will fix her up because I ain't got time for that.”

“Same here” Nonkolosi.

“Me three” Lenah says. “She's on her own.” We all laugh.

I finish getting dressed and we all step out of my bedroom and head back to where the mini devils are.

“Okay we are going out. New wife I hope you know how to operate electrical appliances. You can prepare food for your in-laws while we go out and enjoy ourselves. Bye guys.”

“Mhlolo” Belinda says clapping her hands once.

“Don't burn down our kitchen” Nkolosi says as we step out of the house heading to the car laughing. A great day we will have...

INSERT 3

MPENDULO

The sun has finally set and I'm on my way home my day was good Sean made sure that he makes it to be a memorable one but I still can't get Nomzamo out of my head no matter how much I try I just can't damn it. Maybe that's another reason why I had a bomb day.

“Short left driver” I tell him as we approach my house and he pulls up near my gate and I step out of the taxi sliding the door closed after me. He hoots as I cross the street greeting the gents standing there by the corner and make my way inside the yard.

The house is quiet guess Khutso is still not back from work she was supposed to be back 3 hours ago. I wonder where is she held up I open the door and step inside the house. I sigh as I saunter to the lounge. Our house is just a simple 5 roomed house with no expensive furniture or over-the-top interior designer Khutso really loathes the setup but she doesn't want to spend her money to fix up our house. The walls have cracked and the paint is

peeling off in some parts of the wall the couches are second hand actually most of the things here in the house were donated to me by friends & neighbors but you can never tell because they are still in a good condition; one thing about me I'm a clean freak I love clean places. Khutso sometimes gets annoyed by it oh well whatever.

I take a bath. Once done I change into more comfortable clothes then I need to get started with cooking before Khutso comes back. Argh flip my phone is off I forgot that I didn't charge it all day and it was on 30%. I'm sure Khutso sent me a message notifying me that she will be home late. I put the phone on the charger then switch it on and head back to the kitchen I don't even know what I'm going to cook but I'm craving for iphuthu. Yeah

Khutso will make herself a sandwich or something. These girls and maintaining figures ai. The door flings open and Khutso steps in with two goodie bags from Mamo's in her hands.

“Hey baby. Sorry I'm late. I had to do double shift since one of our own resigned this morning without stating the reason why” she says putting the bags on top of the table. She perks my lips.

“That's bad. Have they found a replacement for her?”

“Yeah they did. Much as I wasn't a fan of her I'm a bit down at the fact that she resigned without a reason yet she was the best we had and she was a hard worker. Work was boring today everyone was down.”

“Guess you guys lost a diamond hopefully tomorrow will be a better day.”

“Yeah I hope so too. What's more awful is that they were going to promote her to be our shift

supervisor but she resigned. Anyway enough about me. How did the job hunting go?”

“I left my resume there hopefully they will call me back before the due date” due date is a week away.

“They better call you or else I'm leaving your ass I'm tired of supporting a grown man like you Mpendulo.”

“They will call me I assure you. Anyway I was about

to start with dinner you can go and freshen up so long.”

“There's no need for you to cook I brought pig trotters & tripe at Mamo's. Let me go and freshen up you can dish up for us so long” she kisses my cheek and walks away.

Thank you God she saved me time. My phone rings I wonder who is it I hurry to the lounge and it's Belinda my favorite grandmother. The woman who raised me without anyone's help she did it single handily. Coming to think of it my father was never really there for me he didn't even support me. He

only started supporting me financially when I was in High school.

“Mama.”

“Hello boy. We are around town.”

“That's good when did you get here?”

“A couple of hours now Mpilo is not home.”

“The wives?”

“Don't ask me about those women who can't harbor babies in their rotten wombs. Anyway come by tomorrow morning we have a family meeting and be here before 09:00 because we are supposed to go back home early we still have things to take care of.”

“Okay I will be there.” We talk for a couple of minutes and she disconnects the call after bidding each other farewell.

“You will be where?” Khutso asks stepping inside the lounge she looks like she's going out.

“Belinda asked me to come to Mpilo's house tomorrow there's a family meeting. Are you going somewhere?” I size her up & down. She's wearing leather leggings crop top or should I say breast support because it is situated underneath the boobs and block heels make-up on point. Weave curled.

“Yes I'm going out. Some of us got paid and I'm not working tomorrow so why not go out with the girls? Plus it's been long since I went out I miss the groove.”

“Okay enjoy yourself and don't drink too much” she tilts her head and gnaws at the corner of her bottom lip staring at me in awe. “What?”

“Urhmm I'm still comprehending that you just

allowed me to go out that easy considering the fact that you detest me going out late at night especially with my friends whom you don't really like and I don't know for what.”

“I know but you are old enough to take care of yourself and I don't want to come off like an insecure boyfriend or that I'm controlling you and I definitely didn't get paid because I'm not working and I can't afford to go out unlike some people.”

She shrugs. “Oh well. Hopefully they will call you wherever you've applied and when you get your first salary take yourself out and experience the

freedom of spending your money without worrying about anyone telling you how to spend it or nagging you” that last line was unnecessary but hey I'm a broke man after all my voice is not taken seriously.

“Yeah I can't wait” I plummet on the couch and tune it to the soccer channel feet stretched out on top of the coffee table. I'm just short of beer to complete my long night ahead.

“Okay I'm heading out don't wait up for me. Oh here's R50 grab yourself two quarts of Heineken or something adios” I don't even bother looking at her I just concentrate on the TV.

I'm not even bothered by the fact that she's leaving a matter of fact I'm glad that she's gone I can think about Nomzamo and smile like a retard all alone without fearing that she will sneak up on me and find me smiling at nothing other than my thoughts about another woman who I barely know and not her.

★ » ★ «

ENHLE

It is only now that we go home after the amazing day we had now that we are heading home my 100% mood dropped down to 0% seeing that we will find those uninvited goat-smelling people in our house. Mpilo should've booked them at a hotel or something. Yes we live in a house that can accommodate 20 people but we don't appreciate other people coming for a visit even our families don't spend the night over when they come to visit. They leave the minute time hits exactly 19:00 and

they will come back the following morning to join us for breakfast lunch and dinner. Anyway I did tell Mpilo that his family is around and they brought his new makoti along even though he did tell us that he is taking another wife I didn't expect him to take some village shabby looking girl I expected him to take a modern woman who is already a fashionista not someone we will have to give a make-over because we don't have the luxury of the time. There's a lot that she needs to be taught shesh. Mpilo must hire her a stylist because wow. And she better be not too uptight.

“And I dread going back home on a Friday night for the very first time in like forever!” Nonkolosi says as we climb on the car.

“Tell me about it.” Lenah.

“I'm worried that we are not going to have our wine and chilli biltong and throw in a movie here & there and a little gossip night” I say leaning my head back on the seat.

“I hope they are leaving tomorrow morning because I can't spend another day with them their goat smell will surely suffocate me” Nonkolisi says pinching the bridge of her nose.

“I hope the new wife is done cooking because I don't want to stand on the stove” I say.

“I won't eat whatever she cooked what if she cooked tasteless chicken that floats in the soup dry cabbage and dry soft pap all in one?” Nonkolosi says with a disgusted face.

“Yuck stop it Nonko. That's disgusting. I really feel like throwing up right now” Lenah.

I laugh. “You guys are dramatic I'm sure she's not that bad I mean girls from the farms cook some mean traditional food and you two know it Mama Deli sells such food and you Lenah like her liver the one that bubbles up when left in the sun for too long” they laugh. “You know I'm telling the truth and Nonkolosi detests it.”

“Without a doubt. Hence I stopped going there plus she's untidy and so is her caravan.”

“Well plus she's untidy and so is her caravan.”

“Well don't you know that these dirty people with their filthy shops sell the most delicious food? The dirtier the place they come for more it says”

Nonkolosi laughs.

“I hate to admit it but you are right. Anyway I'm just glad that I stopped eating unhealthy food. I now eat clean meals” Lenah says rolling her eyes.

We get home and Mpilo's car is already parked in the driveway.

“The husband is home 25 minutes early today” Nonkolosi says as we step out of the car.

“I'm sure that monster-in-law called him” I shrug as we make our way inside the house. Laughter welcomes us from the lounge it must be fun. “I need to go and freshen up I smell like sweat” I tell Lenah. Nonkolosi already left and she didn't greet the people in the lounge as she passed them.

“Same here and I might not come out of my room after I'm done bathing” Lenah says already walking away. I follow after her...

“Enhle” Mpilo calls my name and I stop walking and step inside the lounge with an uninterested face I don't even bother greeting them.

“You called for me” I sit on the armrest chair next to him and the girl is sitting on the carpet looking

down like a good wife that she is.

“Yeah my Mom tells me that she didn't introduce you women to the 4th addition to the Khuzwayo clan” he says.

“We were in a hurry and we already had plans so we didn't have time to stick around and get to know her” I shrug.

“I know. Anyway this is Mazana my fourth wife.

She's not the best looking but with a little bit of make-over she will look good.”

“Yeah she will. But you will have to hire a stylist for her we don't have time to turn her into looking like us. Get up Mazana.” I order her she obliges. “She has a great body all of that filth she is wearing must go and that doek on her head that makes her look old must go. In fact Belinda will have to return back with her luggage it won't work here I'm sure there are cockroaches and small rats in it.”

“Awu ngeke Mpilo. You are going to allow them to turn Mazana into something she's not?” Belinda

asks clearly perplexed.

“Yes if she's going to be my wife and stay under my roof she will have to look like all my wives and if by any chance we come and visit you at the village then she will wear like an old woman.”

“Exactly. She married my husband not his family not Belinda but married to Mpilo and she will do what we do here and adapt to our lives and if she can't do that then Mpilo must buy her a house where she can wear like an old woman and cook white chicken freely. So we will discuss everything else tomorrow and we will formally introduce her to the other

wives Mpendulo too. I hope you called him. Anyway let me go and freshen up. Baba tonight you can sleep in her bedroom. Welcome koti” I stand kissing my husband. “Goodnight everyone.” I glimpse at Belinda and she looks defeated she can't believe it.

“So is this how they address you? They don't have respect Mpilo! And now you are allowing them to turn Mazana into some slay Queen?” Uncle Vic asks.

“This is not in the village Malume we don't behave the way you do. Here we do things the modern way and not the other way around. My wife can talk to me anyhow she wants I don't care. Mazana will

soon be like them but until then we are going to make babies” Mpilo defends me.

“At least she will give you something your wives failed to give” Belinda says and I laugh. “Their wombs are rotten I don't even know what you saw in them. Oh almost forgot that they were just like Mazana at some point. And now they think that they are the big shots if this is how the city turns people then I'm better off staying in my home filled with love. Mazana don't allow them to change you.”

Mpilo clears his throat. “Then you better return back with her to the village I'm not about to be seen

walking around with a farm Julia. My business associates will have a field day and I have a reputation to keep. I don't want her tainting my name.” He moves his eyes on everyone until his gaze lingers on Mazana. “Mazana if you are not willing to live the way we live here you can go back home with my mother and uncles. The choice is yours after all.”

I chuckle. “I'm out of here deal with it baby” I excuse myself and retire to my bedroom. A long day I had...

★ » ★ «

NOMZAMO

Lihle has been gone ever since morning he's still not back yet. I cried myself to sleep I'm defeated. I honestly don't have the strength to do anything what Lihle did really weakened me I saw the other side of him that I never knew existed in all the 10 years that I've known him 7 months in marriage. Hmm now I see that it's true when they say "sometimes marriage can show you the true colors of your better half." He's a fucking good pretender I give it to him he fooled me for 10 full years. I laugh at my foolishness but then again I didn't know that

one day he will switch up on me the way he did. All it took was just a 2 months business trip and he transformed into a varmint. "Lihle." His name leaves a bitter taste in my tongue as I whisper it I will have to go home tomorrow morning. My Mama once said "if a man hits you once leave his ass because if not then he will do it again & again until he eventually kills you." And I will do just that I will leave until he fixes himself up.

I get up from the settee that I've been sitting on and head to the bathroom to wash my face I look like a mess even my braids are let down the beautiful bun I had on is gone. I push my braids back and twist them once so that they don't disturb me when I rinse my face. Done I step out of the bathroom and head to the kitchen I need to eat before hunger kills

me. A knock comes through at the door it's probably a customer and I can't even attend to them because... Yeah exactly that. I get done making myself tea and take 3 scones and head back to the lounge.

The door flings open and the smell of alcohol is the first thing that greets me. I close my eyes and open them again my body stiffens. The door bangs shut I pray that he heads straight to the bedroom and sleep it off but nope. He is blocking the door staring at me straight in the eyes.

“Why are you not welcoming your husband?” He

asks wiping his clean nose.

I quickly get up from the settee and hurry to him I attempt hugging him but he propels me back sending me to the floor on my butt. I attempt to get up too late he's already on top of me. He tears my pyjama top and the buttons fly out.

“Ba-baby pleas—” a backhand slaps seize me from pleading with him I yelp and tears fall at the corner of my eyes. He coerces his lips on mine. No he's gnawing them and his left-hand settles on my neck.

I kick and move my head from side to side. Big mistake! He bites my lips I can taste copper on my bottom lip I'm bleeding. He backhand slaps me back and forth strangling me here & there. My eyes bulge open I need air. He releases his tight clutch on my neck and gets off me. Chance I quickly jump up from the carpet and attempt to run away.

“Arhhh!” I yelp as he yanks me by my braids pulling me back.

“Where do you think you are going bitch?” He propels me on the wall and takes off my pants together with my underwear.

“Ba-please” my voice comes out as a whisper. But it falls on deaf ears. He bites my neck.

“Open your thighs” he orders. And I part them sniffing. “You know what I've always wanted to do this with you and you always shied away from it but this evening” he bites my neck. “I will take it by force I own you Zama!”

“Li—” a bone rippling scream tumbles out of my mouth as he forces himself on my anal he covers my mouth with his big hand ceasing me from screaming. I close my eyes defeated as his dick fills my asshole. He sinks his teeth into my neck. And he's roughly fondling my right breast he groans clearly enjoying himself he took my soul away from me.

Lihle my husband a monster. He's the one crushing my soul beyond repair. The person I trusted and gave my all to is breaking me without any remorse he is assaulting me the man who used to worship me has now turned into a wild varmint. I no longer recognize him I need to be saved I need something that will numb the pain that he entrenched in my

soul unprovoked.

“Clean yourself up use a towel or something then put on some sanitary pads you are bleeding and drink some anesthetics for the discomforts you will be fine when you wake up tomorrow. I'm going out to meet up with the gents and stop crying because you are pissing me off” he kisses my cheek. “I love you baby. See you when I come back” he walks away leaving me standing in the position he put me in.

INSERT 4

NOMZAMO

It's the next day and I'm still not out of bed. The excruciating pains that are pulsating in my arse allow fresh tears to stream down my face. Last night I couldn't sleep I was in too much pain even the painkillers didn't help much with numbing the pains Lihle didn't even bother coming back home and I don't know how to feel about that I'm too numb to feel any emotions right now except for the pain in my arse and the tears that are flowing

uncontrollably drenching the pillow I can't sit upright and going to the toilet to do number 2 it's hard shame I wonder how porn stars or gays do it because wow. Those people are brave respect them. I stir to face the other side and I wince in pain damnit Lihle! The kitchen door bangs closed he's back for more. Air surges from my lungs as he screams my name fear heightens my heart rate. I pull the blanket over my head and control my breathing.

“I'm home my love. How are the pains?” I don't respond to him his voice sounds so raspy. “Guess the painkillers really worked after all they knocked you out. That's good” he says. I feel his weight settling on the bed he smells the same perfume he was smelling the time he got back.

I sigh I'm not stupid. He smells of the same perfume that his shirt was smelling when he came back from his business trip. He's cheating on me. I wonder what did this woman do to him for him to loathe me this much and go to an extent of raping me. What is it that the other woman has that I don't have? Where did I go wrong with him? So this woman doesn't even care about the band in his finger? Fine I don't put on make-up or wear beautiful clothes my hair is always braided I have small boobs I don't drink party nor smoke but I gave him love I supported him when he lost his job. I was there for him through it all. Praying for him helping him with online jobs application I was there when he fell sick and couldn't do anything by himself I was the one who paid his car debt the loan sharks I was there through it all. I gave up on my dreams just to

accommodate his and look where that got me. I guess I loved him enough to a point of doing everything for him to a point of making him & and all that he needed a priority not caring about me and my needs or my happiness. Yet he never did anything for me.

He still snores like a tractor nothing has changed. I remove the covers slowly and put one leg out as I position myself to sit upright another leg follows I slip my feet in my slippers and take slow steps to the bathroom I need to bathe and change the sanitary pad since it's full. I fill the bathtub with water and put in drops of anointments then I strip off my clothes and feel the warmth of the water with my elbow perfect. My eyes shut close and I bite my lower lip preventing myself from screaming

when I finally settle in the water. I really need to find a way to leave this house before things turn ugly. Arh my phone. Yes I need to get my phone and send my mother a message dad might come and fetch me. Let me cut my bath short and go search for my phone before he wakes up.

5 minutes later I'm inside our bedroom I shake him and he doesn't wake up. I pick up his pants and search it and I can't find my phone damnit! Where did he put it? Think Zamo think because pacing up & down won't help you with anything. Well nothing comes into mind I might as well give up or not. I wear my sweatpants and throw in some hoodie I need to hide my face it looks terrible my right eye is black and half-closed my cheek is swollen. Fuck I look for the house keys in his pants and they aren't

there what game are you playing Lihle? I look around the room and I don't know for what. A thought comes into mind and I quickly act on it a second I'm out of the bedroom dragging my feet to the kitchen I bet he didn't lock the door when he came in he forgets to lock the door when he's drunk that's another habit of his that I don't like. I take in a deep breath and open the door and by the Grace of God it is unlocked fuck the butler is locked fuck my life. And the neighbors can't even see me they have this high wall in their yard ai.

“What the hell are you doing?” My throat goes dry instantly as he asks me this question. “I've asked you a question muffin.”

“I-I needed some air plus I'm hungry there's no food” I respond to him shrugging.

“Shit! I forgot to do the grocery but I will go to town after I'm done bathing. Why didn't you remind me? You can be useless at times. Let's go back to the bedroom to make love I can see that you are feeling a little better. I told you that you will feel much better after taking the meds.”

I close my eyes. “Who is she?” I slowly turn and face him as I ask him this question. His face is blank.

“Who is who?” He responds casually.

“The woman you are cheating on me with. The woman who turned you into something you are not?”

He laughs. “What woman? You are the only woman for me muffin.”

“I'm not a fool Lihle. You smell of her.”

“So you now smell my clothes when I'm sleeping?” I shake my head. “Then how do you know?” He raises his voice.

“I smelled it when I woke up I sleep next to you after all” I shrug.

“And how do you know that it's a woman's perfume?” He takes a slow stride towards me.

I fake a smile. “You know what never mind. Can you please give me my phone back I want to call my mother I'm sure she's been calling me to no avail.”

“No. That mother of yours is poisonous I'll deal with her when I get time. So I will call her on your behalf and tell her that we are going on a vacation for a couple of days and don't even try defying me because I will punish you. Now let's go to bed before I drag you there myself.”

“Can I at least make tea for myself?” I implore looking down I'm scared of facing him.

“No just go to the bedroom I don't have the whole day I still have grocery shopping to do hush now” I nod and start walking towards the bedroom.

Maybe if I might listen to his orders maybe he'll stop treating me like I'm not his wife. Or is it maybe because I can't give him a baby? Is it the reason why

he treats me the way he does? We've been trying for a baby all our lives together with no success and there's nothing wrong between the two of us we are both healthy and we can both produce babies but for some odd reason we aren't blessed with one. The pastors prayed for us sangoma's gave us izimbiza to drink doctors gave us fertilization pills and none of that helped we are still childless. But thanks to God his parents and my parents are understanding they still believe that we will have a child in the near future. I believed that too but now I don't want the child at all.

I stand at the door and he shoves me inside he steps in and closes the door after him.

“Take off your pants and get on that bed” he orders me.

“Baby please. I'm still bleeding I will stain the sheets” I plead with him.

“You will wash them. Stop wasting my time!” He roars and I jump up yelping. I nod with tears streaming down my cheeks. I pull down my sweatpants together with the underwear and he pushes me into the bed.

He's wearing boxers so he just whips out his semi-erect dick and gets on top of me. No four-play no nothing. He forces himself in dry as I am and I wince in pain he starts moving inside me I turn my head to face the window he will be done soon anyway. He groans biting my neck. God are you even there?



MPENDULO

I get to Mpilo's mansion and Belinda is the first one to embrace me as I step inside the house.

“Look at you Mpendulo. You've grown so much in just over a year” she lets go of the hug.

“And you are aging gracefully what's the secret?”

She laughs. “Drinking water & eating healthy throw in some prayer too.” I nod and greet everyone present and sit down next to uncle Vic.

“Welcome son” he says.

“Thank you uncle.” Laughter coming from the stairs is what makes Belinda click her tongue in annoyance she really hates the wives with her all bones too.

They are wearing beautiful dresses as if they are going to some gala dinner or something like that flutes of champagne in their hands. I'm just glad that they rejected me when I asked them out once upon a time I don't even know what has gotten into me back then. Phew because wow. Behind them there's a young lady whom I assume is my father's new wife judging by the way she's wearing it seems like my father likes them young. I wonder if she will bear kids for him otherwise kudos to her for agreeing to be my father's wife and I hope the slay wives won't turn her into someone she's not.

“Mpendulo welcome son” Enhle says sitting down.

“Thank you Enhle” the other two don't even acknowledge me. The new makoti sits on the floor respectful. She's clearly cultured.

“And then? What are you doing Mazana? Get up from that floor right now. Or do you see anyone else sitting on the floor?” Enhle hisses.

“What's wrong with her sitting on the floor? She's showing some respect something of which you clearly lack” I tell her.

“This is not the farms Mpendulo. What she's doing is really embarrassing honestly if she wants to sit on the floor then she must go and sit outside or somewhere else not here. You get up!” Mazana quickly stands and sits on the chair next to me.

“Don't even start with her Mpendulo” Lenah warns.

I laugh. “I'm not even there” Lenah warns.

I laugh. "I'm not even there trust me" I respond to her. "Anyway where's Mpilo?"

"He left for work already and we are leaving too after breakfast" Belinda says.

"Thanks God thought you'd never leave. Mazana dish up for everyone chop-chop" Nonkolosi claps her hands as she orders her. I shake my head. "You are still sitting? Get the fuck up!"

“No sit” Belinda says. “Mazana doesn't know how to use electric appliances she's used to cooking outside. So do you have any woods that she can use to start a fire?” She continues to say.

“Fine I will teach her let's go to the kitchen” Lenah says standing. Mazana puts her hand on my lap as she stands. WTF? Maybe it was an honest mistake.

“So Mpendulo. Where's that yellow bone forced girlfriend of yours? I thought you will be coming

with her I needed her input about something but it's fine” Enhle says.

“She's at work.”

“I didn't even know that she works on weekends too.”

“They've asked her to come in since one of their staff members has resigned.”

“I'm sure the girl who resigned found herself a better paying job or better yet a blesser. I don't understand why is Khutso still working there because the money is not even that impressive” Nonkolosi says.

“If she resigns who will feed Mpendulo and pay the bills?” Enhle questions.

“So she enjoys feeding and paying for an old man's

house bills while he watches TV all day? A grown man? Rha it can never be me shame I'm sorry. Khutso deserves a real man a man who will support her not the other way around. Imagine his audacity of sweating on top of Khutso while he ain't contributing anything? I mean where do you get the ener—”

“You don't want to go down that route with me Nonkolosi. Trust me because it won't end well. You will find yourself homeless and more continue provoking me” I glance at her as I tell her this and she drops her eyes to the table.

“I wonder what do you know about her but the truth has a way of coming out and all in good time” Belinda says. And next time Nonko don't talk about my son the way you did because it won't end well. Anyway where is the food time is running out” she looks at the clock on her wristwatch.

“Let me go and find out how far are they I don't want you guys missing your train because the second one will depart very late yeap let me get them” Enhle says getting up from her chair.

“I wonder where did Mpilo get these women because they are very disrespectful and don't know

how to address old people. Mazana better not follow in their footsteps she must not allow them to bully her” I say.

“That's what I'm hoping for too but I don't think she will stand up for herself you saw how Enhle spoke to her a few minutes ago and she didn't even put up a fight” uncle Vic says.

“Well if she's not going to abide by our rules then Mpilo will have to buy her her own house where she can do whatever shit she wants. And I know Mpilo won't agree to buy her a house and you heard what he said last night. So it will all be up to

Mazana if she wants to stay here with us or go back to the villages where people don't have lives they spend their days turning with the sun abomahlalela” Nonkolosi says lifting her flute. I shake my head.

“Food is ready” Lenah says stepping into the dining area followed by Enhle & Mazana. They put the food on the table and sit down. Uncle Vic says a short prayer and we start dishing up for ourselves.

“So Mazana how old are you?” I ask dishing up for myself.

“32 years old” she responds her hand settling on my lap. Guess the first time wasn't a mistake.

I clear my throat. “Can we try keeping your hands to yourselves? You are making some of us uncomfortable please not in a bad way” I say looking at everyone Mazana doesn't bother removing her hand instead he rubs my jeans.

“What are you talking about?” Belinda asks but I ignore her question and stare at Enhle who first

looks confused I point using Mazana with my eyes and she opens her eyes upon realization.

She clears her throat. “Mazana can I please talk to you for a second?”

Nonkolosi chuckles. “Farmgirl here really wants to meet her underground squad before she reaches 33 she doesn't care about her life at all Enhle talk to her fast and I just concluded that I don't like her at all.”

“Troublesome already?” Lenah asks.

“Very much so” I respond to her.

“Get your ass off that chair Mazana now! Enhle I will take care of this relax” Lenah orders Mazana and she quickly stands shaking then steps around the table.

“Are we missing something here?” Uncle Vic asks.

“Nothing uncle it's just ladies' drama” I respond to him.

“But it seems like it involves you too” he says.

“Don't worry uncle” I tell him and he nods. We continue eating.

Lenah & Mazana comes back. You can see that she has been crying I wonder what did Lenah say to her but whatever she said I hope it settled in her mind and she will know better than to step her boundaries. Not only will my father punish her but he will punish me too and badly for that matter. Old as I am my father will still whip my ass.

“What did you do to Mazana Lenah?” Belinda asks.

“Nothing. Finish up your train will be leaving soon I

just lost my appetite excuse me” she stands from her chair and leaves our presence.

“Mine too” Nonkolosi says standing too.

“Same here and you too Mazana” Enhle says standing too.

“Bu—”

“No you just lost your appetite too asambe” Enhle cuts her mid-sentence. Mazana stands from her chair wiping tears.

“I will go to Mpilo's office and talk to him you can't bully Mazana!” Belinda says banging the table.

Enhle chuckles. “While at it tell him to tell her she must keep her hands to herself and stop touching things that have nothing to do with her excuse us!” She pulls Mazana by the hand and they walk away.

I shake my head. "I think bringing Mazana here was a big mistake Mama. A big one" I tell her.

"If only I knew that things were going to turn out this way I wouldn't have brought her here but she pleaded with me saying that she wants to be near her husband" she closes her eyes. "And now it's too late to mend everything she won't leave with us dear Lord I place everything in your hands." I shrug and continue eating.

Mazana is not as innocent as she looks the
Khuzwayo's wives will drive Mpilo crazy but at least
he will handle them and for the first time in like
forever there'll be more quarrels than it ever was. I
don't wish to be Mpilo stress k'phela.

★»★«

PATRICIA

I just got off the phone with Nomzamo's manager he told me that Nomzamo resigned without any reason and they can't reach her as they are busy trying to call her. This is so unlike my daughter Nomzamo would never resign without a valid

reason she loved her job so much and she always looked forward to going to work daily she used to stress when she was off now her resigning abruptly and via SMS it's alarming honestly. And as her mother I can't just sit around and not do anything I need to find out what's wrong and I tried calling her and her phone goes straight to voicemail.

Something is definitely off. My husband is at work and taking a taxi will waste my time as it hoots street to street but I have no choice I must get to my daughter sighs.

I take my bag and step out of the house locking the door after me well living right across the main road has its perks because immediately I close the gate the taxi is already waiting for me. I climb in the taxi...

★»★«

NOMZAMO

I wish I can shout and tell the person who's knocking that I'm in the lounge but I'm tied in a chair naked. Cloth inserted in my mouth and covered with a tape preventing me from screaming...

“Zamo!” My Mom calls out knocking at the door.
“Zamo are you in there my baby?” She asks. I
attempt screaming but it's useless because she
won't hear me. A fresh wave of tears graces my face
again.

Lihle tied me here on this chair after he raped me
and left me here and he's been gone ever since to
buy groceries. This is not life at all. The knock
subsides and it eventually stops my Mom left. I
close my eyes and drop my head. Tears dropping on
the carpet...

INSERT 5

★Inser

ENHLE

Mazana is busy filling the river of Jordan after we reprimanded her and it's quite obvious that she's only here to cause trouble and she got married to Mpilo for a reason. She didn't get married to him because she wants to fulfill her duties as his wife

but she married him because of something else. I still don't understand why is she trying to show interest in Mpendulo and when Lenah asks her she denies touching Mpendulo inappropriately and if she didn't touch him somehow then why is she crying? Pfttt she thinks that we are stupid just like her. Anyway Belinda and her gang left a few minutes ago

“I'm sorry” she says playing with her fingers.

“For what?” Nonkolosi asks her voice laced with annoyance. “For trying to seduce your husband's son? Or for the fact that he called you out? Do you

have any flipping idea what Mpilo will do to the both of you if he finds out?" She shakes her head. "He will kill you then kill your family and Mpendulo will just get a minor punishment like being disowned for good."

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"Why the hell did you agree to marry Mpilo? It's quite obvious that you married him for a reason and don't tell me that you married him because of financial stability. Who sent you here?" I ask her I'm looking out the window.

“No one sent me. I-I agreed to be Mpilo's wife because” she sniffs and wipes her tears. “Because I want to bear him a son and he'll take me back to school to finish my studies nothing else.”

“So instead of focusing on what you are exactly here for you decided to be all touchy touchy with your husband's son? You now want to sleep with your husband's son? Aren't you a little slut?” I ask her.

“I'm sorry.”

I shake my head. “This better be the last time we have this conversation and Mpendulo is in a happy relationship with his girlfriend so don't try and mess up things.”

“And just so you know I officially don't like you. I hate girls who act like horny bitches and you are that girl. I'm sure this pretending to be a respectful Zulu wife is debilitating. Be you sis. Excuse me I need to bathe.” Nonkolosi says walking towards the door. “So are we going out today? I'm bored I need to unwind I had a stressful morning.”

“If we go out what about her?” Lenah asks standing from the couch.

“Her damnit. Let's just call Phathu and she'll sort her out fast and we will have to go to Mandy's boutique and buy her a new wardrobe. Since she's your size Nonkolosi you can lend her one of your dresses” I say.

“What? Lend who my dress? I ain't doing that.”

“So you are fine with her coming with us looking like this?” I ask. She sighs and rolls her eyes. “And I know how you detest people who wear as if like they are going to do laundry but with her it's worse because she looks lik—”

“Fine. I'll lend her one of my dresses but she better not ruin it. Or else hhe” she says stepping out of the lounge.

“Go and take a bath I'll call Phathu” Lenah says stepping out of the lounge too.

Mazana gets up from the chair and walks to her bedroom. I shake my head following after her...



Mazana now looks like a Khuzwayo housewife. Phathu really transformed her into a slay Queen of some sort she rocks. Her high cheek bones are very clear and the make-up is showing her true self her hair has been straightened and I must say that she looks more like Nonkolosi now in fact they look like sisters but Nonkolosi still doesn't like her.

“How are you finding your new look?” Lenah asks Mazana as we step inside Recee's restaurant after the shopping we did.

The men have been staring at us licentious as we paraded the mall wishing we were theirs but hey they can't afford 4 wives who love eat & breath fashion like Mpilo do. Mpilo is a man amongst man and a lot of women are very envious of our lives they wish that they can swap places with us.

“I love it! I'm completely in love with this new look I barely recognize myself. Thank you guys” she says cheerfully and Nonkolosi yawns. Guess Nonkolosi officially hates her but I hope her hating on Mazana won't put us in an awkward situation or make us choose between the two of them.

“I'm glad that you do like it Mpilo will go crazy over you he will be very impressed. Now all that we need to do is to perfect your walk then mission accomplished” I tell her.

“I'd love that. My friends back in the village will be shocked when they see me looking like this I doubt they'll even recognize me” she says.

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“You have friends?” Lenah asks her.

“Yes I have friends.”

“Well from now on moving forward consider us as your friends. Your old friends are dead & buried you will no longer be keeping in contact with them you better get yourself a new sim card hhayi you have a new phone mus you are going to use those numbers and the only person you will call are your family members” Lenah tells her.

“What? But why? I can't live without my friends.”

“You will learn to sweetheart we've all learned and you are lucky because we are the telling you. Enhle had no one to tell her all the rules except for Mpilo who wasn't really kind when telling her. And you can only call your family members 5 times a month the call must not be more than 10 minutes long” I say.

“What the actual fuck? I promised my mother to call her twice daily. She will be so disappointed when I don't live up to my promises.”

“She will understand that you are now a married woman and you do things according to the Khuzwayo's orders” I tell her.

“Why such rules? That's not fair!” She protests.

“Why don't you ask him yourself?” Nonkolosi questions her.

“I will when I get time to be with him.”

“Best of luck” Nonkolosi says skimming the menu. “I think I'm ready to order” she says settling the menu back down.

“Nonkolosi. Do you maybe have a problem with me?” Mazana asks her.

“Problem with you? Nah I just don't like you and I have no idea why but I really don't like you. No hard feelings okay?”

“Wow.” Is all Mazana says.

“This better not cause a chasm between us because we can't afford to have Mpilo barking in our ears you better try pretending as if you guys get along very well” Lenah says.

“Okay. I'm ready to order too” I say scanning my eyes around the restaurant looking for the waitress that will be serving us and I can't spot her. So I call the nearby waiter time is not money.



NOMZAMO

Lihle is back and as promised he brought the grocery but there's only one problem; he didn't come alone he came with some girl who she introduced to me as his girlfriend of course it's her girlfriend her perfume is very familiar in my nostrils. Oh wait soon-to-be wife and there's a huge diamond stone in her finger better than mine even. The woman is already claiming my house and I'm scheduled to sleep in the guest bedroom while the supposed fiancé takes the main bedroom. It's her effrontery for me it's unmatched. She literally brought her whole closet along and my clothes were thrown precipitously on the floor by my husband and now here I am preparing lunch for them my body is still in pain my eyes are still swollen. This girl better looks at me and takes notes of what Lihle will do to her once he's fed up with her once upon a time I was clingy like her but look at me now.

“Make it snappy woman” she says snapping her fingers at me. “We are hungry and while at it you can start with dinner I want steak yellow rice green salad & make sure you put too much salad dressing and my food must not contain too much fat got it?” I don't respond to her. I hiss when her hand comes in contact with my back she hit me unbelievable. “Did you hear me?” She asks pulling me by my braids.

“She heard you leave her to finish making food for us. Let's go and cuddle” Lihle says appearing from the lounge.

“Okay baby I will leave her but she better perfect my meal” she says clicking her tongue.

Tears stream down my cheeks I wipe them with the back of my hand. An opportunity will present itself and I will escape one way or the other even if is at night but I will run away I can't keep on living like this. Lihle doesn't see me he doesn't respect me anymore bringing a woman in my presence was the final nail to my coffin. I'm just grateful that I'll longer no be sleeping with because sis here seems like the covetous type my stomach churns when I think of the fact that he forced himself on me brown. Wh- what if he gave me a certain disease? I mean it's quite clear that they are fucking each

other brown no plastic used none. Fuck it Lihle can't do me like this. I laugh as more tears stream down my face shit!

I tighten my grip on the knife I can always go in there and impale the both of them and leave them to die but I'm not courageous like that I'm a coward. I get done preparing their food toasted bread with sausages tomatoes bacon and 100% orange juice as they requested. I close my eyes and say a 5 seconds prayer I pick up the tray and head to the lounge breathing in & out.

“Here's your food” I place the tray on top of the

table

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and quickly turn on my heels leaving them to eat. I take my food and sit down switching on the kettle next to me on top of the cupboard as my mind drifts to a land of thoughts.

“Nomzamo!” Mira shouts my name. “Come here right the fuck about now.”

“I'm eating.”

“I don't give a damn just get here!” Lihle better tells her about the “do not disturb rule” when one is eating.

A knock comes through at the door good shot. I disembark from the chair and attend to it this could be my break free to freedom. Even though the person won't be able to help me out since Lihle

locked the door but I hope that he/she will go and find me help when they see the state I'm in. But to my disappointment I find his friend Lorry who's not a fan of me I have no idea why. He's with some young girl young enough to be her younger sister they have a cooler box with them.

“Ek'se call Lihle for me” he orders me. I shake my head and close the door in his face. I sit back on my chair and continue eating. He knocks again...

“Why didn't you get the door?” Lihle asks attending the door I don't respond to him because he might get indignant by my answer. I just focus on my food

that I no longer feel like eating. “Welcome man” he says opening the door.

“Thanks man but I don't understand why did your wife here bang the door on our faces.”

“She did what?”

“She closed the door on our faces after I've asked if you around” he tells her.

“She was just being bitchy” the young girl says.
“What did you even see in her? Anyway is Mira around?” She asks already walking towards the lounge.

“Go to the lounge man I'll be with you shortly.
Nomzamo we need to talk follow me to your
bedroom” he says and disappears out of sight.

I disembark from the chair and follow after him without looking at the lounge. I know that with his friends & girlfriend around he will not lay a hand on me. Or maybe he will after all these people seem not to care about anything except themselves. A slap sends me straight to the wall immediately I step inside the guestroom.

“Why the hell did you shut the door in his face?” Rage fills his eyes as he asks me this. My hand is on my cheek. “Answer me damnit!” He roars hitting the wall with his fist.

“I-I didn't.”

“Lorry would never lie to me. Don't you ever get tired of embarrassing me? You are fucking embarrassing me acting like a college slut!” He paces up & down the bedroom. “Tell me what to do with you?” He asks staring at me.

“No-nothing.”

“Nothing?” He laughs. “I can't afford the liberty of

not doing nothing to you you will disrespect me. You deserve to be punished you are really an ungrateful spoilt brat!” I yelp as I earn myself a punch on my nose. “You will stay here in this room until they leave don't come out. In fact I will lock you in here” he steps out of the room locking the door.

I hurl myself on top of the bed and bawl on the pillow. Why me Lord? “

What did I to deserve all this torture? Kanty wena Nkosi uphendula abanjani? Why did you forsake me Father? Just give me the direction to take I can't live

like this anymore. It hurts it cuts deep. I'm wounded. Please help me God. Free me from this torture that my husband is subjecting me to. Touch his heart I'm sure there's some good left in it save me God and I promise to go to church every Sunday. Whatever it is that I did to you I'm sorry. But please just help me and may I leave this marriage still intact and not in a coffin. Thank you Jesus. It is done Amen.”

I bury myself in the pillow and continue crying. Maybe sleeping will do let me just drug myself to sleep maybe I will wake up better because all of this is bullshit. I sit upright and open the chest of drawers and take out the pills there's a bottle of water on top of the bed stand. Sighs I throw in 6 pills then down them down with some water and get inside the blanket I close my eyes allowing sleep

to invade my space...



MPENDULO

I have no plans it's not as if like I always have them but I do have a gang that I chill with every now & then we are not best of friends though. I don't even have a best friend but they are a great bunch of "boys just want to have fun." And Khutso texted me

saying that she will be back late as if that's something new she said I must not expect her early and if I cook I should cook for myself. She's really impossible her behavior is not the same. Anyway yazi I'm sitting here wondering what Mazana's mission is I don't trust her something is unsettling with her. Much as she agreed to marry my father to bear him an heir in exchange for a good life I still think there's more that she came here for. And that more involves me too somehow but I don't know how. Yet she looks very familiar it's like I know her from somewhere I just don't remember from where though but it's definitely back in the village. I shrug.

My phone rings I stare at the screen and it's Pride one of the gents I drink with I wonder why is he calling me because he knows that I don't have

money to contribute towards the bhev. You only drink when you've contributed something. I answer anyway maybe ngingavuka nga 2.

“Sho.”

“Man where are you?”

“I'm at my place man what's up?”

“You at your place on a Saturday evening?”

“Yeah man I have no plans.”

“Le me plug you in you can't be bored while I'm here. You are my dawg I can never abandon you one day the sun will shine on you. So get dressed and I'll be there in 5 minutes be quick because I just turned on your street.”

“I'm ready.”

“Sharp” he hangs up. Some plug at least I won't be bored here in this lonely house.

Let me go and fafa some Cologne to smell nice. This will be my first in a year drinking without contributing anything I can do with this kind of life of drinking for free. I take one slice of bread and smear it with a very thick spread of Rama the aim is to drink and not get drunk plus it will prevent me from puking not that I do puke though. A blare of a hooter makes me step out of my bedroom after

taking one last look at myself. I jump the gate and step inside Pride's Gti.

“Ek'se man” we do our signature greeting.

“Fida my bruh?” He asks.

“Grand you?”

“Same here. Hope the madam is not mad that I snatched you from her.”

“Khululeka my bra she's not around. Anyway where are we going?” I ask him connecting my phone to the aux.

“To some house party in some hood then later on we head to any club that we feel like hitting.”

“I see. So the gents won't mind me being there?”

“They won't we discussed it first and they agreed since we understand your situation. So you will party with us without contributing anything until you get a job. How is job hunting going anyway?”

“Thanks man you guys are the greatest. And job hunting is still a nightmare but I did go and deliver my CV at the firms.”

“N & T Logistics company?”

“Yeah that company. I pray that I become one of the candidates I really need this job and maybe my girlfriend will not see me as a failure.”

“Women. And don't worry the job is yours. Nelson is my brother I'll talk to him and he will make things happen for you real fast. Don't despair khululeka.”

“For real man?” He nods. “Thank you so much man I

owe you big time.”

“Stressless.” God is finally coming through for me after years of not working. And I guess it's true when they say ‘having connections in South Africa will take you far’ I got to witness that first-hand today.

We are in Nomzamo's hood too bad I don't know where she stays I would have gone to her house later on and buy myself some scones just to see her face even if it's for 3 seconds. And if everything goes well in terms of me getting the job then she will be the first person I share the news with she helped

me. I will thank her I must thank her.

Pride brings the car to halt in some double-story house there are few cars parked here but the yard is packed. The wall is not that tall it's normal. We step out of the car and Nana thula is blasting out in the speakers I wonder how the neighbors feel about all this noise because if it was in my hood they would've long called the police to come and end the party guess neighborhoods are different.

We get inside the yard and Pride greets people as we head to where the gents are sitting he is well known here even the ladies are greeting him in a

fliterous way how cute. The ladies went all out with their not fully dressed outfits you can tell that they were inspired by Zodwa wabantu and the gents tables are filled with alcohol mostly whiskies & cognacs ciders are for the huns of course. A girl stands in front of me blocking me from going further she smiles at me batting her lashes.

“Hey handsome” she greets trying to kiss me but I duck.

“I'm taken sorry” I push past her and continue my journey. This ain't a mansion so it will be easy for me to find where Pride and the gents are. I find

them at the back of the house they the only sitting here with their huns of course. Anyway it's just 6 best friends and I'm the spare wheel in this friendship of theirs but I'm not complaining as long as I will drink and head back home...

“Jitas” they nod acknowledging my greeting.

“Ek'se man you made it” Given says as I sit next to him.

“I made it man. Thanks for the invite ngiyalidla I appreciate it too much.”

“Stress neks you are our man answer. We are in this together” he hands me a bottle of Corona.

“Thanks” I take the first sip of the Corona and my throat jumps with excitement. It's about damn time! Tonight I want to have the best night...

INSERT 6

NOMZAMO

I'm woken up by someone splashing me with cold water. The past 3 weeks have been hell for me and I only eat twice each week two slices of rye bread with sugar water that is yet I cook & clean daily and yesterday I did their laundry. I didn't do mine because I was told that I will waste "powder soap" mxm as if I have too many clothes. And I've lost a lot of weight but hey there's nothing I can do about it I just have to be patient and wait for him to let his

guard down plus I overheard them talking about going out tonight I will have to find a way to leave this house. And tonight is the night.

“Wake up! This is not a hotel!” Amara yells at me. “Breakfast should've been ready 10 minutes ago you are starting to become too comfortable for your own liking. You are a maid here not a wife know your place. Now move it” she clicks her tongue and walks away but turns back before she can step out of my room. “I don't want to come back here because if I do I'll come along with hot water and I'll burn your skinny ass” she clicks her tongue again and finally steps out of the room.

Mxm voetsek! I look at the time on the big obsolete watch mounted on the wall that I got in some of the things that we no longer used and it's just after 06:05. I disembark from the bed and hurry to the bathroom to rinse my face and brush my teeth before spitting fire dragon comes back. Their laughter exacerbates my already fucked up situation as I pass the lounge I already know what their breakfast meal contains. In fact I know all their morning to supper routine; Amara will come and see if I haven't hidden food for myself checked if I switched off the stove. And if that's not enough they lock the fridge and cupboards when they leave for work and they will come back late then yell at me for not cooking forgetting that they locked everything. I will ignore them and start cooking immediately they take out what they want to eat that night. Argh. I wonder if spitting fire dragon knows how to cook.

I get done with their breakfast and take it to them I set it on the table then I sit down. Furthermore I'm forced to watch them eat and wipe their mouths once they're done eating Lihle's orders. It makes me insane yes but I get beaten once I say something Lihle doesn't agree with. So I prefer keeping my mouth shut and do as they tell me and I'm glad to say that it's been 2 weeks since Lihle laid his hand on me I've learned to tame my tongue and speak when spoken to and that pleases the mathafacka with his dragon of course who always attempts on making my life arduous but ke “silence” is the best answer.

“So.” Amara begins. “Lihle & I will be going on a short trip in Zimbali and we are leaving this evening we will only be back Sunday late. With that said you will be locked up here for the whole weekend with no food. But water should keep you going until we come back and don't break anything because you don't have money to replace these things am I making myself clear?” Amara tells me already behaving like a wife hopefully Lihle's parents will welcome her with warm hands just like they did with me plus they are trying for a baby.

But now a plan is forming in my head and I better act on it before I miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

“Did you hear what I said?” She asks slapping my cheek plus I'm sitting next to her. I nod. “I will come back later to fetch the bags.”

“Yes I did. Please excuse me I need to go to the bathroom.”

“Go before you mess yourself and you stink by the way” she says and Lihle laughs.

“I did tell you that her pussy smell like rotten fish and you thought I was lying but I was not. You can smell her from a distance” Lihle says laughing. I stand ignoring them. We will see who will have the last laugh.

I get to my room and head to my closet I have tons of pills here and I know exactly which one to use on spitting fire dragon when I prepare her road coffee. She will regret ever messing with me and she will most definitely not have a good day. Anyways if I leave here going home is not an option because that's the first place he will look for me. Yet again I have no family members to go to nearby they all stay far away. Going to them requires me to use trains or buses because taking 3 taxis is a lot of money. So I will have to look for a place to stay for a

time being until the dust settles then I will go back home and I will need a new phone to keep in contact with my parents. I snap out of my thoughts and step out of my room when I hear my name being called I don't want her coming here and drag me out.

“My coffee Zamo. I don't have the whole day!”
Amara really loves shouting I don't understand how Lihle handles her she's a screamer too in bed or maybe she's pretending or maybe she's trying to piss me off. Shame if only she knew that I don't care about them.

“Coming now!” I close the flask and hurry to the lounge to hand her her coffee. “Here you go madam.”

“Thanks. Off to your room now.”

“Have a good day.” I turn on my heels and walk back to my bedroom but Lihle puts out his leg since he was in the bathroom. I trip and fall hitting the door of my bedroom with my forehead. He laughs and kicks me on my ribs as he heads out. Fuck.

I start throwing my clothes in my huge luggage without even folding them when I hear the car engine roaring to life. Phew I pray that my plan succeeds I can't keep on living like this anymore I've had enough of the abuse! Enough! At least I have money to see me until 5 months if not 6. I really hate this life of mine but I'm breaking free from it. Fuck this! I do a quick double-check to see if I didn't leave anything behind and luckily for me I took everything that I will need. And I decided to take all my clothes you don't know what Amara might do to them this woman has some dark aura hovering around her. Despite all the shit that's going on I still value my life I don't want to die young.



MPENDULO

I'm proud to announce that I'm now an

environmental officer a position that I didn't even apply for but because of having friends with connections I've secured it. I've been working here for 2 weeks now and I must say that I enjoy it here and my colleagues are very welcoming or maybe they were told to be welcoming to me but whatever the case may be I'm grateful for the opportunity granted. Unfortunately I couldn't share the news with Nomzamo since she was not at her spot and Sean said it's been almost a month he last saw her but he does see her husband. Maybe she has gone to her parents' house who knows.

Khutso is not really happy with the job that I do she's comparing me to my peers who earn R30k + in a month and drive expensive sports cars living in mansions. I thought that she was going to be happy

that I'm finally I'm working something of which she has been forcing me to do but still she's not happy. She was supposed to be excited knowing that I will be the one paying all the bills and buy groceries take her out to restaurants and picnics but hey. Sis is just being impossible and again I earn more than her but she still ain't satisfied I don't know how to please her anymore and she's been very distant lately. I even thought that she was pregnant at some point but all results came back negative. Women and their tiring endless drama.

Anyway Today is Friday and I've just knocked off from work. And I was supposed to meet up with the gents but they bailed out since they are going to Paris for a 3 weeks vacation. The funny thing is that they decided 5 hours ago that they are flying talk

about people who never plan ahead but make same time decisions and unfortunately for me I've just started with work so I can't really leave with them but hopefully I will next time. So I guess I will have to go to Sean's house and chill with him because Khutso already has plans with her friends sighs. My phone rings and it's Enhle I'm sure this has to do with my dad because the only time Enhle calls me is when Mpilo wants her to pass a message to me...

“Enhle.”

“Hi Mpendulo. Your father is inviting for a braai this evening and tomorrow we will be hosting brunch

welcoming Mazana to the Khuzwayo's."

"I can't come I'll be working."

"Working? Where are you working and for how long?" She asks sounding surprised.

"In some firm and it's been 2 weeks."

“Why didn't you tell us Mpendulo?”

“I was waiting for the right time.”

“And when is the right time?”

“After 3 months. I needed to settle first before announcing it to everyone.”

“Hmmm so are you earning more than R50k a month?”

“No. I earn R5k+ monthly.” There's no way in hell I'm telling her my salary.

She laughs. “What? That's a joke you might as well quit after your first pay because you are clearly volunteering. I mean your salary is my one day hair and nails spending limit it's a mere change for me. But then again you've always settled for less it's

nothing new” she says snorting. “Some girls are really suffering. Anyway will you be joining us tomorrow later then after you've knocked off?”

“I'll see. I'm not promising anything.”

“Even if you don't come but do tell Khutso to come we miss her a lot.”

“Unfortunately she has plans with her friends but try calling her maybe she will come with her friends

later on. I've got to go now bye.”

“Bye.” She hangs up. I laugh. Yeah neh women.

I pack my files and step out of my office. Everyone has already gone home. Well except for some contractors. Walking to the bus stop is more of an exercise for me plus I get to think clearly without any disturbance. I get to the bus stop and I find a couple of workers and students waiting.

“Mpendulo right?” Asks this other nerdy dude from work standing beside me.

“Yeah and you are?”

“Morgan.” He extends his hand for me to shake.

Extending mine. “Good to meet you Morgan” I say retracting my hand from his.

“Likewise. I thought you were going to join the guys from work at the Diewel shisanyama.”

“Nah I'm not used to any of them. They are just colleagues nothing more.” He nods. “And you? Why aren't you joining them?”

“I don't drink alcohol.”

“A rare man you are.”

“Yeah” he says and silence befalls us. I can see the bus approaching. “So would you like to go out on a date with me sometimes?” He asks and I slowly turn to look at him then laugh.

“You what?” I continue laughing.

“Date with me?”

“Nah I'm not interested man but thanks for the invitation” I clasp his shoulder. “Have a great weekend yeah?”

He forces a smile. “You too.” I nod as I get on the bus. I watch him out the window as he walks towards his car I shake my head.

I get home and I bump into Khutso at the door

clearly on her way out but what puzzles me is that she has a weekend bag with her and here I was thinking that she's going out with friends just tonight then tomorrow we will spend the day together. Then this? I just pass her without any questions and head straight to our bedroom.

“Urhmm I'm leaving for the weekend” she says leaning against the door frame I didn't even realize that she was following me.

“Okay have fun I will see you when you come back.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah I'm sure” I tell her stripping off my clothes I need to take a bath then I will go to Sean's place later on. I grab my towel wrapping it around my waist. All this while she's looking at me.

“I can always cancel my plans” she puts her bag on the floor.

“Nah I also have plans. I'm going to my father's house there's some braai there and I'll probably be there for the rest of the weekend” I shrug.

“I'm coming with you let me text my friends and tell them that I'm no longer coming.”

“Listen you don't have to cancel your trip because of me Khutso.”

“No no baby I'm not canceling it because of you. I want to go with you to your home I miss the ladies and I want to meet the new wife.”

“Oh if you say so. Let me go and bathe then” I step out of the bedroom and head to the bathroom. I chuckle. Yah neh life. So she only decided to stay because I didn't question her or maybe she thinks that I'm seeing someone that's why I don't care about her trip with friends? Haha what a joke!

I will have to text Enhle and tell her that we are coming. Obviously she will send one of the drivers to come and fetch us.

★»★«

ENHLE

This weekend we are not touching any pots Mpilo hired chefs for the weekend. We are doing a welcoming ceremony for Mazana. The rest of the families will get here tomorrow morning but those who like things are already here suffocating us with their oil-smelling aprons and goat-smelling dresses. It's going to be a long weekend ever and the noise that they are making is annoying at least we are in Nonkolosi's bedroom and it's a little far from all the noise. Mpilo is outside with the uncles drinking African beer he brought Ice Tropez for us we don't drink these cheap beverages uh uh we are women of dignity after all. I can never stop bragging about the fact I'm married to a wealthy man and I don't lack anything.

“I still can't believe that Mpendulo settled for a job that pays him R5k a month?” Mazana says. “Why didn't he asks his father to loan him money so that he can start a business or something?”

“Starting a business? You mean as in customers coming to him to buy something? Nah that's just bad too. What he needs to do is to join his father in the family company that's it. Do you know how annoying it is to deal with people who are broke and can't pay you back your money when you want it? I've been there got the memo and trust me it's not worth it” I tell her.

“The worst part he's a male and women hate broke men but ke he has Khutso. That girl is one patient motherfucker it can never be me. I mean I don't even glance at broke men even their greetings make my skin crawl. People should stay in their lanes just like some of the people here and because of their presence I bathed thrice since they got here God. I wonder how many times am I going to bathe tomorrow” Nonkolosi says. Lenah laughs.

“Please! These people are really annoying. Anyway Mpendulo is coming and he's coming with Khutso” I tell them.

“My favorite girl is coming how I missed that crazy ass” Nonkolosi says.

“Talk about a whole vibe” Lenah says.

“Who's Khutso?” Mazana asks.

“Mpendulo's long-term girlfriend who kicks little

girls ass” Nonkolosi answers her.

They still don't see eye to eye but Mazana doesn't have a problem Nonkoliso is the one who has a problem with Mazana shame. Mpilo doesn't even know that two of his wives don't get along but I don't blame him because they are good pretenders when he's around.

“Was there a need for you to mention that ‘she kicks ass?’” Mazana asks.

“Yes there was a need to let girls with loose panties know that Khutso doesn't play when it comes to Mpendulo get that in your head bitch” Nonkolosi responds to her rolling her eyes.

“You are so childish Nonkolosi!”

“It's better than being a loose whore who couldn't even wait a day to seduce her husband's son!”
Nonkolosi spits back.

“Enough!” I reprimand them. “We have visitors for Christ's sake let's behave like normal people and not show these people that we know how to hurt each other with words damnit maarn. Don't dare embarrass Mpilo in front of our guests and—” the door flies open and Khutso steps in with a bottle of champagne in her hand cutting me mid-sentence.

“Bitches!” She screams and Nonkolosi is the first one to throw herself on her making her to almost fall. She laughs. “Wow someone is happy to see me.”

“We all are but you know how fast Nonkolosi reacts” I tell her and she laughs breaking the hug with Nonkolosi.

“I know” she hugs me then moves to Lenah and finally comes to a halt on Mazana. “And you must be Mazana the additional wife to the Khuzwayo household. Lovely meeting you and I'm Khutso.”

“Whore.” Nonkolosi mumbles.

“Lovely meeting you Khutso” she doesn't even spare her a smile.

“Great” Khutso says yanking her hand from Mazana's grip. Lenah & I exchange looks. “So what are you ladies up to apart from drinking wine?” She asks sitting on the carpet looking at all 4 of us but her gaze lingers on Mazana. Don't tell me that...

I clear my throat. “We were discussing clothes & hair. Anything to eat?”

“Nah I'm good. Let's continue discussing fashion & hair then.”

“And your boyfriend's salary while at that”
Nonkolosi says jokingly.

She laughs. “I'd rather not he is an embarrassment already. Anyway I found a new shop for bags but the prices there are very steep. Their bags range from R15k — R100k and in different sizes ladies we have a new plug plus not a lot of people know it and of course 95% of women won't afford them but us? Hha we run this game.”

“I'm intrigued already tell me more” Lenah says sitting down. “And show us what we are working with.”

“You know me” she takes out her cellphone.
“Nonkolosi please borrow me your laptop.”

“Sure” Nonkolosi says standing. An interesting weekend it's going to be.

★»★«

NOMZAMO

I hear a car pulling up outside and I quickly sit down since I was pacing up & down and peeping on the window to see if the gate will open any time soon I'm wearing my robe covering the clothes that I'm wearing underneath my bags are hidden behind the couches and I also found my phone I will just have to change sim cards and block him on all social

networks. I hear some rattling of keys and the door opens.

“Yewena Nomzamo!” She yells stepping inside the lounge looking terrible and she smells awful. I wonder how the car smells like. “What di—” she throws her bag on the couch and hurry to the toilet.

I quickly get up from the couch and hurry to where her bag is I open it and search for the keys I find them with a bunch of other keys. I grab her purse too then I take my bags and hurry out of the house. Bitch.

“Nomzamo bring me a tissue. There's no tissue in here” she yells.

I laugh. “So long motherfucker!”

“What the h—” I don't hear what she says anymore as I'm already out of the yard. My bags are pretty heavy but at least I'm just a house away from the main road.

A taxi comes to a halt and I quickly get in. I release a breath as the taxi starts moving a smile breaks out of my lips as the houses from my hood disappear on sight. I blink and tears fall finally I'm free.

INSERT 7

MPENDULO

I'm chilling with my cousin Samke in one of the rooms that we will be sharing and we are drinking our own alcohol. Samke is such a heavy drinker and he doesn't get drunk easily y'all already know the butter trick and there's a cooking oil one too I got both of them from him. And did I mention that he's a fuck boy? I don't think I did but now you know. He changes girls every fucking 3 hours plus he got the looks we all got looks but as you all know some look better than the others. The other cousins of ours aren't here guess they will get here tomorrow morning. I understand why they didn't come today. These women Mpilo married talk too much sies.

“So where's that girlfriend of yours you said you will marry?” I ask him.

“Girlfriend? Marriage? Dude I'm not the committed dude all I do is eat pussy getting attached to these huns is suicide.”

“Not if you love the woman and she loves you back.”

“Msunu ka Love. That shit is a fucking scam. Haven't you done poetry in school?”

“Poetry? What does it have to do with our conversation?” I ask him rising from my seat to fetch a beer. “You want another one?”

“Yeah another one. Anyway the reason I mentioned poetry I don't know why but ke ‘love hurts’. You'd know this quote or whatever fuck they call it if you dated in high school.”

I shake my head. “Nah love doesn't hurt. People hurt you in the name of love leave love out of this

shit rather say; being in a relationship with someone who doesn't love you hurts.”

“Same fucking difference. Otherwise did you see how hot your father's new wife is?”

“Is she? I didn't realize.”

“Dude why are failing to appreciate a beautiful woman apart from Khutso? I mean I can smash your father's wife and with my charm she'll never say no.

She's fucking beautiful and has curves in all the right places man. Why are you not seeing all that? Or maybe you didn't take a look at her properly? Keng mfanaka?”

I chuckle. “Dude appreciate her without dragging me into your nonsense.”

“Are you sure that Khutso didn't put it using a full spoon?”

“Nigga what?”

“You know what I'm talking about man these women do a lot of shit for you to notice and love only them. That's why I purge every now & then.”

I laugh. “Maybe she fed someone else not me.”

“What the fuck man? Are you saying that you share her with another man and you are fine with it? Huh she put in the whole packet mus” he whistles

afterwards.

“I don't know really. My heart is captured by a stranger a stranger that somehow brought luck in my life a stranger I saw once and never saw again yet she resides in my mind in my dreams and in my heart. She's the last thing on my mind when I sleep and the first thing in my mind when I wake up.”

He laughs. “Man you are fucking in love with a whole stranger?” I shrug. “Dude your eyes say it all. I mean you are cheating with this girl on Khutso mentally. Did you at least get her numbers?”

“No.”

“Arhhh man. You are such a flop! I would've gotten her numbers before she can even respond to my greetings. What if she's your soul mate?”

“If she really is my soul mate then we will cross paths again and that's a big IF.”

“You better cross paths soon.”

I laugh. “Maybe we will cross paths when you finally decide to take a wife until then. Hmmm.”

“Guess y'all will never cross paths.” We both laugh and the door flies open. Mazana steps inside hasn't she heard of knocking?

“We are done dishing up. Shall I bring you guys food?” She asks staring at me.

“No I'm good. In fact tell Khutso to personally bring me mine” I tell her not flinching from her uncomfortable stare.

She shifts her gaze from me and rests it on Samke who's practically drooling. “Oh I will do. And you Samke?”

“You can bring mine. You can also feed me I don't really mind” he says winking at Mazana and Mazana blushes.

I punch him on the shoulder. “Dude don't. Mpilo will slaughter you alive” I warn him.

“Relax dude it's just harmless flirting” he says with a smirk plastering on his face.

“Nothing is never harmless with you. I know you

Samke better than you know yourself. Mazana you can take your leave.”

“Of course yes. I'll tell Khutso to bring your meal” she leaves us.

“Dude don't you ever flirt with Mpilo's wives like ever. You know how dangerous he is especially when it comes to his wives. They are his precious jewels don't piss him off. And stay away from Mazana she's bad news.”

“Fuck Mpendulo! I'm a grown man for fucks sake!”

“Yes. A grown man that thinks with his dick and not with his head damnit Samke. Get it together just this once.”

“Fine I'll behave. But she better not come here one more time because I will grab her rip her clothes apart and throw her on that fucking bed fuck her until my dick goes numb inside her! Look at how erect my dick is? Man she's doing things to me. Fuck” he disarrays his hair.

“On second thoughts; let me rather go and fetch the food. Go and take a shower or something” I stand and walk out of the room shaking my head.

I bump into Mazana & Khutso in the hallway with two plates in their hands.

“Hey baby. We were just bringing your food where are you going?” She says kissing my cheek.

“Actually I was going to fetch the food but now that you are here you can give it to me.”

“Really?”

“Yes thank you though.”

“Oh okay then” they both give the plates. I thank

them and turn on my heels without looking back.

Samke's groan is the first thing that is heard as I approach the door this guy. Imagine if there were people in these other rooms? Mxm. I push the door open and step inside then place the food on top of the cooler box. And my mind drives itself to the thoughts of Nomzamo I hope by Monday she will be at her spot I pray to find her there then share the news with her. I've never been obsessed over a woman before like I am with Nomzamo it's so weird but I'm still drawn to her even though I know very well that she's married. This is messed up. You know it wouldn't be a bad thing if I never see her again maybe I will forget about her as time goes by.

★»★«

LIHLE

“How did she get away Amara?” I got here as soon as Amara called me and told me that Nomzamo ran away and she packed all of her shit and locked her inside the house. I don't understand why was she careless with her bag by leaving it where Nomzamo is! Fuck it I'm pissed off.

“I had to rush to the toilet I didn't think that she was going to go through my bag and steal the keys together with my purse. Besides she was wearing her robe just like any other normal day she showed no signs of someone wanting to run away if I knew I wouldn't have left my bag carelessly.”

“So having a running tummy all day out of nowhere didn't raise any red flags to you?” She shakes her head. “Funny because if it was me I would've known the very first moment I took the first trip to the toilet but then again we are all not designed the same and our thinking aptitudes.”

“Are you saying that I'm stupid?”

“Did I say that you were?”

“You didn't have to but your statement spoke thousands of words indirectly. Anyway do you have any idea where she might be at?”

“I have no idea and I know that she will never go to

her parent's house because she knows that that's the first place I will go to and search for her” I tell her sitting down since I was standing.

“Friends? Family?”

“She doesn't have any friends and her family stays very far. So I have no idea where she could've gone too” I let out a bemused huff.

“Well good riddance to bad rubbish. Now we can

enjoy our own space and have peace of mind.”

“Yeah let's get our bags and proceed with our plans we are not canceling our weekend gateway because of some jealous sorcerer.”

“Wait baby. What if she goes and reports us for treating her badly and abusing her?” She asks sounding worried.

“Relax she won't. She knows what's at stake. Stop

worrying about her let's go and have fun.”

“Alright daddy let's go” she stands from the couch and heads to the bedroom.

“Nomzamo ran away find her for me I will reimburse you greatly.” I press send.

Who does Nomzamo think she is running away from me? Seems like she's forgotten that I'm well-connected I will need to remind her once they

find her. I will need to instill some discipline in her and I shall do so in front of Amara so that she will know to never run away from me no matter what. And no I can't divorce Nomzamo a little part of me probably 3% still loves her and as for the rest I just loathe her plus she doesn't look like the very first time we met physique wise argh. And to tell you the truth I don't regret treating her the way I did she deserved more but because I'm a good guy I decided not to. She should be thankful.

“All set and ready to go.”

“I hope we won't make 50 stops because of your

running tummy.”

She laughs. “We won't. The coke actually helped with minimizing the runny tummy don't worry.”

“Good.” We step out of the house we are going to use my car. She locks the door and the butler as I take our bags into the car. Monday is another day but this weekend is all about fun with our friends and making babies. Amara is 100x of a woman than Nomzamo is. She knows how to make me happy and she never limits herself when it comes to sex unlike that uptight Nomzamo.

“We are doing a convoy?” She asks stepping inside the car.

“Yeah we are.”

“Great then we are.”

“Great then” she buckles up as I roar the engine to

life and I drive out of the yard. Umsebenzi wethu x
Mr. Jazziq and Busta blasts out of the car.

★»★«

NOMZAMO

I get myself checked in in some flat in town it's not that wow but at least it will shelter me and the rent is affordable since I told them that I'll be staying

here for a month or two. My room is not that big and I kind of like it like this plus the room is connected to the toilet. There's a small screen TV on top of the TV stand decoder and a few books on the shelf attached to the TV stand one couch a wall-built wardrobe. Suitable for someone like me oh and there's a landline here I will have to call my parents once I'm done freshening up and tell them where I'm at and the reason why. Finally some peace of mind no one to order me around and no slaving for anyone maybe I will gain some weight again and once I'm strong enough I will claim my life and divorce that monster called Lihle.

See I could've gotten him arrested but it would've been useless because his brother is a commander in our police station and again Lihle is friends with the

cops. My case wouldn't have even made it to court instead I would've been punished for even attempting to open a case for him. And again I will have to tell his parents too about how he treated me and that I want to divorce him I won't listen to them when they tell me that we should go for counseling or something like that because I'm done with their abusive son. I don't want anything linking me to him. I'm done.

I get done packing my clothes and now it's time for a shower then go and buy some food there's a canteen nearby and I heard that it runs 24/7. Guess they aren't scared of being robbed. I settle for my pyjamas plus it's evening already so no one will judge me or anything like that. I take my purse and step out of my room then head to the canteen and

luckily for me it's not packed I fall in line. I wonder if has he already gone to look for me at my parent's house and what was his reaction when he didn't find me I'm sure he searched for me all over the house. Nxa fucktard.

“Can I help you?” This lady asks with so much attitude.

“Yes please. I'd like to buy ¼ chicken & chips and Blue Ribbon brown bread with some coke” I tell her handing her the money.

“Mild or hot?”

“Mild please thank you” I say stepping aside since there are people behind me.

My mind drifts to the handsome stranger I once helped I wonder if he has gotten the job. And if he did then congratulations to him but if not then he must continue job hunting and never give up something will eventually come up. You'll never know when luck will locate you... He is a very

handsome young man but not handsome like Lihle plus he has some belly unlike Lihle who is friends with the gym. I wonder if he has a girlfriend. Of course he has one. They call my order dragging me out of my trance. I hope their food tastes as good as it looks I thank her and leave.

Getting into my room I switch on the TV then make myself comfortable on the carpet and start eating after asking God to bless the food. Damn the chicken and the chips are out of this world too bad I don't eat green vegetables I'm sure this green salad tastes as good as it looks.

I switch on my phone and put in my new sim card. MTN has always been my network provider from the very first time my father brought me my first phone I fucking love it. No stressful network signal on this side we are good. I punch in my mother's number... Argh I forgot that there's a landline here.

“Hello.”

“Mama.”

“Nomzamo? Is that you my baby? Where are you? Are you okay?” She asks all these questions in a hurry.

“Is that Zam-Zam?” My father asks in the background.

“Yes it's her Baba.”

“Put her on the loudspeaker” he tells her.

“Zam-Zam baby. What's going on?”

“Hi Baba. I left Lihle.”

“So instead of him leaving because he found you in the house naked with another man you decided to be the one leaving? How can you embarrass us like this Zam-Zam? This is not how we raised you” he says sounding disappointed. I laugh. What a joke!

“He said that?” I chuckle shaking my head what a liar.

“Yes he said so even his aunt confirmed it.”

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“Aunt? Which aunt is that?”

“I don't know her it was my first time seeing her but she looked really young to be her aunt.”

I laugh. “That's not his aunt. That's his fiancé Amara the one who claimed my house and changed all the rules on the first day. Baba nawe Mama ever since Lihle came back from his vacation he was no longer the same. Lihle was abusing me. He—”

“He was what?” My mother asks in disbelief.

“Abusing me. He raped me until I bled he hit kicked me and did all of those inhumane things that include inflicting pain on someone without pitying me or showing remorse. He even sent my boss a message stating that I resign with immediate effect

at work then he switched off my phone and most probably texted you that we went somewhere” I wipe my tears. “I heard you when you came to the house this other time but I couldn't respond to you because I was tired up in a chair naked after he beat me senselessly and my mouth was gagged I cried out to you but it was all useless because you couldn't even hear me. I was living in fear in my own house a house that we built out of love. Lihle & his fiancé treated me like a maid in my own house depriving me of food I was surviving by eating two rye slices and water twice a week yet I did my wifely duties. I've been praying to God day & night to help me and he finally did but he was too late because I was already broken. Mama you should've heard all the insults they spewed my way. Lihle has really changed Baba. He changed I no longer recognized him.” I know that my mother is a crying mess right now because she is friends with tears.

“That son of a b—” my father really hates using inappropriate names. I hear him breathing in & out trying to calm himself down. “I will deal with him. Who does he think he is laying his hand on you? I don't remember your mother and I raising our hands at you but a son of another woman does that to you? That's nonsense. And you better draft divorce papers and send them to him before the sun rises and there will be no let's talk about this no marriage counseling nothing! No man abuses the women they claim they love that's nonsense!” My father says sounding really indignant. “Where are you now?”

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“In some hotel” I respond wiping my tears.

“Come back home. Lihle will not set his foot here I will kill him if he does. Send me the address of where you are at and I will come and fetch you pack all your stuff! You can't stay in a flat when you have a home and you will live rent-free. Save your money.”

“Th-Thank you dad. I will send it right away” I disconnect the call and allow my tears to fall freely.

I'll forever be grateful for my parents I love them and I'm just glad that they believed me. I chuckle when I think that Lihle introduced Amara as his aunt I wonder how did that make Amara feel because wow it can never be me shame. Anyway let me start packing. I'd probably not speak to him until I'm relaxed. Now how is he going to introduce him to his parent? Nah I don't care how he introduces her they don't matter to me. Anyway I will have to notify the landlord that I'll be leaving so that he will refund me my money not all of it though he stays here in another house. I stand from the carpet and head to the closet after sending my father the hotel address.

The door opens after I knocked for almost two

minutes and was about to leave. The landlord is naked and his dick is still erect guess I disturbed him as it looks like he was busy.

“I'm sorry to bother you but I just wanted to notify you that I'll no longer be staying here I'm going home.”

“Then go.”

“And since I didn't sleep can I please get my

refund.” He rakes my body and licks his lips as his eyes linger on my lips. Oh hell no. “On second thoughts you can keep it I don't really need it and thank you once again” I turn on my heels to leave but he pulls me back by my robe hoodie almost getting with me inside the house. Uh uh I untie the robe and remove it from my body and take off leaving him with my robe in his hands.

I get to the flat and I'm panting from all the running I did. I don't waste any more time I pick up my bags from the floor and step out of the room. What if he comes here and finishes what he wanted to start? I'm not taking any chances sorry. I hurry out of the yard and luckily my dad's car is already at the gate. He steps out of the car and he comes and helps me with my bags. I hug him for dear life and cry on his

shoulder.

“Shhhh Princess. All is well now let me take you home” he says and helps me inside the car. I wipe my tears and lay my head on the window closing my eyes. Almost...

INSERT 8

ENHLE

05:00 and we are already being woken up by these people banging our doors considering the fact that we only slept very late something of which we are never used to I already dread the long day coming. I usually wake up around 07:00 every day not this nonsense happening right now. I'm sure Nonkolosi is pissed off wherever she is she's used to waking up around 09:00-10:00 sis loves her sleep shame.

Anyway I disembark from the bed grabbing my robe from the chair and head to the bathroom I fill up the bathtub with water as I pour myself a glass of wine. My wines are everywhere I don't have to go to the kitchen or wherever to get one. I strip off my nightdress and get inside the bathtub I lie my head

back closing my eyes.

Looking for clothes to wear is always a mission for me and to think that I have lots of clothes that I've never worn before makes me cringe some of them I only wore once and never again. I don't even know what to do with them but donating them to some orphanage is out of the equation it's not my fault that those people living in orphanages are struggling. I finally settle for a black pencil skirt white shirt and I put on my wedge then throw in some fur coat since the weather it's a little bit chilly. Khutso plaited my hair last night as we were chilling but I add in my fur hat. Satisfied with my look I pour myself another glass of wine and gulp it down one time then step out of the room.

The old women are already cooking outside I wonder what time did they wake up the kitchen is busy. My sister wives are not here guess they aren't done getting dressed and I don't like the way these women are looking at me it's creepy.

“Where are you going?” Aunt Mita asks sizing me up & down.

“Nowhere why?”

“It doesn't look that way to me it looks like you are going somewhere. Anyways aren't you supposed to be helping us together with the other wives?”

“Nah Mpilo hired a catering company to do all the cooking and shit. Our job is to sit down and enjoy the day we are not supposed to touch anything if you have a problem with that take it up with Mpilo and leave us alone” I tell her opening the fridge and taking out last night's beef lasagna.

“Yerr Mpilo akanabafazi uzihlele la” she claps her hands. “Mpilo should've married a woman in her age group not some young women who still get wet dreams and spending his money precipitously. These women don't deserve to be Khuzwayo wives and they are failing to give him babies yet they enjoy his wealth. Talk about futureless women!”

“Stop wasting your time with these disrespectful housewives Mita. It's useless going back & forth with this woman you'll never win. My son deserves better but he's too blinded to even see that these

women aren't good for him they will all learn the hard way. In fact they better pray that nothing happens to Mpilo. Let's get back to cooking before more guests arrive” Belinda says walking away.

“I pity them someday they are going to eat a humble pie they aren't ready” says an old woman whom I don't know and I doubt she's part of the family. “They better brace themselves because the castle will crumble with no hope of being rebuilt. Only time will tell” she says going back to chopping the cabbage.

“Excuse me? And who the hell are you to curse us

like that? So you will be the one who will make sure that this castle crumbles you ancient wrinkled face witch? Yeses I don't know why Belinda brought us witches and you better not leave any herbs of yours if you leave this house. In fact stop cooking all together before you kill us. Go and join the other witches” I yell at her yanking the knife from her hand. Everyone is now looking at us. “Voetsek! Leave my kitchen right now!” I grab her frail hand and pull her outside. The others whisper amongst themselves as I roughly shove her outside and she falls. “Serves you right! I don't want to see you in—” A backhand slap ceases me from talking. I look up to see who slapped me and I freeze.

“How dare you? Why are you treating this woman like she's a witch or something? Do you have any

idea who that woman is and how important she is in this family?" Standing before me asking me these questions looking furious is none other than Mpilo and he slapped me this is the first time him raising a hand on me. I'm shocked guess I went too far. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that there will come a day when Mpilo lays his hand on me.

"I'm sorry" I say my hand on my cheek.

"You are apologising to the wrong person Enhle. And don't you ever talk to any present elders here in that manner again you are embarrassing me" he

hisses.

“And it's all your fault. You've spoiled these women and now they don't want to cook because you've hired a catering company for them you've turned these women into modern wives. They've forgotten all their roots & tradition fix your household Mpilo before it's too late Mam'Mabasa said things are not looking good. Fix your household son” Belinda says and walks away leaving me with Mpilo who looks defeated.

“Gather all the wives and join the other women in cooking I'm canceling the catering company I will still pay them though. The sooner you start behaving like a respectful humble and active wife the sooner these people leave my house because I'm enough of their presence I need my space back. Get going” he tells me and I nod turning on my heels.

I've managed to gather all my sister wives in one room and Khutso too. My cheek is still sore but I won't tell the ladies what transpired between me and Mpilo because they won't believe me because has never been psychical with any of us.

“So why are you here?” Lenah asks.

“Well Mpilo wants us to join the other women in cooking.”

“What? But why? I thought he hired a catering company” Nonkolosi says.

“He did but he canceled them. The elders told him

that they want food cooked by the wives and he also said; the sooner we operate the sooner these people will leave because he's already fed up with their presence. Plus the elders are so sure that we don't have hands let's prove them wrong” I tell them.

“So I wore my new dress for nothing? My outfit has really gone to waste and I wanted to slay and show these women who the hell I am dammit. Mpilo really has bad timing. Why are we even proving the elders wrong? They are not the ones who married us but Mpilo did. So I don't understand what the fuss is all about” Nonkolosi says.

“This is boring argh. But if this is what Mpilo wants then we will do it for him and maybe the elders will stop talking about us behind our backs my ears itch every fucking 10 minutes because they can't keep my name out of their mouths spewing all kinds of insults! I'm tired of them” Lenah says.

“Well count me out ladies I'm not a wife to your husband after all I'm just a girlfriend to his son and on that note I'm not going to do any makoti duties. Y'all can slave alone. I'll be drinking alcohol while watching you women slaving around and when you dish up make sure to put more meat for me. These

elders are taking you ladies for a poes it could never be me. Now go and change 'wives' I'll be waiting for you downstairs" Khutso says laughing.

"Wait until Mpendulo puts a ring on it you will see flames" I say.

She laughs. "Put it where? My finger is not for young boys to put rings in it's for a real man like your husband so. Now that's the man who can fill my finger with a 9-carat diamond band" she says holding in a smile. I don't know whether she's joking or she's serious.

“I hope that's a joke I won't accept any more wife that Mpilo will want to bring to this house. Mazana is the last one” Lenah says.

“She's just joking ladies. No sane woman can jump from son to the father it doesn't work like that not unless she's a girl who doesn't know herself worth and always settle for less instead of aiming better” Nonkolosi says shaking her head. “Anyway let me go and change and you should change too” she tells us walking out Khutso follows after her.

“You are quiet Mazana. Are you okay?” I ask.

“Nerves. I'm nervous and I'm wondering what will my family's reaction be like when they see me looking like this I've changed so much” she says.

“They will understand and get used to you as time goes by now go and change. You too Enhle.”

I laugh. “But you are in my room Lenah.

She chuckles. “Damn it let me just go. See you in 5 minutes” she says stepping out of my room shaking her head. Mazana has already left. Sighs...



NOMZAMO

The smell of freshly baked vanilla muffins is what makes me flutter my eyes open. My mother must've woken up very early to bake them I'm sure she baked them especially for me. She knows that they always make me better no matter how bad I feel on that particular day I'm grateful for her. Anyways I'm so glad that I woke up willingly and at my own time without being forced finally freedom. My mother cried last night when she saw the state I was in and she officially loathes Lihle and she's determined to get me a lawyer that will serve Lihle with divorce papers and I know that he will not sign them but he will want to fight me instead. We've married in a community of property even so I don't want anything in that house. I need to rebuild my life and look for a job once I'm sure that Lihle will never bother me again. That man is crazy he has some screw missing in that head of his but once upon a time I loved him and now it's like all these

years I've been with him I wasted my time. There's no ounce of love for him left in me he's like a forgotten flower.

“Hey baby how are you feeling?” My mother asks immediately I step into the kitchen.

“Much better thank you.”

“I've baked you your favorite vanilla muffins stuffed with small peaches and raisins

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sit down” she says and I sit down. Yes my teeth are brushed and my face is rinsed.

“Thank you. Where's dad?”

“He's attending some welcoming lunch of his business associate in Pretoria hence he left early.”

“And he left you behind?”

“Yes I couldn't leave you alone. I wanted you to find someone when you wake up.”

“Thank you so much Mama. You are the best mother in the whole wild world.”

“Of course I am. You always told me this” she serves me muffins and warm milk.

“Thank you.”

“When did you discover that bastard is cheating on you?” She asks sitting down she has baked herself some carrot cake unfortunately I don't eat it.

Yes she's the one who taught me how to cook & bake. Dad wanted her to start a catering company but she refused and said that she will sell from home and her business is booming shame.

Sometimes dad goes with a few packets to work the way these two support each other in everything that they do inspires me but unfortunately I have no one's dreams & goals to support and vice versa.

Their love story started 35 years back 3 years living together and 32 years of marriage I was conceived in their marriage. Anyway dad met mom on her way to the shops and he was coming from work. He stopped her and according to dad; he waited 5 months before he courted her since he was scared to approach her but somehow he got the courage to ask her out at first my mother rejected his advances but dad never gave up. He eventually won her heart after months of pursuing her and ever

since then they've been in love they never get tired of each other. That was my dream with Lihle too and our marriage to last us for years but it never happened. I had a lot of dreams for us and we've planned on buying a new house then we start a family of our own but I was wrong very wrong. I'm just glad that it didn't become my reality.

“When he came back from his trip. He came back smelling of a woman's perfume but I didn't think that he was cheating on me since he works with females. But later that even he changed he became someone else. Anyway he chose his friends over me and at that time I was looking forward to spending the night with and hear about his trip. Haike the

next he—” I closed my eyes and breathed out. “He started beating me then he forced himself on me and locked me inside the house once he was done with me. The following weeks were hell he brought another woman into the house and they moved me to the guest room furthermore I became their maid their plaything they deprived me of food Mama. It was hell but I've had enough of their abuse. So I told myself that yesterday was the day I break free from their abuse. I put some laxatives in Amara's coffee plus they had a trip and I knew that Amara will come back early due to the running tummy. That was an opportunity for me and I couldn't mess it up I took the keys from her bag as she dashed to the toilet and I left locking her in the house” I tell her shrugging.

“What? Those two deserve to be in jail! And why didn't you fight back? Why didn't you stab them or something? And what kind of a woman is this Amara to rejoice in another woman's misfortunes? Does she honestly think that she will have her happily ever after?”

I chuckle. “It never crossed my mind and besides every time they go to work they'll lock the cupboards fridge and hide all the knives Mama. But I'm glad that I managed to escape and one thing I know is that he will come back here for me you've not seen the end of him.”

“He will not find you because I've already spoken with Nora and you will be staying with her until all this blows over. And I'm glad that you chose yourself.”

“What? Out of all the aunts you decided to ask Norah? You know how much she loathes me Mama and she's always comparing me to her kids who are successful and married to business tycoons. She will always find a way to belittle me she's no different from Lihle.”

“But she's the only one who agreed to take you in the others came up with different excuses avoiding

you coming to stay with them. We have no one else to ask Zamo.” Norah has three girls and one boy.

I plunge my shoulders. “Fine. But Mama please tell her not to compare me with her kids because our journeys aren't the same.”

She laughs. “She won't trust me. Her kids' lives aren't perfect too Nonjabulo is in a process of divorce and to top it all off she also lost her job now she's back home with her three kids finishing Norah's food as Norah puts it” she says shaking her head. “And that's another reason why she agreed for you to come and stay with her we are going to

send her monthly allowance it will help her here & there.”

“Wawu life is a roller coaster I tell you.”

“Tell me about it. See you are not the only one that life is showing flames.”

“I see” I say nodding.

“When am I leaving?” She scratches her head.

“Mama?”

“You are leaving tomorrow morning your father will take you there before he goes to work.”

“What? So soon?”

“Yeap your father doesn't want any blunders because that boy promised that he will come back for you and I'll gladly welcome him to search for you. In fact I will feed his fiancé or whatever he calls her she can do with some meat here & there.”

I laugh. “Mama geez. Her body is not that bad she's just too skinny and besides she loves her body the way it is hence she eats salads most of the time.”

“But still she can do with some meat” we both

laugh. "I'm joking I just wanted to make you laugh and I did an impressive job. And don't worry you will find your man. Anyway dreams? Still having them?"

"No I'm not. And I'd appreciate it if they never come back ever again."

"That's a good thing my baby."

"And I will not get married to this man that I'm

supposed to get married to right?" I raise a brow.

"If he doesn't exist Zama. And that's a big IF Zama."

"I will still not agree to marry him I will run away on that particular day."

She laughs. "Yeah right. Let me go and make a quick call I'll be back" she says excusing herself.

Aunt Norah neh? That woman has diarrhea of a mouth shame and she likes to brag but now that one of her daughters is back home I wonder what is she going to brag about now and I'm sure she insults her every chance she gets. Anyways a new scenery will do and who knows? Maybe I might open a mini bakery there plus aunt Norah resides in a busy hood sighs. At least me & Nonjabulo have something in common and that is "failed marriages" wuhhh life yi cabbage.

★»★«

MPENDULO

The ceremony is going very well and it's good to see the wives doing what is expected of them even though you can tell from their faces that they've had enough Khutso is sitting with the other girls who only came here for food & alcohol. She told the elders straight up that she's not touching any pots because she's not married to this family she's just a girlfriend and her being my girlfriend doesn't mean that she will get married to the Khuzwayo family. According to her the Khuzwayo elders are bullies and are backward she told them 9/9 leaving them with their mouths hanging and boy did they not come for me? Did they not tell me to never marry this “two skin-toned disrespectful girl?” Hhayi

shame they came gun blazing and I told them that I'll never do that mistake. Plus judging from her conversations lately she no longer wants to be in a relationship with me and I don't mind that but she should tell me straight up that she's no longer into this relationship and I will gladly let her go without a fight ebile.

Anyway Samke and I are chilling with the old men since the other cousins brothers & sisters decided to group themselves according to their levels and the less privileged ones are gathered in one place it's always been like this. The well-off don't want to associate themselves with the poor. That's why I opted to chill with the elders and tune them off I cant be listening to them talking about business and all that stuff. Samke yena is busy ogling the ladies

but mostly at Mazana. He can only look but never touch. Yazi there's this man who is present here who came with one of my father's business associates and he looks like Nomzamo I may have seen her once but this man resembles her. I tap Samke on the shoulder and he turns to look at me.

“What? I'm still window shopping.”

I chuckle. “Man I just wanted to give you a picture of how Nomzamo looks like” I tell him.

“And how exactly are you going to do that?” He asks.

“See that man sitting next to uncle Bruno?” He nods.
“That's how Nomzamo looks like.”

“Damn I know this may sound somehow man I'm not gay. But that man is very handsome no homo.”

“Exactly.”

“Then the girl is just as flame I will have to go and have a conversation with him I don't know about what but I will have to talk to him and maybe he might say something about Nomzamo” he says looking at him and he looks at us. “Or not. Man is not even smiling I'll pass.”

I laugh. “Thought as much you can see that he's not one you can just approach without any valid reason.”

“Yeah anyway let me continue looking at the ladies there are too many of them and they are all beautiful” I just nod and pick up my can. How do I even approach this man? Yeses he looks scary.

INSERT 9

NOMZAMO

My father came back very late last night I didn't even see him since I slept very early I had a headache. And he decided to be the one to wake me up my mother has already packed my stuff and baked all kinds of scones muffins and cupcakes to give to aunt Norah. I step into the kitchen and my mother has already prepared breakfast for me. And after here she's going to church she loves church shame and I like the fact that she never forces me to go to church with her I don't even know when was the last time I went to church. My dad goes there when he's off.

“Morning Mama” I greet sitting down.

“Good morning baby. How did you sleep?”

“I slept well thank you. And you?”

“I always sleep well. You better start eating your

breakfast before your father comes back.”

“Where is he?”

“He went to work to retrieve some files and also notify them that he will come in late he has an emergency to attend to” she says closing the last ice cream container.

“Hmmm I see.”

“I'm going to miss you my baby. I will call you daily and don't allow Norah to slave you around if she does do not hesitate to call me or your father and make sure that the minute she starts mistreating you find an apartment or something your father & I will take care of the rest. Okay?” I nod. “Good finish up then I'll go and get your bags.”

“Thank you Ma.”

“Only a pleasure my baby” she messes my hair as she walks past me. Grateful for my parents.

I get done eating. I wash my plate and head to the lounge to watch TV. Logging into Facebook I'm welcomed by Lihle's pictures with Amara next to him and there are over 100+ comments and 1.2k reactions. My notifications & messenger are piling I'm sure it's tagging after tags and I'm sure some tried calling me but since I changed numbers they couldn't reach me let me not get started about the WhatsApp messages. I skim through the comments and most of them are from his friends and some family members praising them and saying they make a cute couple he thanked those who complimented them and ignored those who asked about me mathafakha. They look so happy shame

let me just block him for my own sanity. In fact I should block him everywhere I don't want anything that connects me with him. The ring? I took it off a long time ago and flushed it down the toilet. I log on to Instagram and I still see their pictures blocks.

“Zam-Zam.” My father calls out as he steps inside the house.

“Lounge” I say getting up. He appears and I hug him.

“Ready to go?”

“Yeah it's not as if like I have a choice” I say shrugging.

“Exactly. We are not doing this because we want to but the situation is forcing us.”

“I understand Baba. My safety comes first.”

“Exactly. But don't worry everything will be alright.
Are your bags ready?”

“Yeah I'm sure Mom will come with them let me go
and see if she doesn't need any help.”

“No need for that I'm here now” she says walking out. I follow after her. “I'm so going to miss you my baby” she says pulling me into a tight hug after giving my father my bags.

“And so will I” a lone tear stream down my cheek. “I promise to call you daily.”

“I will try too and if you need money or anything don't hesitate to call us okay?”

“I will Mama.”

“And I'm done let's go Zam-Zam” my father says he was loading my luggage in his bakkie.

“Okay” I pull out from the hug and I step inside the car. Dad kisses mom goodbye and steps into the car too.

“Take care my baby” my mom says.

“I will Mama and enjoy church.”

“As always and I'll pray for you. Drive safe” she says
dad nods and roars the engine to life and he hoots
as he takes off.

My dad is not much of a talker he has always been not one unlike my mother she's a chatterbox that one. I resemble my father so much and I took my mother's body and too much hair. Anyway I plug in my earphones and Nicki Minaj x grand piano comes on. I wonder what awaits me back there in Pretoria and I don't last with friends hence I don't have any I get bored easily. Besides I prefer my own space. But one thing I know is that I'm going to make the best out of it while there and maybe I might open a mini bakery. All my life I've been living for Lihle my life was centered around him the only friends I knew were his now it's time I live for me and do me...



MPENDULO

Sunday one of the shortest days of the week and I have no plans. Khutso remained back at my father's house to help the ladies with cleaning up seeing

that everyone was already leaving. But I knew that they will be drinking wine and gossiping. It was also weird to have a welcome lunch for Mazana without her family present when they inquired about their whereabouts they said their transport broke and they couldn't come they will come next time. And if you ask me they were told not to come because Mpilo is very much capable of doing so heartless bastard. Mazana didn't even seem bothered by it even. Yet they were looking forward to coming here tsk. Anyway I was brought here by Samke who by the way was also going to his house he had an emergency to attend to I'm sure the emergency is one of his thousands of sex buddies that called him. Samke is 6 years older than me but his mindset is of a 3-year-old and he loves 2ks Lord. Plus he has kids all over South Africa. Ae.

I go to Mama G's and I buy myself two quarts of Heineken and a packet of cigarettes I was going to buy more if I had money but payday is only a week away. On my way out I bump into Bayanda one of the gents that I used to be friends with while growing up I didn't know that he stayed around here or maybe he's visiting.

“Hhe boy wuwe lo?” (Is this you) he asks pulling me into a hug.

“This is me man” I pull out from the hug. “Look at you man you look like money” I say and he laughs. He drives a machine a beast! Fuck how rich is this man now?

“You think?” I nod. “Man I am money” he says laughing.

“And you don't plug us in when you generate money?”

He smirks. “How the hell was I supposed to tell you? You relocated man without telling me. I even tried searching for you on social networks and I found nothing.”

“I'm sorry man. The sudden relocation wasn't planned but you've found me now. Coming to think of it I also searched for you and to no avail at some point I even thought that you moved to Newzland as you always said you would.”

He shakes his head. “Things didn't go as planned man” he huffs.

“But here you are looking & smelling like wealth.”

“And it's all thanks to my wife she made me who I am today. That woman is my forever” he says with a genuine smile plastered on his face. Mans is in love and I'm here for it all.

“So you finally put a ring on it on Aziza? And I'm

sure you have little ones too.”

He chuckles. “Not her man. That girl did me bad. I'm married to Zubenathi a business-minded woman. A woman who loved me even though I was below her level.”

“Wait you are married to Zubenathi the 5x businesswoman of the year title winner?” He nods. “Damn man. The fuck? Dude how did you even get her? That girl is a force to be reckoned with.”

“Give me your contacts we will set a day and I will tell you everything a lot has happened man. Right now I need to see Mama G about something important business-wise” he says giving me his phone to put in my numbers.

“Done Mr. Millionaire” I say and he laughs.

“I'll see you around man enhlek bamba so” he takes out his wallet and comes out with a couple of papers I don't even think he counted the money. “Bamba I 12 dah” he hands the notes to me.

“Ek'se ntwana dankie bhuda lami” we shoulder bump and he gets inside while I'm left stunned.

I count the notes and they make up R2 500 I put the money in my pocket. The actual fuck? Who carries so much money in their wallet? I mean even after he gave me the money his wallet was still full. Who would've thought that Bayanda can love someone else other than Aziza? Man used to love that girl guess it was not meant to be and I wonder what he meant by she did him bad. Hmmm I'm surrounded by men with money lately and I'm here for it. The universe is sending me a message. I chuckle as I

walk back to my place. Friends who just give you money without asking for it we all deserve to have them. My phone rings and it's Khutso argh.

“Khutso.”

“Hey I'm just letting you know that I will be home late

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I'm just letting you know that I will be home late the ladies & I are going to a spa. Please don't blow up my phone.”

“Okay enjoy.”

“See what other men are doing for their wives?”

“Exactly wives not a girlfriend.”

“Wow goodbye. You are so useless it's not even funny.”

“K.”

“Mpe—”

I cut her short. "I'm busy bye" I disconnect the call before she can speak any further and put my phone back in my pocket. Does she think that she's the only one who knows how to misbehave? Then I have another thing coming for her. Her belittling me no longer gets to me.

My phone keeps on ringing and I know that it's her hehe I've ruined her entire day. Serves her right. But I'm sure by the time they get to the spa she would've long forgotten by the phone call.

I get home and I put my beers in the fridge then I will go to Beta's and buy myself some pap and braaied meat & wors with lots of peri-peri chakalaka I don't even know when was the last time I brought such food with my own money without having anyone yapping for it and complaining before we start eating now this is independence. I can live like this with no hassles. Samke said he'll come by later mxm a liar that one. He was just saying. Guess it will be just me & soccer highlights all day long and throw in some movies here & there. What a peaceful life what a peaceful day. I pray that Khutso comes back after 20:00 by then I'll already be in bed I won't get to see her.

“Nomzamo” I mutter to myself.

★»★«

ENHLE

Spa treatment & shopping spree is how Mpilo is apologizing. He will never say sorry no matter how many times he wrongs us he will just give us money and book spa treatment for us and just like that our mouths are sealed. Nonkolosi asked Khutso to stay over for the night because she will be bored when alone and Mpendulo doesn't seem like fun and she gladly agreed. And last night was officially the night where Mazana & Mpilo slept together I was a little bit jealous though considering the fact that it's been a month since Mpilo made love to the three of us and we still have two more months before he has sex with any of us. In the coming two months for

Mazana & Mpilo something must come out between the two of them. Mazana needs to get pregnant for Mpilo and I hope she will carry full term unlike us who never surpass four months. It used to bug me at first but now I'm content with everything maybe it's not our time yet ours is coming all we need to do is to be patient.

“He hanged up on me can you believe it?” Khutso complains tossing her phone on the couch. “He fucking disconnected the call while I was still talking to him and he's never done that before!” She clicks her tongue.

“And why are you sounding stressed?” Nonkolosi asks her.

“He disconnected the call while I was still talking to him Nonkolosi.”.

“So what? How does he disconnecting your call affects your bank balance? Why would you stress yourself about someone who doesn't make you happy? Baby girl you don't need him. He's useless imagine stressing over a man who can't afford to

take you to a spa every now & then? It can never be me shame” Nonkolosi says pinching the bridge of her nose.

“Yeah you are right. He doesn't deserve my stress woman. Thank you for reminding me of my worth shesh let's go” she says fixing herself.

“So Khutso. You want money or love?” Mazana asks her.

“Money baby girl. I want money. Love is overrated people no longer do love but it's all about helping each other out. I mean you even married Mpilo because you want something from him and vice versa. Or maybe you married him for love too?” Khusto says arching her brow.

“This hoe is just like the rest of us is here for money nothing else” Nonkolosi says as we step inside the limo.

“Are you my spokesperson now Nonkolosi? And if you are who appointed you to be one?” Mazana questions her.

“I don't need anyone to appoint me to be your spokesperson Mazana. You are a hoe and everyone knows that!” Nonkolosi spits back.

“And so what? Do you want a round of applause? Some support? Please don't bore me Nonkolosi. I've had it with your shit! And I won't go back & forth with you this better be the last time you talk about me without being asked. You don't know me you don't fucking know anything about me Nonkolosi. You don't and trust me you don't want to witness the other side of me because I'm poisonous once I switch. Stay in your lane and I will stay in mine!”

Mazana retorts. You can hear in her voice that she's pissed off!

“Okay ladies. That's enough can the two of just stop the shit you are doing? This is not high school maarn yeses!” Lenah reprimands them. “Don't ruin our day and don't add to my exhaustion okay?” Mazana clicks her tongue and Nonkolosi rolls her eyes.

Hectic! These two are just impossible. I can't believe that Nonkolosi is still stuck on the fact that Mazana was all touchy-touchy with Mpendulo. And I thought that she was looking out for her friend but

this is more than that. Or maybe she's desirous because Mazana is more beautiful than her? Haike guess there's more to this than what meets the eye. But what?



NOMZAMO

My dad left me at the salon to plait my hair he drove to my aunt's house with the clothes he will come back with Nonjabulo whom I will leave with later on. He couldn't wait for me because he has to go to work. I'm plaiting cornrows a style of which I'm very familiar with and love. I'm scared to try out

other styles because I have this thing that they will not suit me and stuff I'm also scared of putting weaves. Disaster is me. Children laughing is what diverts my attention at the entrance and the stepping inside with her 6 kids who look like they haven't taken a bath yet is none other than Nonjabulo aunt Norah's firstborn. Bathong this woman. She looks like some old magogo with her ANC T-shirt and pleated dirty skirt with sleepers. Jesus! This woman why did she allow herself to look like some granny because of a failed marriage? I have a lot of work to do with her. You can't look like your problems haibo chile. I look at the time on my phone and it's just after 11:00 but the kids are urhm you know what? Let me just mind my own business.

“Nomzamo we are here to get you” she says sitting

down and her kids are running around the salon making noise. Everyone is shocked you can tell by their faces.

“I'm still plaiting give me 15 minutes I'll be done.”

“15 minutes? My kids are hungry they can't wait 15 minutes and why didn't you do your hair in the upcoming days?”

“I won't have time then I have a lot of things to do.”

“Oh but I need to leave I was busy” she says
sounding bored.

“You were cleaning?”

“No I was playing cards.”

“Oh I see.” Cards? Really? Hmm hhayi. “Any shops nearby where you can buy them pap & meat?”

“Yes just around the corner.”

“Will R200 be enough?”

“More than enough” she's already standing next to me. I take out my purse from my bag and take out R200.

I hand it to her. “Here you go.”

“Why not R300? You have so much money Nomzamo. This won't be enough!” She complains.

“Don't start with me Nonjabulo. I'm not your jackpot. Go and buy the kids food and leave me the hell alone okay?”

“Mxm you are stingy wena. Kids I'll be back stay here with this woman till I come back” she says already walking away.

“I don't think it was wise for you to give her so much money I don't think she will come back” the hairdresser says.

“She will I mean she can't leave her kids to starve right? Look at them you can tell that they haven't had a decent meal in weeks” I tell her.

“I hope so” she says shrugging.

I look at the kids and they look really hungry even their bodies are not malnutrition. Nonjabulo better not punish these kids by starving them but knowing Norah she makes sure that she feeds them. Norah loathes scrawny kids.

10 minutes later I'm done plaiting my hair and Nonjabulo is not back yet mxm. Guess she took the

money to gamble with it so heartless. I pay the hairdresser and thank her then walk out of the salon with the kids. Now where to from here?

“Do you know where we can catch a taxi?” I ask the eldest daughter she nods. “Okay. And do you know where we can find food?” She nods. “Alright let's get you guys something to eat.”

We get to the rank and there's a woman who cooks traditional food here. I buy food for all of them and tell them to sit down but first I ask the lady for a basin so that they will wash their hands. Gosh the people's stares are just too much but I don't blame

them. I look good while the kids are dirty. I'm sure they think the kids are mine.

They finish eating and I ask the lady for a basin so that the kids can wash their hands one more time. I thank the lady and we leave. We get to the rank and the eldest daughter shows me where the taxi to Orange farm is I don't even know her name I will ask her later. We board a taxi and I pay for all of us.

In no time we are on our way to aunt Norah's house. I chuckle when I see Nonjabulo playing cards in some yard with a lot of women they all look untidy. We pass them the kids don't even bother to go to

her. Aunt Norah is not home and I almost purge when the horrible smell coming from the house hits my nostrils. Fuck what the hell? There are dishes piled in the sink the kitchen floor has stains on them the stove is so dirty. The door fridge too cupboards are broken. Lord what's happening here? I mean the Norah I know would never leave her house this dirty she's one of the people with too much COD. And now this? Did Nonjabulo's marriage affect her too? Again do Refiloe & Sthembile visit? I doubt.

“Urhm what's your name?” I ask the eldest daughter.

“Gail.”

“Okay Gail. Can you please get me cleaning materials we have a lot of work to do here” she nods and disappears somewhere around the yard. The other kids have gone to play.

I cover my nose and go in further inside the house. The lounge is a mess and that's where my bags are I doubt my father got inside because if he did he would've warned me about the state of the house. Wawu no time to rest.

INSERT 10

NOMZAMO

I'm so exhausted even my feet are hurting from all the running around I was doing all day I couldn't even spare myself some little time to call my mother because I was too buried in cleaning this house. I've never come across an extremely dirty house before this one takes the cup shame. I didn't

enter into the bedrooms though they have four bedrooms. My luggage is placed safely behind the couch. There's no TV here nor sound system boring. I wonder how do they keep themselves busy on a daily basis well with Nonjabulo it's quite obvious she plays cards and there's no food here but the kids are out playing I gave them scones to eat because they were complaining about hunger. And now I've prepared them water to bathe using the boiler I wish there was a woofers but there's none. The bathroom Jesus! It was so dirty the bathtub had water soap dirt of many days ago. I don't think I'll last a week here I loathe lazy people with my all. The time on my phone reads 14:30 and now I'm hungry but I don't want scones I've seen a fast food outlet close by I'll go there.

The walk to the outlet is 10 minutes long I took my purse with me because I don't want Nonjabulo to go to the house and steal for me. I pass them as they are still playing cards there are empty bottles of Black Label lying around the yard. Those who are still in their robes are making me cringe. Aphi amadoda wabo? Lord help me.

“Nomzamo!” I can hear Nonjabulo calling my name but I ignore her plugging in my earphones I increase the volume of my music.

I'm sure she wants to ask me for some money I'll be damned if I give her some. She showed me that she

can't be trusted. She chose for her kids to stay hungry all day because she wants to feed her gambling addiction and unfortunately for her I'll not fund her lifestyle I'm not the one who introduced her to it after all.

There are 5 people before me who are yet to buy because the ones sitting on benches are waiting for their orders. I take this opportunity to call my mother she answers after a while.

“Zamo. How are you and how is the environment there?”

“I'm exhausted Mama and the environment is not good everything is just off. I don't think I will last a week here.”

“That terrible huh?”

“Yeah.” I fill her in...

“What? You better start looking for a place to rent then those people will abuse you and you will be expected to feed them and feed Nonjabulo's kids? Awww ngeke you don't owe them anything. But before you leave make sure that you buy groceries for them and buy clothes for the kids I'll send you money okay?”

“Yes Mama.”

“Good. The next thing Nonjabulo will start wearing your clothes or sell them to satisfy her gambling uh uh it won't work. Anyway where's Norah?”

“I have no idea Mama. She wasn't there when I got there and the kids said she's been gone since last night.”

“Wuuhhh mntanami. Hhayi ke I will tell your father. Let me get done cooking I have visitors.”

“Visitors?” I'm one person closer for my turn to come I look behind me and there's no one.

“Yes your father's visitors I don't even know who they are I will fill you in though okay?”

I giggle. “Okay Ma. I love you.”

“I love you too my baby” she disconnects the call.

My turn comes to buy and I buy R45 Kota R30 chips and R120 Springbok for the kids Nonjabulo will see

what she eats she's a grown woman after all.

There's a shop right next door I'll buy bread and a cold drink for them. I sit on one of the benches once given my order slip. Someone removes one of my earphones taking a seat opposite me is some a little too cute guy. He's not bad looking he looks just fine with his brush cut and you can tell that he's friends with the gym just by looking at him. He has long-sleeved tattoos in both of his hands he's wearing a man beater.

“Hello. It's my first time seeing you here you must be new around here” he says smiling revealing his silver tooth. I nod. “My name is Senzo and you are?” He extends his hand for a handshake.

“Nomzamo.”

“Lovely name. So Nomzamo where are you from?”
He asks brushing my hand. I remove it from the table and put it on my lap.

“Witbank.”

“Hmmm I see. Now this is how it's going to work”

he says and I look at him confused.

“Pardon?”

“From now on going forward we are dating. I'm your boyfriend and you are my girl no man should look your way except me” he says with so much confidence. You can see that he's not bluffing.

“You must be out of your damn mind Senzo. I'm not your girl leave me alone” I stand from where I was

sitting and walk towards the store and stand next to these other guys I pay no attention to them.

“Fresh meat” comments another.

“Very fresh. And cute too. My type maybe? Do you think we can make a cute couple?” Asks another and the others laugh.

“I don't think you will man. Check how Senzo is staring at her. I'm sure he's undressing her and

fucking her with his eyes he's a fucking pervert after all" says another.

Guess I'm the fresh meat they are referring to men. I slightly lift my eyes and I do catch the intense stare of Senzo pinned on me he is creepy.

"Fuck. I hate that man he hurt my sister real badly. He knows it naye."

"But your sister is still with him she must really love

him even though he gives her bruises twice a week and embarrasses her in front of the whole community” comments another.

“That's the thing. Zandi never listens like ever. I think she enjoys being beaten up and insulted by him I've honestly given up on her she knows it too.”

Seems like I dodged a bullet there Senzo must be really evil. Guess he also told Zandi that they are dating and gave her no option but to agree to be his he does look like a bully after all. Women go through a lot shame.

“I think she's suffering from Stockholm syndrome”
comments another.

“What's that Mbombi?” The lady that just joined
them asks.

“Stockholm syndrome is a condition in which abuse
victims bond with their abusers it's like they can't
live without them.”

Glad I'm not suffering from it I left before it got to that point I value my life.

“That's bullshit!” The lady yells. “I think Senzo fed her love portion stocko what-what doesn't exist it's all in your mind and stupid psychological facts. I need to—”

“Shut up Bailey. You are not better than her you are the worst” Zandi's brother says cutting her mid-sentence.

“This is not about me Willow. It's about your sister”
she defends herself.

“Still the two of you are cut from the same cloth the
only difference is that you are into older married
men tsek” Willow says.

My order number is called I take my things then go
to the shop and buy the bread and cold drink not
forgetting airtime too. Walking back to aunt Norah's
house I'm praying that Senzo isn't following me yes

the street is busy but there's no telling what he will do he does look like a psycho after all. Nonjabulo is still playing cards when I pass the house again. What time do these people eat? Bathing kona? The sun is very hot I wonder how are their armpits smelling like let me not get started about—I shudder as I think about it. Sies. The dark-skinned ones have turned gray and the yellow ones are going dark skin because of the sun. I laugh at my silly thoughts.

I get to aunt Norah's house and I place everything on top of the table and walk to the lounge but I stop in my tracks when I see my clothes thrown all over. Nonjabulo! I groan I'm sure she was looking for money. Nxa. This dirty woman will be the death of me I swear. Phela this means I'll never have peace

rha.

“The house is clean today” the manly voice says coming from the kitchen.

“Very” aunt Norah says. “And there's food here.”

“Nonjabulo must've m—”

“It's not her but it's. Oh snap!” Aunt Norah half shouts. She clears her throat and I turn to look at her. She looks older than her age now and it looks like she's drunk.

“Hi aunt Norah sir” I greet the both of them. The man looks at Norah then back at me and nods.

“Urhm where's Nonjabulo?” Aunt Norah asks.

“She's playing cards?”

“Yeah where's Nonjabulo?” Aunt Norah asks.

“She's playing cards?”

“Yeah she is. Something of which you are familiar with.”

“I don't know how many times I've scolded her from going over to that house infested with human-size looking rats but she never listens! She really loves embarrassing me” she says clicking her tongue.
“Anyways when did she go over to that house?”

“Well the second I told her to go and buy food for her kids since my father dropped them off at the salon in the morning basically she ran away with the money that was supposed to buy her kids food and she took the first taxi coming here and gambled with it instead. Azanke ngidineke kanje plus my head is painful.”

She clears her throat. “That's her style she doesn't care about those kids I think she lowkey detests the. And did I hear you saying your father dropped them off?”

“Yeah around 10:00 and the kids were very dirty. Hhayi aunt Norah. Why di— argh almost forgot that you didn't spend the night here.”

“Who told you that?”

“One of the kids told me.”

“Hmmm and who cleaned up the house?”

“I did. Hhayi shame nidodi yong. And I bet this man stays here?” I ask her my eyes focused on this sober-drunk-looking man before me.

“No he only comes over whenever he can. He has

his own place that's I spend most of my days.”

“I see” I continue putting my clothes in my bags.

“Why are your bags here?”

“Because I didn't know where to put them.”

“Baby please go to the bedroom I'll find you there I need to show Nomzamo her room” the man nods and walks away.

“Does it need thoroughly cleaning too?” I ask her picking up my bags and following after her.

“No it doesn't. I cleaned it yesterday before leaving.”

“Why didn't you clean the whole house?”

“Because I'm sick & tired of cleaning up after Nonjanbulo and her bunch of careless and scared of bathing kids! I'm tired of it all Nonjabulo is so careless Zamo. She steals things here at home and sells them just to feed her gambling addiction now I'm forced to hide them in my bedroom and lock the door when I leave” we step inside my supposed room and to my surprise it truly is clean and I like the fact that it is vast. The bedding is clean too.

“Why did she allow the divorce to get to her? I mean just because she's divorced it doesn't mean that it's the end of the world. She needed to pick

herself up after crying out geez I'm so disappointed in her. Ebile why is she playing cards? Didn't she maybe stash some money somewhere for rainy days?" I ask sitting on the bed.

"Nonjabulo is a lost cause. Maybe you will be able to get through her once the two of you stay together."

"Stay together? What do you mean by that?"

“I'm hardly here so it will only be the two of you and the noise-making kids even when unnecessary of hers. The money that your mother will be sending I'll give to you so that you will use it for everything in this house and make sure that your room is always locked every time you leave to somewhere because Nonjabulo has a hand ai shame she's busy.”

I laugh. “Thank you for the heads-up.”

“You are welcome and maybe with you around the house will be clean as it is right now the scene is very welcoming. Anyways let me leave you to it and

I'll be spending the night here I want you to tell me about what that useless husband of yours did get done. I'll also make us tea while at it."

"There's no kettle and there's only one pot."

"I have a kettle in my bedroom don't worry" she says and leaves the room.

I chuckle shaking my head. Nonjabulo is really behaving like a nyaope boy who steals things just to

feed his addiction. Guess Norah has really had it with Nonjabulo. Well at least she gave me heads-up. I'm no longer leaving I'll turn this house into a loving and warm home. The kids will be well-fed and cleaned up pretty well Nonjabulo will decide on her own if she wants to change for the better or continue pleasing her enemies.



ENHLE

The day is sailing pretty good all that happened yesterday is forgotten like old gossip when new ones come in. Money indeed solves everything. We are dining at Brixton's steak of house completing our day with some steak & salads.

“Well ladies I'd love to stay longer but I can't because I have an appointment scheduled in an hour from now” Khutso tells us eating the last piece of her steak.

“With him?” Nonkolosi asks her with a very mischievous smile plastered on her face.

“Who else babe?” She responds to her laughing.

“Go girl secure that bag. Why hasn't he still asked

for your hand in marriage? I mean it's not as if like your family doesn't know about him.”

She sighs. “Well he said he's not ready to get married yet he recently got divorced it's understandable on my side. Plus we are not in a hurry. Marriage is a lot of work and committing is really not part of my long life plan I still have places to travel.”

“So what's the deal between you & Mpendulo? Why are you still with him if your heart or whatever is into another man?” Lenah asks her.

“I don't know honestly and I can't say it's the sex either because we haven't been intimate in months let alone kiss each other. He annoys me” she says standing and fixing her dress.

“Break up with him via text than to string him along knowing very well that you are not into him just free him so that he can see other girls stop hindering him. You can't be whoring whereas he's remaining loyal to you it's annoying maarn” Lenah tells her.

She laughs. "I'm not holding him at gunpoint after all. Anyways let me get going. I'll see you ladies around" she gives us air kisses and saunters away. Nonkolosi giggles.

"Khutso better make up her damn mind. Mpendulo is a man and he has needs that must be satisfied some women" I say shaking my head.

"They are just high-class whores with no morals none whatsoever" Mazana says and she earns herself a dirty one look from Nonkolosi. "And of course her puppy will always defend her whoring ways how cute."

“You better tell me straight up in my face Mazana. Don't beat around the bushy” Nonkolosi says.

“You are lucky that I'm not gossiping about you but I'm talking about you in your presence. Cute right?” She smiles at her.

“Fuck you Mazana. You ugly piece of shit” Nonkolosi says standing looking very furious her chest going up & down. “I've just lost my appetite nxa” she

grabs her bag and leaves fuming.

“That went very well” Mazana says chuckling.

“Whuu what a good day!”

Lenah & I look at each other and she shakes her head and I know very well why. These two will definitely go fist to fist one of these good days and I fear what Mpilo will do when he learns that it has been like this for too long and the reason behind it. Yuck.

“Yeah what a day” I say then take a sip of my dry red wine.

“Where to after here?” Lenah asks.

“Home. I need to go and try out all the lingerie I bought. I wonder which one Mpilo is going to like” Mazana says sounding excited.

If only she knew that Mpilo doesn't care about those he will not even notice her efforts plus she waxed too Mpilo only wants pussy nothing else and he hates trying out new styles. Missionary is what he wants when you want to try new styles he will say that you are cheating knowing very well that he has put trackers in our phones and hired people to guard us.

Lenah giggles. “Don't waste your time sweetheart Mpilo doesn't care about all those. He is your typical Zulu man that lingerie you will only wear them for yourself” she tells Mazana

“Well I'm going to change all that. I'm not old school like the both of you that includes Nonkolosi too. Mpilo will soon worship the ground that I will be walking on” she says with so much confidence.

“Good luck baby. You are going to need it” I tell her.

“Yes good luckkkkkkk” Lenah says.

“I don't need it periodit! I will make him my pussy is too much for him. He groans when he fucks me we

did it all night” she tells us. And that's nothing new to us we are used to it. Arh the village girl front is slowly disappearing her real self wants to be recognized.

“We know. Tell us something different Mazana”
Lenah says.

My phone rings and it's Nonkolosi I'm sure she wants us to leave.

“Nkoli.”

“You will find me at the casino once you are done there. If it was possible I'd ask you guys to come with that ugly farm Julia.”

I chuckle. “Okay” I hang up. “Nonkolosi says we will find her at the casino once we are done here” I tell the ladies.

“We are gamblers now?” Mazana asks.

“Mxm” Lenah settles the bill and we leave. The casino is just 5 minutes away.

INSERT 11

MPENDULO

My alarm rings waking me up fuck! I groan and switch it off snoozing it will only make me late for work. Khutso didn't come home last night and I didn't even bother calling her and she didn't bother to call me and let me know that she's not coming. I wonder where did she sleep because I know very well that Mpilo would've chased her if she slept there. Oh well I disembark from the bed and stretch myself then step out of my room and head to the bathroom. I fill the bathtub with water as I do my number 2 my phone in my hand I'm checking my emails. Nothing I log into Facebook it's been weeks since I last logged in and nothing interests me and so are the other social networks.

I make myself cereal and head to the lounge to

watch the morning news the bus will only be at the bus stop around 06:00. I don't wear suits when going to work I wear jeans T-shirts or shirts because I wear a reflective vest all day. But I'm not complaining. 05:45 I stand from the couch switching off the TV and I pick up my small cooler bag that I carry my lunchbox with. I get to the kitchen and rinse my bowl then step out of the house. The bus stop is 3 minutes away from my house.

As I'm waiting for the bus I place a cigarette in between my lips and lit it facing my house. A big car stops by the gate and Khutso steps out of it fixing her short dress that I don't recall seeing her wearing. I chuckle and shake my head. I watch her as she gets inside the yard that's when the car leaves. Right. I see the bus approaching and I switch off my

cigarette using the stop sign board and put it in its packet again I never throw away my cigarette until it is entirely finished. I step inside the bus and just then my phone rings I look at the screen and it's Khutso mxm. All the signs that Khutso is cheating on me were there and it's no surprise that she's cheating on me with a wealthy businessman I'm sure this man has kids & a wife somewhere out there. Pffft. My phone rings again and it's Khutso. I finally answer because I know she will not give up.

“Khutso.”

“Hey baby.”

“What do you want?”

“Awu baby why are you being cold?”

“I'm not being cold what do you want Khutso?”

“Well I just wanted to tell you that I'm back home

Marshall your stepmothers' driver dropped me off.”

“Good for you. Can I call you back later I'm in the middle of something here?”

“Oh yeah sure. Enjoy your day.”

“I will” I disconnect the call.

Getting to work one of my female colleagues meets me halfway. She's a very beautiful woman with all the curves in all the right places she's yellow too but not yellow than Khutso. I don't even know her name but she's always the first one to greet me and she's a bit older than me or maybe the make-up is making her older than her actual age. I wonder if Nomzamo also puts on make-up dammit! Why is she even crossing my mind?

“Hey Mpendulo” she greets me with her melodic voice as she falls beside me.

“Hey” I look at her name tag without making it look obvious.

“How are you and how was your night?”

“My night was fine Jidenna. How was yours?”

She smiles. “Fine too. Anyway I brought you lunch. I cooked a little too much last night and my kids didn't touch their food and I know that they will not eat it today they don't eat leftovers. So I decided

why not bring you home-cooked lunch since you always eat at the canteen. I hope you don't mind.”

I smile. “Of course I don't mind. Thank you for the wonderful gesture it's appreciated.” Dude I do mind but I don't want to appear as if I'm rude or anything like that.

Belinda taught me to take whatever someone is offering me with warm hands and if I don't like it I must give it away or throw it away. And she also told me to never eat food that my colleagues bring for me because you don't know their intentions. A lot of people lost their job because of eating food

given by their colleagues. She also said I must work then go back home and not make any friends. Argh she said a mouthful truly speaking. But that doesn't mean that I can't hang around with the guys every now & then.

“You are welcome” she hands me the container and I take it. “You are so going to enjoy it in my spare time I also try new recipes.”

“Hmmm and what's in here?”

“Spaghetti & meatballs stew.”

“My favorite meal well add some mashed potatoes to complete the meal.”

“I'll remember that next time. Enjoy the rest of your day see you later” she says sealing it with a smile.

“Likewise” I say stepping inside my office.

I put everything on top of the table and take out the blinds remote from my pocket and open them. My office is not small nor big it's just average. There's an office leather chair of which is mine of course. A double couch a table at the far end of the office where my mug my planner notes and other files are put an aircon just above the door. It's perfect for me and the interior is not overboard it's simple the walls are painted gray and there's a very big complicated painting on the wall I found it here and it shall remain here. I sit down and open my laptop today I'm not going to drink coffee I'll see it during lunch. And right then a knock comes through at the door I puff out some air. I wonder who is it and what do they want.

“Come in.”

The door opens and Jidenna steps in with a flask and another contain. I arch a brow as I gaze at her coming to the table with a smile.

“I almost forgot. I've brought you coffee and some vetkoek with mangola I wasn't sure if you are atchaar hence I didn't put it I made them early in the morning” she places them on top of the table. “Hmmm I hope you will enjoy them” she turns on

her heels and walks out of my office.

Geez this woman. Do I look skinny to her or something? She's too friendly for my liking or maybe it's just the way she is naturally. I look at the two containers and sigh. Great!



NOMZAMO

The kids are all awake and making so much noise
Norah is helping them get ready for school.

Nonjabulo left the house at 06:45 going to the place
where she plays cards I wonder what time did she
come back home last night. And why would she
leave the house so early in the morning just to play

cards? The day is still long mus and it is yet to commence I'm sure she didn't even take a bath. I get done cooking soft porridge for the kids and I dish it up for them.

“Aunt Norah!” I yell her name since she's in the lounge with the kids and I'm in the kitchen.

“Yes?”

“I'm going to the shop to buy bread for the kids I'll

be right back.”

“Okay make it quick!” And I'm already out of the house.

People are already going up & down. I pass the house where Nonjabulo plays cards at and there are 5 women sitting on the veranda playing cards and they are still wearing dirty robes there are two bottles of black label next to one of them I shake my head and continue my journey to the shop.

“Yewena Nomzamo!” Nonjabulo calls my name.

“Voetsek wena!” I yell back without turning to look at her.

Nonjabulo must really love my name for her to be even calling me so early in the morning. I get to the shop and I buy bread & eggs. I will have to go and do grocery shopping. Norah did say that the kids eat at school during lunch at least they do eat. Their uniform is clean but their school shoes are all worn out I will have to buy them too.

“Hey” a voice of a man greets me I turn to look and it's Willow.

“Hi” I greet back.

“I'm Willow and you are?” He extends his hand for me to shake.

“Nomzamo” I don't give him my hand because I already have what I came here to buy.

“Can I take you on a tour today? I mean you are new around here. Right? Or are you visiting?”

“Tour? No today is impossible I already have plans and yes I'm visiting” I tell him already walking away.

“When are you going to be free and when are you leaving?” He asks falling beside me. I didn't even notice that he is following me.

If it was any other day Willow walking beside me and I was still involved with Lihle it would've been another story I'm telling you. Lihle is a very jealous man.

“I honestly don't know and I think I'll be here for a while” I say shrugging.

“Not even a day since you've arrived here and you are already entertaining men? How loose can you get?” Nonjabulo shouts as we pass by. I ignore her.

“Whoa you know that dirty prostitute?” Willow asks laughing.

“Prostitute? What do you mean? And she's my cousin.”

“What? So you are actually staying at her house?
That dirty house?”

“You can cease walking me from home at this point
thank you for walking with me. But this is where
your walk with me ends” I tell Willow and pick up
my pace.

“Nomzamo wait!” He yells after me.

I really don't like people who talk about other

people's business and how does he even know that Nonjabulo's house is filthy? Or maybe they are seeing her appearance? Wait she's still wearing the same clothes from yesterday and so are the robes her friends are wearing sies. Prostitute? I mean where does she even get time to sell her body? Urh hhayi. Nonjabulo needs to change her life hhayi. Nonjabulo needs to change her life yoh. Awu ngeke phela.

I get home and aunt Norah has already accompanied the kids to school and her boyfriend left early in the morning to go to work he is a contractor. Anyways I don't know whether to start by cleaning or eating I'm hungry. Yet I can't eat in an untidy space. Well it's not that dirty but the soft porridge bowls must be washed.

“Yah wena Nomzamo!” Nonjabulo shouts stepping inside the house. “Who the hell do you think you are ignoring me when I call you huh?” She questions sounding very angry.

“I am no one. I just don't appreciate you calling my name anyhow you want” I respond to her putting the bowls into the sink I must rinse them first before washing them.

She laughs. “You don't appreciate me calling your name anyhow I want? Have you forgotten that you are in my hood?”

“So what if this is your hood?”

“Why are you back chatting with me? Or have you forgotten that I'm older than you?”

“Leave me alone Nonjabulo. Go and take a bath or something.”

“Nomzamo. What did you just say?” Her nose flares.

“You heard me. Just because your marriage failed that doesn't mean that you must throw in the towel. Have you seen yourself? I mean have you taken some time and looked at yourself in the mirror? Ha—”

“Shut up Nomzamo. You bloody barren whore! At least I have kids from my marriage and what do you

have to show for yours huh?"

"Nothing. In fact I'm showing that despite my failed marriage I still am very much intact and I still have my dignity. I didn't allow marriage to turn me into some fail pop playing card all day without even caring about my kids' woman and became a prostitute as everyone calls you. Respect yourself Nonjabulo. This person that I'm looking at now is not you. And are you aware that with your behaviour your enemies are rejoicing? They are laughing at you and calling you a failure. And you are proving what some of them said when you get married trust me when I say not everyone becomes happy for you when you get married. Some simply curse you by saying it won't work she will be a returned soldier look at yourself right now. Have

you maybe asked your sisters what's keeping their marriage strong? I mean they've been married longer than you. Yoh hhayi let me stop talking. I'm also a returned soldier after all” I say shrugging.

“To hell with your stupid advice! I don't need it offer it to someone who really needs it because I don't. I'm fine with the way my life is I can afford my own lifestyle! And this is my house Nomzamo. You will leave by my rules if not then I will kick you out do you hear me? Kick you out!”

“You can kick me out even now it's fine and keep in mind that; you kick me out I go and report you to

the social workers and they will take your kids away from you because they will declare you as an unfit mother. Try me Nonjabulo. I will not allow the kids to suffer because of your selfishness I will not!”

Her mouth keeps on closing & opening like a fish. She wants to say something but she doesn't know how to say it.

“One thing I know is that the last thing you want is your neighbors seeing your world crashing down and a social services van parked in that gate taking your kids away from you. What's it going to be Nonjabulo?” I fold my arms.

“Fine. You can stay. Just stay out of my business and I'll do the same. Anyways can you give me R500?”

I chuckle. “I don't have that kind of money Nonjabulo. The only money I have is to buy groceries. How about you give my leather jacket back?”

“You- your leather jacket?”

“Yes. The one you stole yesterday when I went to buy some food. I came back only to find my clothes thrown on the floor I know you sold it to whomever but I need it. Or else the snake that the jacket belongs to will fetch it to whomever you sold it to at night you have 2 days to get it back Nonjabulo. 2.”

She swallows trying to act brave but the fear in her eyes can't be hidden.

“Mxm. I don't know what you are talking about.

Bring some Hennessy from town and remember to stay out of my business nxa.”

I chuckle. “Aren't you going to bathe?”

“Leave me alone tsek” she states stepping out of the house banging the door after her and I laugh. Stupid.

I'm only here for the kids and not her and everything that I'm going to do I'll do it for the kids.

One day God will bless me with one or two of my own but for now I need to take care of these little ones. My mother will be so proud of me shame.

I get done cleaning the house and aunt Norah is still not back I look at the time on my phone and it's just after 08:45 I still have some time to do the kids' laundry. I'll go to town around 11:00. And I will have to ask aunt Norah to come with me because I'm not familiar with this place or the mall can do. But I'll go with whatever aunt Norah says. I also need to get a small TV for my room and a decoder well aunt Norah does pay for the DSTV monthly since she has her own TV. But she promised to put it back in the lounge for the kids to watch whatever they want plus the TV will be safe now that I'm staying here.

Anyway I wonder how often aunt Norah's daughters visit this house I doubt they do. You know; once some people start living a much better life they forget where they come from. I pray that I don't forget where I come from once I'm affluent.

“Hhey morning gossip will be the death of us” aunt Norah says stepping inside the house. “So what are your plans for today Nomzamo?” She asks sitting down. “I know you don't have any friends here and you are unfamiliar with this place.”

“I was hoping that you'll come with me to do grocery shopping for the house.”

“Of course I was also planning on going there too. We need to leave now because I have a meeting at 12:00” she states and I nod.

“Very well then. Let me finish up here your food is in the microwave.”

“Thank you. I don't know when was the last time

someone prepared breakfast for me thank you
Nomzamo” she stands and walks to the kitchen.

Guess I'll do the laundry when I come back and
that's if I'm not tired. Sighs... A long journey it will
be but I will reach the end of it.



ENHLE

Our morning is starting off on a boring note and I'm thinking of going to the mall just to see people and eat some ribs. I'm annoyed by Mazana talking about how good Mpilo is in bed and how big his cock is as if we don't know that mxm. I get up from the couch and leave Mazana talking to Lenah because

Nonkolosi is busy with her phone and she has earphones on. I get to the balcony and look out of the view with a glass of wine in my hand.

“I had a dream” Nonkolosi says standing beside me I turn to look at her.

“What dream?”

“It wasn't clear but there were two women whose faces were invisible talking to us telling us that all

will be well and the truth will be revealed. They also said someone will come and turn this kingdom around and that will be the end of our empire & riches. They also said that we will go back to whom we used to be before we got married” she states. She sounds very worried.

“What does that even mean? And which kingdom are they talking about because as far as I remember we don't stay in any kingdom?” I ask her I'm so confused.

“I don't know either. I didn't want to entertain it but it doesn't sit well in my heart. Plus it's all that I've

been thinking about ever since I woke up.”

“I wish I knew what it meant or maybe it was just a random dream nothing special.”

“If only it wasn't making my heart heavy. Anyways what are we doing today?”

“Let's go to the mall and I hope Mazana will keep her mouth shut while Marshall drives us there. She annoys me” I hiss and she laughs.

“I know what you mean. I sometimes wish that she can lose her voice just for a day hey.” We both laugh.

“I mean” I roll my eyes. “Let's go and bath” we turn on our heels and head back to the lounge.

“We are going to the mall” Nonkolosi notifies them passing them by.

“Finally some real outing. Who knows? Maybe I might eat food that I'm familiar with not half-done steaks and green salads as if I'm white” she says standing and I shake my head. “And don't tell me that we wear dresses I want to wear jeans or leggings.”

“Have you forgotten that you are a married woman now Mazana? That ring on your finger is not for the show. And you should throw away all your pants we don't wear pants here” I tell her and walk away.

I can hear her mumbling something as I ascend the stairs taking one step at a time. Kingdom? Riches? Back to who we were? Hell no I'm not going to selling vegetables on the streets. Ewww thinking that I was once a vegetable seller makes my skin crawl I hated every minute of it. Thanks God I'm living a better life now. But Nonkolosi's dream left a bitter taste in my mouth yuck. I hope it was just a dream and it will not come true.

I step inside my bedroom and take off my robe leaving it at the door.

INSERT 12

NOMZAMO

After all the shopping we've done that got my feet painful we are finally going to have lunch at spur steak ranches I love the ribs. We've put our shopping bags in some parcel office what a friendly & convenient mall this is. We get to spur and one of the waiters leads us to where we are going to settle. He has already introduced himself as he was escorting us. He hands us menus.

“Anything to drink while you are browsing the menu?” He asks with a smile plastered on his face.

“Orange juice will do thank you. And you can bring me double ribs with chips” I state. I can't skim the menu knowing very well what I want.

“Very well then and you ma'am?” He asks aunt Norah who's busy going back & forth with the menu.

“Please give us some time I'll call you once she's ready to order.” He nods and walks away.

“I'm confused I don't know what to order Nomzamo. I've never eaten here before” she confesses and I chuckle.

“It's okay aunt Norah you'll get used to this life. Take your time don't rush” I tell her and she nods.

I keep myself busy with my phone and people around me gasp and whisper amongst themselves. I lift my head and look at the entrance and four women make their way in you can see that they bathe in money you don't have to ask. Their dresses look beautiful but they are not mall friendly they are for galas and late-night dinner or something. But hey everyone has the freedom to wear whatever they want so whom am I to judge them? They are coming our way obviously going to sit at the table behind us and they have this attitude on their faces. As the looking down on someone not in their league look I don't know if you get me or what.

The first one passes us sending a dirty stare to our away and all of a sudden I hear baby cries. They continue until the 3rd one passes by with the last one there are no voices of crying babies but her presence alone makes my shoulders heavy. What the hell is going on here? I turn my head around to look at them and I see the spirit of babies attached to them crying & bleeding. I snap my head back to aunt Norah when I feel the back of my hair stands and a cold shiver passes me fast. Shit! I gasp and aunt Norah attends to me real fast by handing me a glass of orange juice that was placed in front of me I didn't even see the waiter putting it on the table.

“Are you okay?” Aunt Norah asks and I nod.

I clear my throat. “Ye- yes I'm fine. I was just thinking I'm sorry” I tell her with a fake smile plastered on my face and she nods. “Have you finally ordered?”

“Yes I've ordered steak.”

“Hmmm excuse me I need to use the bathroom” I say standing. “I'll be back.”

No I don't want to use the bathroom I need a breather. The women's presence isn't making me comfortable there are just too many spirits attached to them and I don't even understand how I am seeing them because I'm not a spiritual person I'm baffled. I rinse my face and look at myself in the mirror. The back of my hair stands and I snap my head to look at the door and I can hear the babies crying. No! I step out of the bathroom and I bump into someone. My blood rushes.

“Watch where you're going you dirty thing! You don't even know how much this dress costs this dress can buy you a much better life!” She yells as I walk through the hallway.

I sit down aunt Norah is already eating.

“I see you couldn't wait for me” I say chuckling.

“I was too hungry and you were taking too long to come back.”

“Fair enough” I say shrugging.

“Is everything okay Nomzamo?” She asks her voice laced with worry.

“Everything is fine Auntie. I just need to rest now the shopping exhausted me.”

“Okay we will leave once I'm done eating I also need to go and prepare for the meeting.”

“What's the meeting about anyway?”

“It's more like society schemes” she responds and I nod.

I don't know if whether I'll be able to eat with my

heavy shoulders and the baby cries ringing in my ears or maybe I'm overthinking this. Sighs. I will have to tell my mother about this immediately after I get home.

“What the hell is this? Huh?” One of the women yells at the waitress/waiter that's serving them.
“Am I speaking to myself?”

“No- no ma'am” the waiter responds with a breaking voice.

“Then what the hell is this? Can you eat this meal huh? Can you?”

I turn my head around when I hear the waiter half scream and this woman with no manners threw the food on his face. The other 3 laugh out loud. That's no way to treat people no matter how affluent you are one day you will want help from that very same person when you are on your low this is just uncalled-for. How dare they?

“I demand to see the manager right now!” Everyone is now focused on her and some are taking videos. I bet you they will go viral they deserve it. “Someone get me the damn manager right about now! Someone must be fired!”

“Pl- please madam this is my bread & butter please don't get me fired” the waiter kneels.

“Are you a man or woman? Wait you are gay. More reasons to get you fired. I can't be served by

someone whose confused about their sexuality. Sies you are disgusting! The manager right now!”

Her words cut deep and not only is she disrespectful but she's also homophobic too. Pathetic my heart aches for this waiter he's going to be jobless only because people with money own the world. Sighs.

The waiter & waitresses scurry across the whole restaurant most probably going to call the manager as this nonsense of a woman ordered. I close my eyes then open them again and look for the waiter that was serving us and he's nowhere to be found guess he too has gone to call the manager. These

women must be very important around here.

“Hol'up” the voice sounds very familiar. “Isn't that the very same dirty bitch who bumped into me as I was going to the bathroom? Enhle please tap that bitch sitting behind you I need to have a talk with her!” She yells.

I breathe in & out. These women are dramatic I turn before this disrespectful piece of shit named Enhle can tap my shoulder. Aunt Norah is watching everything attentively.

“What?” I ask her staring at her straight in the eyes even though they are making me uncomfortable. She also shifts uncomfortably in her seat. “What?” I ask again.

“What did this bitch do?” This Enhle person asks turning to look at her friend.

Kanty what kind of friends are these? I mean all

three of them have the same baby's spirit attached to them but different numbers. Wait what if they are sister wives? They are married after all.

“Speak up Nonkolosi! What did this bitch do? Doesn't she know who we are? Does she know that we can buy her whole entire life together with this old wrinkled face grandma she's sitting with?” Enhle spits and I chuckle standing.

“Auntie we can go now” I tell aunt Norah taking out money from the purse.

“What about our food?” She asks.

“Find the waiter and tell him to do takeaways for us you'll find me outside.”

“Bitch how dar—” thanks to God for the manager because I wasn't about to take any more insults from her.

“Good morning” he greets them as I walk away.

I get outside and I wait for aunt Norah to come out. Those women really ruined my day. I wonder who are they and what do they do.

“That was intense. Those were the Khuzwayo's wives some wealthy billionaire from around here” aunt Norah tells me as we leave.

“So just because they are married to a billionaire they think that they have the right to treat people anyhow they want?” She shrugs. “That was not cool at all this shows that they were never taught respect and how to address people. I've never come across rude wives like them in my whole entire life of existence. It's like they are forgetting that this life thing it's like a wheel it turns. Tomorrow they might find themselves looking for those people that they belittle for help.”

“My heart bleeds for the young man though losing your job just like that? And I know his family and he's the only one whose working he started two months ago” aunt Norah says. She sounds hurt.

“That's sad but at least you know his family. Can you get me his number?”

“I will try and maybe you guys might be best of friends. He has no friends either only because he's poor gay and HIV+ it's a sad situation.”

I swallow. “Find me his numbers.”

I don't know what the plan is but we will figure something out together. Imagine not having friends only because you are poor gay and HIV+? Mxm it's useless to tell you the truth. The society is fucked up really fucked up!



ENHLE

I hate being disrespected in front of useless broke people in a cheap eat-out place for that matter. I refuse to be disrespected by someone who's not even close to my tax bracket. Someone who doesn't know whether he's male or female I know that he wasn't the one who prepared me the burnt steak but he was the one serving me

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but he was the one serving me so he deserved being lashed out on and the manager did fire him. We didn't stay any minute there even though the manager said that he can prepare us another meal and it's on the house. I refused knowing very well that their day is already ruined.

“That was unnecessary though Enhle. The poor boy/girl lost her/his job now” Lenah says as we step inside the car.

“So what? We don't know him. Why must we care whether he lost his job or what? He can look for another job mus” I respond to her shrugging.

“I enjoyed every single of it. Watching him pleading to you to not get him fired excited me it showed that you held so much superiority. I was impressed and let me not get started about how clumsy the manager behaved in your presence” Mazana compliments with a laugh carried in her voice.

“That was great I felt proud I must say so myself” I say chuckling and turning to look at Nonkolosi who looks like she's deep in thoughts playing with her ring. “Nonkolosi.” I tap her shoulder and she jumps a little.

“Dammit Enhle! What the hell is your problem?!”
She snaps.

“Geez calm your tits down. What's going on with you? You wasn't yourself immediately you came back from the toilet and who was that bitch that bumped into you anyway?”

“I don't know her but what I do know is that I don't like her.

“You don't know her but you don't like her? How can you not like someone you don't know?” Lenah asks her.

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“I don't know either or maybe it's just hate at first sight it happens just like love at first sight.”

“Maybe you are right but it's a good thing that you'll never see her again” I say.

“Yeah and it doesn't make me feel any better because somehow she managed to ruin my day in fact my whole week. What a way to start my week” she says closing her eyes. “I don't know if it's me or what but there was something about her that I couldn't really put my fingers on something I don't even know what it is. Yet it was there she's so creepy.”

“You are the crazy one. Mxm seeing things that aren't there” Mazana mocks taking out her phone in her bag.

“I don't have time to entertain you Mazana. Not today not this week actually. And I'd like to suggest that may you not talk to me this whole week because I might moer you yeah?” Mazana laughs.

“Haibo and now?” Lenah asks chuckling.

“Beats me” I respond to her.

“What is really going on with you Nonkolosi? You woke up in a foul mood this morning and you have not been yourself ever since” Lenah sounds genuine right now.

“It's one of those days I'll be fine Lenah. Don't worry about me. Where are we going now?” She asks clearly dismissing the topic at hand.

“How about home? We will order pizza via Uber eats or Mr. D” I suggest.

“That ca—” and Lenah's phone start ringing cutting her short. “It's the husband let me hear what he wants. Baba” she answers.

— — —

“But—” she opens her eyes wide in shock.

“Okay I will tell them” she hangs up and stares at her screen.

“What? What is it?” I ask.

“Mpilo says we are a disappointment he says we've embarrassed him and he will deal with us when we get home. He sounds very furious” she tells us not meeting our gaze.

“How did we embarrass him?” Mazana asks her sounding confused and so am I.

Nonkolisi laughs and we all focus on her...

“What's funny?” Lenah asks her.

“We are trending number one on Twitter and thanks to you Enhle” she responds chuckling. “And the comments are not making things any easier.”

“What?” I retrieve my phone from my purse and go straight to trends on Twitter and we are trending number 1.

“@Boo_Bear I can't believe that these are the wives of a prominent businessman behaving like

hooligans. Sies they are annoying.”

“@Machody I've always known that these women are rude and they love looking down on people forgetting that they are where they are because of being married to a billionaire.”

“@Recee disgusting act from an old woman. And what does the sexuality of the waiter have got to do with anything? This is embarrassing I hope their husband won't see such a distasteful act!”

“@Honey Let's boycott spur that was unfair dismissal and what kind of a manager is that that fired someone on the spot just because a woman with money ordered her to? She's spineless. @EFF @Ombidisiu @Customerservice.”

“@K007 They should put the same energy in giving their husband babies. Old barren women they're useless. Mpilo must divorce their asses.”

“@Pule @K007 God will never give evil women kids. They are taking out their frustrations on innocent people. Barren women useless to the society.”

“@Sandy Seems like Enhle has forgotten where she comes from. She used to shit herself in school and always had gobs of snorts sies.”

That's it. I log out of Twitter. Tears are already running down my cheeks the comments are so mean. I didn't even realize that they were taking us a video dammit! This is messed up I got a little too carried away. Dammit I wonder what Mpilo is going to do to us I really wonder. The last time he slapped me now I have no idea what he will do to us.

“W-we didn't do anything. Mpilo must deal with Enhle. She's the one who acted like a hooligan we had nothing to do with it” Mazana says.

Lenah laughs through her tears and I know why she's laughing. Mpilo doesn't care whether you messed up alone or what he deals with everyone. He used to punish us by not giving us bank cards for two weeks and he knew how much we loved shopping but since he clapped me a few days ago I'm not sure what he'll do to us all I can say is that I'm scared.

“And I forgot to add: he summoned us back home at once” Lenah tells us in a very low tone.

Sweat drips from my forehead and I close my eyes saying a short prayer.

We are finally home and my heart starts beating out of my chest when I spot Mpilo's car on the driveway and none of us want to step out of the car first.

“The first wife must get out of first” Nonkolosi says.

“No. The one who shares a bed with him must go out first” Lenah says.

Yoh they keep on going back & forth about who should go out first. I mean who wants to be punished first? No one.

“All of you out right now!” Mpilo yells opening the door on Mazana's side we didn't even see him coming. “I said out don't make me drag you out of

here!”

I'm the first one to step out of the car when I see him grabbing Mazana by her dress and she screams when a hot slap lands on her cheek. The three of us rush to get inside the house but his booming voice halts us from taking any more steps further my knees become wobbly. I can feel him coming behind us and Mazana's sniffing is not making things any easier for us.

“Stand in line!” He orders us. “Why do you like disrespecting me women? Why do you fucking love embarrassing me!” He starts from Mazana and ends

at me his hands on his back. He huffs. “So none of you are willing to answer me? Okay all of you in the house now.”

We all rush inside the house and we ascend the stairs pushing each other we are all trying to make it to our rooms. I've never seen Mpilo this angry before he's breathing fire.

“Back here and strip off all your clothes!” He commands.

“Askies Baba?” Lenah sounds confused.

“Don't antlitl baba me. Strip! Don't make angry.”

My eyes dart to the whip on top of the bookshelf and I decide not to take off my clothes.

“Enhle. Strip right now” he hisses. I shake my head.

“Okay fine.”

Without any warning he grabs the whip and one lash on my back greets me. I scream in anguish. Another one follows and I can hear the others cry too.

“I said strip!” He roars tearing my dress and it falls off. “Good.” A lash follows. “I’m going to whip all of you 5 times for embarrassing me. My associates will never look at me the same again and it’s all because of your monkey behavior. Next time you will think twice before disrespecting me again and to make sure that you women never disrespect me I’ll add salt to the wounds. I’ll be starting from the first one

to the last one and after here I'll be expecting my food!"

Jesus Christ! What did I do?

"Oh and I've frozen all your cards for 4 months."
That's it we are done!

★»★«

MPENDULO

Today I decided to have my lunch in my office I've locked my door I'm avoiding Jidenna. She came to

knock here half an hour ago but I didn't respond to her knock. Anyway I ate my food first then transferred the lunch that Jidenna brought me to my lunchbox and I just need to wash her lunchbox. The vetkoeks I've given them to Tumelo one of the cleaners.

I open my laptop and go to Instagram. The first thing that catches my attention is a video it looks interesting. I press play and it's Enhle together with the other wives. Enhle is busy talking to the waiter in an uncivilized manner spattering a lot of nonsense. Money makes people go crazy but this is disrespect on another level. I hope my father doesn't see this video these women are not normal. I'm about to stop watching it when something or rather say someone catches my attention I quickly

press pause. And indeed someone caught my attention it's Nomzamo. What the hell is she doing there? And what the hell is she doing in Pretoria? Shit. I have no one to answer all these questions for me. But what I do know is that I need to find her...

INSERT 13

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ENHLE

My body is in excruciating pain I can't even sit upright and even lying on either side and on my back is impossible I can only lie on my stomach but not for long. The painkillers aren't even helping with numbing the pains. We were forced to cook a full home meal even though we were in great pains and I'm limping. Mpilo was guarding us all this while ordering us around and telling us to hurry with preparing his dinner. He threatened to whip us if we don't make it quick. Mpilo really turned into something else over a day this is not our husband something else took over him. Yes we pissed him off by what we did in the afternoon but we didn't deserve the beatings he gave us we really didn't and it's worse that he froze our cards and didn't even bother to call in a Dr. to check on us or something. Fresh tears invite themselves once again I look at the time on the small watch placed on my nightstand and it reads 20: 30. I heave in a sigh and

release it again.

Everyone is in their bedrooms nursing their wounds
Mpilo has gone out. I don't know to where and
quite frankly I don't care he's not sleeping in my
room after all. My heart goes out to Mazana
because Mpilo will sleep with her even if she's in
pain. My phone rings underneath the pillow I take it
out and Lenah's name flashes on the screen.

“Lenah.”

“I'm in the kitchen looking for food and the pots are empty did you maybe transfer the food somewhere? I'm hungry and I'm having stomach cramps.”

I sigh. “Check in the oven or something I'm sure Mpilo put it there you know how much he hates pots filled with food and worst of it all at night.”

“I've checked everywhere and there's nothing the pots are all cleaned out” she tells me sounding

defeated. I close my eyes. “And there's no bread either.”

How could Mpilo do this to us? How could he hide the food from us knowing very well that we will get hungry at some point? Dammit Mpilo. I'm also hungry and my stomach is making funny sounds I tried ignoring it but it's impossible and now here is Lenah calling me telling me that there's no food after we cooked up a storm. This is ridiculous!

“Why is Mpilo evil?” I ask Lenah knowing very well that she doesn't have an answer for me.

“You are asking the wrong person Enhle. I'll just settle for cereal at least it will hold me until in the morning” she tells me. “And how are you feeling?”

“That's a dumb question you are asking me right now Lenah. You know very well how I'm feeling I feel the same as you; hurting confused and hungry. I'm still trying to comprehend the new Mpilo he introduced to us it all just feels surreal.”

She chuckles. “We are partly to be blamed though Enhle. Let's state facts. He has been far too patient with our spoilt behavior and looking down on other people. Guess he was putting us in line and reminding us that he's still the man of the house. Our actions cost us greatly.” She's justifying his abuse? Unbelievable!

“Are you hearing yourself very well Lenah? Did he damage your brain perhaps when he was beating you? Don't defend his abusive behavior Lenah!”

She chuckles. “So it's okay for you to abuse others emotionally and verbally? You are no different from Mpilo you are both abusers Enhle. Or do you think that how you treat all those people below our league is that not abuse? Do you think that throwing food at that waiter in spur was not abuse? And not only that but you've embarrassed him to the whole. Do you think he will be the same ever again? Let me answer you I think the fuck not. This should be a lesson to us and maybe if we try by behaving like normal wives maybe he might give us back our cards sooner. I'll die being indoors for four months. Think about this” she disconnects the call without waiting for me to say something.

I chuckle because I'm speechless. I have nothing to say. This is... Wow! She's right I'm no different from Mpilo. I've hurt more people I'm worse. Mpilo wouldn't have beaten us if we were behaving like any normal wives out there and now thinking about it we've really embarrassed him and since we went viral I'm sure my family has seen it and they are disappointed in me they are very disappointed because they didn't raise me to behave like I was not raised in a traditional home and taught to treat everyone with respect. All the dos & don'ts they gave me flew out of the window. I got introduced to a lifestyle of money and everything was never the same afterwards. Did money really change me? Did it turn me into someone that I'm not? The answer to those questions makes me cringe.

My stomach grumbles again forcing me to get off the bed slowly without hurting myself I'll not sleep on an empty stomach that's for sure. I put in my slippers and drag myself out of the bedroom. I look at the long spiral glass staircase that I need to descend. Now more than ever I wish that I had a room below sighs. I take one step at a time anyway.

Stepping inside the kitchen I find Lenah sitting in one of the chairs eating and busy on her phone. I'm exhausted from that 5 minutes walk I took coming here at most times a minute is enough for me to descend the stairs.

“How the hell did you manage to get here without getting tired?” I ask Lenah taking out a bowl from the cupboard the cereal is on top of the countertop together with the milk.

“It was a mission to get here and it's still going to be a mission when I ascend the stairs going back to my room.”

“I know what you mean. So the other two aren't hungry?”

“I don't know or maybe they are but they are just lazy to come down to eat. I wonder what did Mpilo do with the food and to think I was looking forward to eating your beef stew ai disappointments galore” she says shaking her head.

“I think you were right by saying that we must start behaving like normal wives being indoors for four months will surely suffocate me. Imagine not seeing people for four months? And to think that we will be missing all the trends out there gives me heart

palpitations.”

“I worry that we will be forced to wear all the outdated clothes in our closets. I mean I can't wear something that I brought 3 months ago it no longer holds value.”

“My sentiments exactly and it will be more annoying having to reprimand Nonkolosi & Mazana with their constant bickering. It gives me an unnecessary headache” I tell her rubbing my temples.

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“Those two drains all the energy out of me they are too childish. Hopefully they'll learn to tolerate each other now that we are held prisoners.”

I chuckle. “I hope so too.”

“So this is what you always get up to? Gossiping about me & Mazana?” Nonkolosi asks coming behind us.

Lenah clicks her tongue and I chuckle. We are not about to entertain her shame. Ignoring her is bliss. Sometimes her attitude stenches.

“And you decided to finish all the fo—” she stops talking when she looks at our bowls. “What happened to the food that we cooked?”

“Mpilo happened. We don't know what he did with the food” Lenah responds to her.

“Fuck him! Isn't it enough that he whipped us and gave us bruises that are making it hard for us to sit & sleep? Why is he doing us like this?” She asks putting both her hands on the kitchen counter and dropping her head.

“We—” the engine of Mpilo's car makes me stop talking. We all look at each other and no one tells one another to leave as we stand to our full length.

Nonkolosi switches off the lights and we all rush to the lounge mizing the excruciating pains with our bowls in our hands to hide behind the coaches in the second lounge. The door opens and he steps inside without switching on the lights. He whistles as he makes his way to the staircase. A breath of relief leaves my mouth and I can hear Nonkolosi and Lenah too breathing out. Fuck this man.

“Let me go to my room” whispers Nonkolosi.

“Same here” whispers Lenah.

Ascending the stairs is a mission on its own passing Mazana's room I can hear her begging Mpilo to not do it.

“Baba please I'm in pains” she tells him.

“So you are denying to have sex with your husband? I paid full Lobola for you! I own you and I can do any fucking thing I want with you Mazana. Now sweetheart you are going to satisfy your husband or first thing tomorrow morning I'm going to send you

back to the village. You will go back to fetching water in the river and cook outside. The choice is yours and I know that you'll never go home because you've tasted the sin of a good lifestyle” he tells her. “After I'm done with you I'm going to sleep with all my other wives. I own your bodies minds and souls.”

Jesus this man. I cover my mouth when I hear him groaning and hurry to my bedroom. I step inside and lock the door and stand behind it breathing heavily. He can't be serious I don't want to have sex with him he's evil! Who demands sex from their wives after the whopping they got? My heart beats out of my chest. I rush for my phone underneath the pillow and send Nonkolosi & Lenah messages telling them to prepare themselves Mpilo is coming

for sex. I hope he won't start in my room. What have I gotten ourselves into? It seems like we've awakened his beast. I look at the time on my cellphone and it's 21:45 he still has a long night ahead.

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NOMZAMO

Since I'm bored and I've already put the kids to sleep after bathing them & serving them food a couple of hours ago I decided to keep myself busy with baking. I'm only going to do two pans of muffins and one pan of Banana bread. The kids were so happy with all that we've brought for them I added a couple of reading books & toys to the mix. Aunt Norah went to her boyfriend's house and Nonjabulo went to another section with some man. Apparently she used to come with those men she

sells sex too in this house and sometimes she'll make the kids watch and tell Abigail that she should take lessons because very soon she'll be the one to do what she does supporting her mother and mind you; Abigail is only 10 years old. The anger that rose inside me when Abigail told me that cannot be deciphered.

Nonjabulo was willing to sacrifice with her eldest daughter unprovoked so that she can fund her gambling & alcohol lifestyle. Abigail is still a child for crying out loud she's supposed to be playing with her age mates and not babysit her little brothers. The revelation really rubbed me off the wrong way plus my day was ruined. Futhi ke that dirty pig allowed a couple of men that she sleeps with to touch her in an appropriate manner dammit. As

long as I'm here nothing will happen to the kids I'll protect them from any harm that may come their way

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I'll protect them from any harm that may come their way and if I'm failing I'll send them to my parents.

The knock at the door startles me I wonder who can that be so late. I attend to it at least the butler is locked. Willow is standing at the door with his hands buried in his sweatpants. I stare at him he is a catch honestly but men showed me flames. Not men but a man rather. Lihle was my first but not in breaking the sealed lid. Story for another day...

“Hey the smell dragged me here I was just passing by and I couldn't really ignore the smell. So what are you baking?” He smiles showing me his perfect white teeth.

“Why didn't you continue walking?”

“Because the smell didn't permit to. Now back to my question; what are you baking?” He bites his bottom lip and I shake my head.

“Muffins & Banana bread.”

“Can I get a taste?” He asks. “With some tea of course or coffee” he processed to say.

“You can't come in here. You are a stranger and kids are sleeping so you are not allowed in.”

“Fine then I'll sit here then. Just give make the cup of tea with muffins then” he says sitting on the kitchen step.

“Come in and it's just one coffee then you leave deal?”

“Deal.” He stands as I open the butler for him to get inside. “Very cleaner than the last time I was here.”

“Yeah. You can take a sit” I tell him and he sits in one of the chairs taking a look around.

Aunt Norah still has those old wooden chairs with the table. But they are still in good condition and her cupboards are stainless steel. Anyways I switch on the kettle.

“Lemon zest or chocolate muffins?” I ask him.

“Two of each will do.” I nod. “So Nomzamo tell me about yourself.”

“I'm a baker that's all you need to know.”

“Just that? Any friends job favourite music/movies?”

“I don't have any friends and I listen & watch about everything. I'm not choosy honestly.”

“Wow a rare breed. Do you at least party drink or smoke?”

“Neither.” I push the saucer of muffins in front of him.

“What? You can't be serious Nomzamo.”

“Believe me. And you? Tell me about yourself.”

“Well my real name is Ofentse Willow is my nickname. I'm 32 years old and I'm an accountant at Smith & Phil company. I have a daughter who's 8 years old and I stay in my parents' yard in the backroom. Hmm I have 4 friends and I party every weekend I'm wild.”

“I see. Where's the mother of your daughter?”

“I don't know. Probably running after old men I don't care about her really as long as I have my daughter all is well.”

“Some women. How many sugars? Actually don't answer.” I place the mini tray before him. “Serve yourself.”

“Thank you. You know I can actually get used to this
hey being served muffins in a saucer and brought
tea in a tray.”

“I'm not this nice hey” I tell him and he laughs.

“We shall see about that you'll be around here for a
while yeah?”

“I don't know.”

“Well you should stay I'm your friend now.”

“Your girlfriend allows you to have female friends?”

“Yeah she's very understanding and besides you will automatically be her friend too.”

“And you allow her to have male friends?”

“Yeah I do.”

“She's very lucky. My husband didn't like the idea of me having friends whether males or females the only friends I knew were his and I was not allowed to talk to them even if we are chilling together.”

And now that I'm thinking about it he was controlling me. It all makes sense now. He used to tell me how to dress and so forth.

“Wait did you just say husband?”

“Yeah husband.”

“You are married?”

“I was” I give him my back and look out of the window. All that Lihle did to me comes crumbling down my brain like an exploded building I quickly blink away my tears. “Excuse me” I say lowering my face and head to my room.

Stepping inside I fan my face and wipe away the tears. “Keep it together Nomzamo. Don't break down in front of a stranger.” I tell myself looking in the mirror and my eyes are slightly showing that I wanted to cry. Dammit!

I wipe my face with my wipes and step out of the bedroom. Willow has served himself more of my scones. He swings his shoulders and his ripped back comes into view not bad. His girlfriend is very lucky hey. Lihle never attended a gym in his whole life but I loved him still with his beer belly.

“I'm sorry about that” I say sitting down.

“It's okay. I hope you don't mind.”

“I don't really but don't take anymore they are for the kids.”

“I'm also your big kid mus” he says and just then his phone rings. “It's my girl” I nod.

My phone vibrates on top of the table and it's a message from an unknown number. I pick it up & view it.

“Hey it's Lwazi. I got your numbers from

Mam'Norah. She says you wanted my numbers so these are my numbers.”

I quickly save them on WhatsApp and text him luckily for me he's online. Willow is still talking to his girlfriend.

†♥†

“Hey it's Nomzamo. What are doing tomorrow?”

“I'll probably be spending the rest of my day in my bed as usual besides I'm not ready to face people after what happened to me.”

“I understand. Can you give me your address? I'll come tomorrow in the afternoon.”

“Before I give you my address. Why are you so interested in knowing me?”

“Well firstly it's because I didn't like how that woman treated you and made you lose your job. Secondly aunt Norah told me your story and since I'm new here in the hood I decided that I'm going to befriend you knowing that you don't have any friends. I also didn't have any friends back home.”

“If you say so then. 53...”

“Thank you we will text tomorrow I have a visitor.”

“Relative?”

“No. Some guy named Willow.”

“O.M.G! You mean that 🔥 🔥 hunk?”

“Is the any other Willow that you know?”

“No. Only him. Tomorrow when you come to visit I want every detail. Willow is every woman's dream around here. His smile is a panty dropper I'm even drooling.”

“Lol... Well he's not my dream thank you.”

“You must be bewitched woman!”

“Lol... Maybe goodnight.”

“Don't drop your panty for him just yet he is a king of hit run.”

I chuckle and do not respond to his text. He seems like a cool person.

“The husband?” Willow asks erasing the smile on

my face.

“No. I need to go to bed now thank you for visiting.”

“He told you to chase me already?”

“No. It's my bedtime and I need to read before my actual bedtime.”

“Oh okay” he stands. “Have a good night then.”

I stand too. “Good night.”

“Can I at least get a goodnight hug?”

“No. Your girlfriend will give you one” I hold the door open for him.

“Please?” He implores.

“Fine.” He pulls me into him and hugs me. He's slightly taller than me.

“You can let go now thank you” I tell him freeing myself from his grip. I had to break the hug I felt his bulge of which wasn't there when he came in.

He clears his throat. “Yeah sure goodnight” he says walking out.

I lock the door after him and clear the table. I look at the time on my watch and it's 23:45 yoh it's very late. Once done tidying up the kitchen I switch off the lights and go to my room.

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