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Precious Rosé

"Love is not all sunshine but two
people can share one umbrella
and survive the storm.."

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INTRODUCTION.

Love, pain, jealous, witchcraft, supernatural powers, sacrifices all come to play in this romance thriller. Bloodshed is a common practice as every other maiden compete for the ultimate prize which is the heart of the crown Prince, Sphamandla. Being the love of the Prince means being the future Queen who wouldn't want that? The question is, does the Prince's heart want to be won?

Nomthandazo is a loving, obedient, hardworking and a beautiful daughter of Bab' uMahlangu and MaNkonjeni who treat her as a Princess despite their background. Nomtha is determined to help her family out of poverty by securing a job but with no luck. Nomtha is the complete opposite of her elder sister Snegugu. Unknown to her, she meets the sought after Prince Sphamandla. When she realizes she's been dining with the prince, she's shocked and at the same time scared of how other maidens will react to the news. How will meeting the Prince change her life?

QUOTE

"No relationship is all sunshine, but two people can share one umbrella and survive the storm together."

INSERT 1

Sometimes in life we envy other people lifestyles, wonder why God chose our very own family out of all the families in the world, country, neighborhood to be from a poor background. We question Him of being unfair but he knows why he did that. Our blessings are delayed because ours are a special order and takes time to prepare.

AT THE MAHLANGU HOUSEHOLD

It's a very beautiful early Monday morning, MaNkonjeni is already up and cleaning her yard. She does this everyday despite having two full grownups daughters. Bab' uMahlangu is busy trying to fix his scooter. The motorcycle is what brings the food on the table at the Mahlangu household, it would be of great disappointment and sadness if he is not able to fix it. What will they eat if they all stay at home looking at each other.

"I sent these girls to school with the hope and faith that one day they were gonna come to my rescue. I now regret ever sending them to school." Bab' uMahlangu curses still busy with the spanners.

"Good morning, dad. It's not good for your healthy to be cursing and regretting your decisions this early in the morning. Besides, all hope is not lost, don't lose your faith dad." Nomtha kisses his father's forehead.

"What do you know about health issues? You should be busy looking for a job not trying to lecture me, I'm your father young lady." He continues with his work.

"I will find a job, I promise." With that said, she disappears into the kitchen to help with the cooking and cleaning. Nomtha is very hardworking person, always trying her best to make her parents' burden easy. She knows it's going to take a lot more than just helping with the chores and giving them words of encouragement. What her family needs is money then all their troubles will be history. She's been up and down trying to find a job with no luck but she's hopeful. She's not the kind that gives up every time things don't go her way.

"Good morning, Maa." She greets her mom as soon as she enters the kitchen.

"Morning sunshine. What are you preparing?" MaNkonjeni takes a seat in one of the kitchen chairs.

"Sour porridge. Almost done. Want some coffee?" She asks already pouring the coffee in her mother's favorite mug. She knows what her mom wants and needs all the time.

"Call your father in so he can have his porridge while its still hot." MaNkonjeni sips her steaming hot sugarless black coffee.

"Let me set the table first then I will call him." Nomtha is running around setting the table.

"I don't know why you even bother calling him inside, he doesn't deserve to eat anything. What kind of a husband, father makes only \$2 the entire day?" Snegugu pulls the chair, takes her mother's already served coffee and helps herself.

"Sne, what is wrong with you? Please, show some respect. Dad is trying his best to feed all of us but you never appreciate his efforts." Nomtha defends her father like always.

"Mtcheew! Tries his best my foot!" She spits the coffee.

"What the f-----"

"That coffee wasn't meant for you but since you are too lazy to even pour yourself coffee that's in front you, serves you right." Nomtha takes the cup away from her, pours the remaining coffee into the sink, washes it and pours her mother another cup of coffee. Sne is that child that you pray to God and ask Him why He gave you a curse instead of a child? MaNkonjeni is always in tears because of her. Bab' uMahlangu has given up on her. Nomtha is the one who still hasn't lost hope and patience in trying to mould her sister into a better person. Will she succeed?

"Mom tell your daughter to find a job. We can't be starving and eating like slaves when she has a suitcase full of certificates." Sne takes out her packet of cigarettes, she's about to light the cigar when her father snatches away the lighter.

"Not in my house Snegugu!" He snaps.

"You call this a house?" She laughs her irritating piercing laugh.

"Sne!" Nomtha can not bare to see her parents troubled by her.

"Say another word and I will forget that you are my sister. I'm sorry mom, dad." MaNkonjeni can't keep holding her tears anymore, it's too much to keep on holding in. Tears fall freely down her cheeks.

"Zandi darling, I know how you feel about Sne, please stop stressing and upsetting yourself." Her husband comforts her, she cries even harder. "Hush, it will all be fine." Seeing her distraught mother, Nomtha hugs her tight and says nothing. She can't hold her own tears, it breaks her heart to see her mother so upset. Abruptly, she turns and goes to Sne's bedroom. She pushes the door without even knocking, Sne is busy putting on her makeup.

"What is wrong with you, Sne?" She ignores her, Nomtha snatches her eyeliner.

"Are you crazy? Can't you see I'm busy?"

"Don't you dare give me that shit! What has come over you? You always make mom cry, you are not even bothered about it. What kind of a daughter are you?" For the first time in her entire life, Nomtha is genuinely angry. "What? You can't talk now? If you continue like this I will forget that you are my

sister. Mom and dad are doing so much for us, the least you can do is to show appreciation and respect."

"Who died and made you madam speaker?" Sne tries to snatch the eyeliner from her.

"You really need divine intervention." She sighs.

"Are you trying to say that I'm a lost cause?" She feigns to be sad.

"Sne, you are my only sister I love you but you leave me with no choice. Most of the times I feel like you want me to choose sides----"

"And you are choosing your useless parents over me?" Sne blurts out.

"First of all, our parents are not useless. Secondly, I will never choose between you and them. Come on Sis, we're family. We are supposed to be united not against each other. I love all of you, for my sake, please try and be good daughter, please." Poor Nomtha, always begging her older sister to behave herself.

"Okay. Stop preaching I have to be somewhere in a few minutes, now can I have my eyeliner back?" She smiles melting Nomtha's heart.

"Yeah. Where are you going?" She probes.

"Somewhere you wouldn't want to be."

"Fine. Behave yourself, don't do something I wouldn't do."

Nomtha cautions, Sne laughs out loud.

"Who is the older sister here, you or me?" She asks still laughing.

"Whatever." Nomtha rolls her eyes and leaves.

The two sisters can be on each other's throats one minute and understand each other the second minute. They have that sisterhood bond that only the two of them can understand. MaNkonjeni and Bab' uMahlangu have tried to tear them apart thinking that Sne will eventually corrupt Nomtha's mind but to no avail. Nomtha is just a sweetheart, all she ever wants and prays for, is for her family to be united like before.

AT THE ROYAL PALACE

The maids are busy with their morning chores. This palace has like.....twenty or so maids. They are always busy walking up and down

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in and out of the house, I wonder if they ever rest or sleep at all. Ntombikayise the only daughter of king Melusi Tshabangu and Queen Clementine is sitting in the garden. She has her Apple earphones on, humming along whatever song she is listening to. On the table in front of her is a tray which has all sorts of fruits and a glassful of mango juice, she picks up the glass, sips the juice but quickly spits it all out.

"Maids!" She screams, they all come running almost tripping over.

"My Princess." All of them are now standing opposite her with their heads bowed.

"What in the hell is this? Huh!" She throws all the remaining juice on them. They flinch but say nothing. "What? Have you all gone mute?" Must be nice being a Princess, now these poor maids have to guess what has upset her so much.

"That was mango juice My Princess." Samkelisiwe the only maid in the palace who seem to still have her voice says.

"You call this shit mango juice? Is this how to prepare fruit juice at your house!" Kayise is fuming.

"Maybe if you tell us what's wrong with it we can understand where your anger is coming from." Samke continues to defy the princess and that makes Kayise even more angry to an extent of slapping her.

"How dare you talk back to me?" She's enraged.

"Everyone has a right to voice the----"

"What's going on here?" The Queen briskly walks towards them.

"Mommy they saved me a shitty juice and they are all claiming it was pure mango juice, I don't even know where they got that cheap awful tasting thing." She shouts.

"Who among you prepared the juice?" Asks the Queen.

"I did My Que----" A hot slap lands on Zodwa's cheek. "Don't you ever serve my daughter cheap things, she's royalty not a commoner like you who eats everything thus edible!" Those words hit hard on my chest and penetrate through my heart and soul. Zodwa is in tears, I too would be in tears if I were her. No one chose to be a commoner, if we all had to choose our lineages I'm sure we will all be somehow of royalty.

"Get out of my face! All of you!" They swiftly turn and leave.

"It's okay honey, I will personally prepare something for you." She smiles.

"No. It's okay mother I will manage the fruits, besides I have an appointment with my beautician in a few minutes, I have to get ready. Thanks for the offer, anyway." All of a sudden she's smiling, what happened to her anger?

"Do you need some money? Or anything?" Clementine asks her spoiled brat.

"You know I hate carrying cash. A bank card will do." Without hesitating, Queen mother opens her purse and hands her a debit card.

The maidens are blaming Samke for everything that just happened. They are also trying to comfort Zodwa who was at the receiving end of the Queen's hand. Sbu, the younger prince walks in the kitchen, makes his own sandwich, pours himself some coffee and sits on one of the kitchen stools. Upon seeing him, other maids quickly return to their assigned work.

"Heeeee, the sun must have risen from the West today! Prince Sbu and coffee?" Samke exclaims and claps her hands.

"I have a serious headache, please lower your voice you crazy maiden." He mumbles.

"Hayibo Sbu, yimina uSamke (Sbu, it's me Samke) you know you can talk to me. Where were you yesterday?" She raises her eyebrow, lowers her voice so only Sbu can hear her. "Did you find yourself a desperate girl?" The nosy Samke continues trying to make Sbu say something.

"I'm not telling you anything. If you keep persisting, our deal is off." He takes a sip of his coffee.

"Fine. But you know how I like breaking news. Anyway, money is more important than whatever you were up to yesterday."
She finally gives up.

"That's better. Now, go and continue with your chores before my mother sees us together." She winks at him and leaves.

AT THE TSHABANGU ENTERPRISES.

"Wow mngane! (Wow, friend) this place looks like heaven."
Sheila who's accompanying Nomtha on her job hunting exclaims.

"The more reason why I haven't even bothered to try my luck.
The building only, intimidates me." Nomtha sighs.

"You are a brave and confident girl I've ever met, come on go
and show them what you've got." Sheila encourages her.

"I can only imagine how the workers of this company dress, the
perfumes they use, what they eat for breakfast and lunch-----"

"Stop. You have what it takes to work anywhere you want, class
and fashion doesn't determine our destinies. Go and make use
of those certificates, don't be like me. You know I was never
intelligent like you thus why I even failed my standard level. Be
thankful God gave you brains, use them." Sheila may not be

intelligent like she says but she is a true friend. She's always there for Nomtha no matter the situation.

"Thank you chomie." Nomtha hugs her tight.

"Anytime." She pulls out of the hug.

After some minutes still procrastinating on whether to get in or turn back and go straight home, Nomtha finally punches the open button on the elevator and gets in. Her friend waves and promises to wait for her. The elevator doors close, she's now alone on her way to either her success or another disappointment. She's silently praying until the elevator comes to a jolt on the 23rd floor, her heart is now pounding in her chest but soldiers on. She's come a long way to turn back now.

"Good morning ma'am." Nomtha greets the lady behind the reception desk who in turn looks her from head to the middle part of the body, says nothing but scowls expressing her displeasure. "Good morning ma'am. I'm looking for a job if by any chance your company is hiring." The lady bursts into laughter.

"Girl, what makes you think you have what it takes to work in this prestigious company?" She still has a frown but Nomtha chooses to ignore that.

"I have an honors degree in Accounting and Finance and that makes me eligible to work for any company that is in need of an accountant." She says proudly.

"Well then, this company is not hiring and even if we were hiring I'm sure we wouldn't be considering someone who has no sense of style like you." This lady? Does she have to be so blunt? I now feel sorry for poor Nomtha who is wearing her best outfit.

"Ma'am, a company like this doesn't have to be run on sense of fashion. I understand the Tshabangu Enterprises is more into manufacturing and agriculture, my fashion sense has nothing to do with me looking for a job unless this company has somehow immediately turned into a fashion house." Nomtha humbly says. She's an angel but hell the girl can put forward some valid points.

"We are not hiring. Just I----"

"Aisha!" Someone calls out, the receptionist quickly goes back to her computer.

NOMTHA'S POV.

A tall, dark skinned, well taken care of guy approaches the reception area. He's wearing a suit that looks like its cost can cover all the expenses of my family for a whole year, not to mention his shoe....

"Hello Miss." He says, he has a deep voice and a British accent.

"Hi." I wave still holding my files.

"How may we help you?" He politely asks making that arrogant receptionist cough dramatically.

"I came here looking for a job but the lady here has helped me. Thank you." I turn to leave but he pulls me back.

"Is this how you have been looking for a job?" I nod. "No wonder you are still unemployed."

"Not to be rude but I don't understand." I'm really a down to earth young lady but I react whenever someone tries to be arrogant or somewhat looks down on me.

"Follow me." He orders. What? I do as he says. He opens the door, goes in, holds the door for me.

"Come in." The office is magnificent. Everything inside is unique, the paintings on the wall are breathtaking. "Sit." He orders me to sit on the opposite chair. I'm still wondering why he asked me to come into his office when that lady said they are not hiring. "Sphamandla Tshabangu." He brings his hand forward for me to shake.

"Nomthandazo Mahlangu." I say as I shake his warm and soft hand.

INSERT 2

He looks straight into my eyes making me feel uncomfortable. I have nothing to hide but I don't like it when someone looks straight into my eyes as if they can read my mind or even worse, able to see my vulnerable inner self. I pull my hand away from his, he clears his throat and sits down.

"Well, you said you are looking for a job?" Is that really a question?

"Yes." I decide to treat his statement as a question.

"May I see your papers?" I give him my files. "How old are you? Are you a graduate?"

"I'm twenty four, a holder of an honors degree in Accounting and finance." I say with confidence.

"For a twenty four year old, you have quite a CV and a hell lot of references. I'm impressed. Can I have copies of these?" I say nothing but stare at him. He hasn't even read a single word on the papers, how rude. "I'm not rude. I have a meeting that has already started in the boardroom. I was on my way there when I saw you leaving. Tell Aisha to photocopy these and send them to my office, I will be in touch." He gives me his business card, ushers me out and disappears into the door labelled boardroom.

"Friend, you really took your time. So?" Sheila asks as soon as I step outside the elevator. I blink rapidly because of the the light.

"I didn't find a job." Disappointment is audible in my voice.

"I'm sorry friend. We will keep trying." She hugs me tight, I try hard to stop the threatening tears but fail miserably, I sob still in my friend's arms. "It's okay sweetheart. God will surely make a way, you will see yourself breaking through one day. I will keep praying for you." She comforts me.

"Thank you. I don't know who I would be without you." I wipe my tears.

"Without me, you'd be a boring and too strict, young, lonely Nomthandazo." We both laugh.

We decide not to take a taxi but walk home.

NARRATED

MaNkonjeni is sitting with her friend MaZikhali under the tree shade. MaZikhali is giving her the lunchtime news. Who needs a radio, newspaper or television when MaZikhali is around.

"Did you see that daughter of your neighbor?" She lightly pats her friend's shoulder.

"Which neighbor are you talking about now?" Zandi looks at her.

"That woman who thinks owns the world. Her daughter is back and you won't believe it!" She dramatically claps her hands.

"What are you saying?" She pushes her lightly.

"She's now a yellowbone! From being the most dark girl in this neighborhood."

"You're exaggerating MaZikhali. She was in America, its cold that side so its normal for her skin to be lighter." Zandi tries to defend the girl.

"America you say? This girl was in the country selling her body." Zandi's eyes wide open in amazement.

"Stop lying. Did you see her or it's just hearsays?" She knows how her friend likes making up stories.

"I'm not lying Zandi. You should ask Sne, what do they call it?" She scratches her temple. "Yeah soci.....what is the word again? Social media, it's all over there. People are talking."

"Good afternoon mama." Nomtha saves her mother who looks all of a sudden disturbed. Could it be what MaZikhali said or something else?

"Afternoon Princess. How did it go?"

"Not good Maa but I will not give up. Oh! Aunt how are you?"

"I'm fine my girl. You look grown up, when are we meeting our son in-law?"

"I'm not about to rush into love stuff. I still have to build my empire before falling in love."

"Thus good." She makes faces, Nomtha notices but chooses to ignore it.

Sne is in a club somewhere in town, she's drinking and getting down like always. People are shouting, whistling and clapping hands. She's the only one in the middle of a big crowd, she has a bottle of beer in her hand. Partying is what keeps her alive, I wonder where she gets all the money to buy such expensive beverages, clothes, shoes, make up kits and the whole enchiladas. She is a definition of a slay queen. After all the struggle her parents went through to see her graduating someday, this is how she repays them. Poor Mahlangu and Zandi, only if they saved all that money for something else.

The King is having a meeting with his advisor and chiefs. Queen Clementine is also attending the meeting, she likes to poke her nose where they don't belong, one could swear this kingdom is led by a woman.

"Your Majesty. I think it's time we crown Prince Spha as your successor." The king's right hand man Bab' uMseleku suggests.

"What's the hurry? Everyone knows Spha is the crown prince, why do we have to waste our energy and time doing such useless things." Clementine says out of ignorance.

"Watch your tongue woman lest the ancestors strike you dead this moment!" Cautions the King's advisor and seer.

"This is the reason why I always tell you My King to restrict this foreign woman from meetings like these unless you want this kingdom to face the full wrath of our ancestors." Says Mr Sokhele, he always tells the truth like it is.

"I apologize on behalf of my wife. Darling please, respect our culture." The King tries to avoid the chaos.

"Whatever." Clementine scowls and leaves the elders shaking their heads.

"I will talk to my wife and get back to you on when we should crown my boy Spha." He sighs.

"Your Majesty, this has to be done before Spha gets married. He's not getting any younger and I'm sure we don't want the situation where he comes home with a pregnant woman because if that happens, the Umlazi kingdom will be doomed." Warns the seer as he turns to leave.

"You should put a leash on that wife of yours, we can't face the consequences of her foolishness." Chief Sokhele warns.

The King assures everyone that everything will be done accordingly but he looks uncertain. What could be bothering him? Is Clementine more of a problem than of a wife? We will see if the King is as strong as he portrays himself to be.

"What's wrong mother? Why are you pacing like this?" Sbu throws himself on his mother's bed.

"It's your father and those fools!" She removes her crown and throws it on the couch.

"What did they do now?" He yawns.

"Stop! This is a serious matter. Get out of my room I need to think." She takes her phone and dials someone's number.

"Fine. Suit yourself, I'm out." He slams the door behind him.

NOMTHA'S POV

Its been eight days since I left my documents in that man's office but they haven't called or anything. They can at least tell me they are not gonna hire me. My phone rings bringing me

back to where I am. I check the caller, it's an unsaved number, who could this be?

"Heello." I wait for the caller to say something. Someone clears his/her throat on the other side.

"May I please speak to Nomthandazo Mahlangu." He finally says.

"It's Nomthandazo speaking. How can I be of help?"

"Ehm.... Its Sphamandla. Can you please come to my office, like now?"

"Okay. I will be there in a few minutes." The line goes dead, I sigh. I hope this guy is not calling me to tell me to my face that he won't be hiring me. I already took a shower so I just change my clothes into something formal. I take my phone, bag and leave.

"Where to, Princess?" Dad questions.

"I just got a call to come to the office where I dropped my CV a few days ago." I pour myself some water and drink.

"Thus great news." He's ecstatic.

"Let's not celebrate now. See you later, Dad. Love you." I blow him a kiss and leave.

"You? Again?" The receptionist gives me a stare, I wonder if there is something wrong with me or its just her being herself.

"Good morning. I got a call from Mr Tshabangu to come and see him." I ignore her stern face.

"Fine. Wait here, let me tell him you are here." She presses a button on the telephone and informs him that I have arrived.

"Go in." I thank her and climb the steps to Mr Tshabangu's office. I find him waiting for me in the doorway.

"Good morning Miss Mahlangu. Come in." He pulls out a chair for me to sit, I hesitate until he tells me to sit.

"Thank you."

"I called you here to tell you that I'm impressed by your CV. I decided to give you a chance and see how it goes."

"Really?" I can't hide my excitement, I have waited for this day ever since I graduated. I'm jumping up and down, I've forgotten that I'm in someone office until I hear him clear his throat.

"Sorry." I sit back down.

"It's okay. May I continue with what I was saying?" I nod. "You will not be working as an accountant but my personal assistant." I don't know how I feel about this, as long as I will get paid, right? "You can start working tomorrow. For now, I will just show you around the offices and brief you on how we operate."

"Thank you so much

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Sir."

"We will share this office, I hope you don't mind. Here is your contract you can read it and sign it if you agree with what's written on it." He gives me a big brown envelope.

We walk around, other workers are giving me stern looks and some are looking with raised eyebrows, will I be able to fit in here? I will have to try, my family needs each and every cent I can get from this job.

When I reach home, I tell mom and dad how it went. They are all happy except for my sister.

"Sne, I just got a job, smile." I tease her.

"I would be happy if you had won a lotto. Anyway, all the best slaving your whole life all in the name of being employed." She hugs me.

TWO WEEKS LATER.

Despite all the looks I keep getting from my coworkers, I must say I have been enjoying my job. My boss doesn't talk too much

but when he does, his voice has the authority that makes him respectable.

"Nomtha, I think I'm hungry, what about you?" Did he just shorten my name?

"Uhm.....its not lunchtime now." I say looking at the clock on the table.

"Come and join me for lunch. And I don't take no for an answer." He raises his eyebrow waiting for me to say something. What can I say? He just said he doesn't take no for an answer.

"Okay, Sir." I pack my stuff, he grabs my hand startling me.

"Sorry. Leave that, we will see it when we get back." He ushers me out of the office still holding my hand.

"Sir, my hand." He quickly let go of it but says nothing. The ladies in the accounts department are gossiping about it already, I don't like people talking about me behind my back, why did he do that? He opens the passenger door for me, I find all this weird. He's my boss not the other way around. I get in the car, he also gets in and drives off in silence. He parks in front of an enormous building, gets down and again opens the door for me. I will have to tell him to stop this. He leads the way into the elevator, up we go until the elevator comes to a standstill on the 30th floor. Wow! The place looks amazing, the

walls are antique white, wooden furniture and the centerpieces on the tables are flowers. He leads me to the corner of the building, looks like a private section, the furniture here is different from the rest of the restaurant. Instead of wooden brown chairs, there are white couches, a wooden center table with yellow roses on top. We both sit down.

"Welcome to where I always run off to every time my stomach grumbles." I faintly smile. "You look lost, what's the matter?" He asks, concerned.

"Sir, I don't like your other employers to hate or gossip about me. What you did....holding my hand like that can cause a lot of troubles for me at work."

"Are you afraid of your colleagues? Nomtha life is too short to keep following the rules, what the society will say and all. I will understand if you say you felt uncomfortable or you don't want me holding your hand not you worrying about other people." I look down. "Look at me, I want you to do what you want not what others want, okay?" I nod.

"I understand, Sir, just that I feel embarrassed when you pull out a chair for me or open the door for me." Again, I look down. Why am I feeling shy all of a sudden?

"Besides being your boss, I'm a gentleman Nomtha, my dad taught me to treat women with respect all the time. Let's order something, I'm starving."

We eat our lunch in silence, he keeps stealing glances at me every chance he gets. After finishing our food, he calls for dessert but I'm already full.

"You are too quiet, what's wrong? Don't you have something to ask your boss?"

"Mmm.....not really, Sir."

"Will you please call me Spha, I'm too young to be called Sir even when I'm outside the office." We both laugh.

"It won't be easy but I will try." I smile and look away.

It's twenty past four already, shit! I promised mom I was going to cook dinner but here I am still busy with these papers. It looks like I'm the only one left in the building, I have to go. Just then I hear a thunderous sound, I open the blinders, its dark outside and about to rain. A flash of lightning forces me to quickly close them and sit down. What now? I'm really scared of thunderstorms. I try to call mom, dad, Sne, Sheila but their phones are off. Oh my God what will I do now? Just then I hear someone's footsteps.

"Nomtha! What are you still doing here and why are you crying?" I didn't realize I was crying.

"Sir, I-i-i- I'm scared of thunderstorms, my parents' phones are off." I finally manage to say.

"Is that why you are crying?" There is a flash of lightning followed by a thunderous sound again, I hug myself and let the tears just fall. I silently pray to God to protect me.

INSERT 3

In the Prince's arms, unknowingly.

"Hey, the storm is over now." I open my eyes only then I realize I'm wrapped in his arms. I quickly pull away, our eyes lock, I want to say something but he puts his finger on my lips silencing me. "No need to say it, I know what you are going to say." He gives me a handkerchief to wipe my face.

"Thank you." I really mean it, if it wasn't for him I would surely be dead by now.

"Come on, let me take you home." He offers or orders, I can say.

"Home?"

"To your parents, Nomtha or you want to sleep here today?" I shake my head. "Well then, let's go." I'm shivering, I don't know if its really cold or it's the fear. Spha removes his jacket and makes me wear it. It smells of him, not in a bad way but its a unique fragrance.

The drive to my house is quiet. The engine goes dead, just then I realize we are at my house. How did he know this is where I live? Before I can ask him, he gets down the car, opens the passenger door and I get off the car. I want to give him back his jacket and handkerchief but he tells me to bring them tomorrow at work. I thank him, he drives off.

"Princess!" Dad shouts as soon as I enter the house. I run to him and hug him tight. Tears fall afresh when I remember how scared I was. He makes me sit on the couch and wipes my tears.

"I was scared, dad." I sob.

"I know. I'm sorry, okay?" I nod and sniffle at the same time. Mom brings me a cup of tea.

"Here sunshine. It will calm you and warm up your body, you're shivering." I sip the tea, it tastes a little bit sour.

"Maa, what did you put in here?" My body cringes every time I taste something sour.

"Lemon. I don't want you to catch a cold, just drink up my baby." How can I say no to her when she's being this sweet.

"Who was that?" I knew this question was going to be asked but I decide to play dumb and raise my eyebrow. "Princess!" Scolds dad.

"Ok, dad. That was my boss, he saved me from my astraphobia." He nods. "Dad!" He faintly smiles.

"Ok. I understand but I don't like you getting too close to men, they are problematic, especially these men with money." He looks away.

"Is that all?" I know my dad very well, he is a man of few words but I can read his mind. Mom comes back in the living room

and tells me that she has prepared a hot bath for me. I ask them where Sne is but they both clueless. I hope she's safe wherever she is.

It's around 3 a.m when I here sounds from the main entrance, I hope this is not what I think. I put on my robe and go to the main entrance to check. I'm met by a tottering Sne pucking all over the place. Damn! She's drunk. She burps loudly.

"Shhh.... Sne, if dad sees you like this you are dead. Please, contain yourself let me take you to your room." She mumbles, tries to jerk my hand away but almost falls. I put her other hand around my neck, my hand around her waist and help her to walk. I go straight to the bathroom, she falls, I drag her under the shower tape and open cold water. She mumbles and curses, I help her shower, wrap a towel around her and take her to the bed. She falls fast asleep as soon as I finish covering her with blankets. "My poor sister, only God knows what went wrong with her." I mop the kitchen floor, clean her bathroom and go back to my room.

My alarms goes off startling me. I quickly make my bed, take a bath and after a few minutes I'm done getting ready. Mom is already in the kitchen preparing breakfast.

"Good morning Maa."

"Morning, angel. How did you sleep?"

"Not bad mama."

"Where is Sne?" I hope this conversation isn't going where I'm thinking.

"In bed, probably." I pour myself some tea.

"I'm your mother, I heard everything yesterday."

"Maa, I'm sorry but I have to leave." I'm not ready for a lecture this early in the morning. She is my blood, do I have to abandon her only because she's straying from the right path? Then who will guide her if we all desert her?

"Morning. I brought you coffee and muffins." I look up.

"Morning, Sir. Thank you but I don't take coffee."

"No problem I will make you some tea." What? Is my boss out of his mind?

"Sir, no! I will do it myself." I can't let him serve me like I'm the boss here.

"Nomtha, sit down. I will make tea for you." With that said he disappears and comes back with a cup of tea. He orders me to drink it, I do as I'm told.

"Thank you for the breakfast." I say wiping my hands with a serviette.

"My pleasure. There's a business conference I would like you to accompany me to."

"Okay, when?" I thought my job was only to deal with his paperwork and calls but it has been much more different. Spha sometimes make me do presentations and write business proposals.

"We're leaving tomorrow. Eight o'clock in the morning, it's a five days conference in another province." I was never ready for this! Will dad agree to it? I hope so because I can't lose this job.

"Okay, Sir. Noted."

I'm really tired, I need to get some rest. I'm about to go to my room when Sheila walks in. I love my friend but what I need right now is to lie down and rest.

"Hey Chomie." She hugs me tight.

"Hi darling. Can we go to my room, please." She agrees.

"You look like you don't want to be with me."

"That's not the case, I'm really tired. I feel like I've been working for my whole life." I throw myself on the bed.

"That's why you didn't tell me that you find yourself a rich man?"

"What? What are you saying friend?" She tells me how other maidens are gossiping about me. They all believe I'm into prostitution since they saw a big car dropping me at home. They even claim to have seen me in expensive hotels with different men. Holy Heavens!

"Thus not true. That man is my boss, nothing else." I defend myself.

"I know but they don't." She looks at the jacket on my bed. Oh no! "And this? Did your boss happen to have slept here and forgot his jacket?" She can't be serious right now.

"Sheila, I'm sure you don't mean that." She laughs, I sigh relieved. I couldn't bare it if my best friend was to think otherwise about me.

"Relax, I'm pulling your leg. But, I must say, he seems to have good taste. Nice jacket and a rare quality fragrance. Impressive."

We chat, I tell her all about my colleagues who hate me because I'm always with the boss. How my boss treats me special, yeah, I kinda feel like special around him. He's such a gentleman, I wish to meet the lucky lady someday. Surely, he can't be single. Spha is a whole package, he can have any girl he wants. My friend tells me to be careful of men as they cause heartbreaks. I don't like my boss in that way, I respect him.

Spha comes to pick me up, I wonder why he didn't send the driver as he had said before. I say my goodbyes to mom and dad, they both tell me to take care of myself and to work hard always. My sister is fast asleep so I leave her a note. Despite all her flaws, I love Sne dearly.

We arrive at the hotel, its a very nice place. Spha tells me to wait as he gets the keys to our rooms. I sit on the couch, but just then I hear him screaming to the receptionist.

"I said call the damn manager!" He screams. Okay? What's going on here? Why is he so angry? "Or should I call the owner of this place?" He is really fuming. What do I do? I tap his shoulder, he looks at me.

"Sir please, calm down." He jerks my hand away.

"No, Nomtha these lousy workers only reserved one royal suite, how am I suppose to calm down?"

"Ok. Can I talk to them, please." He gives in to my request. I talk to the receptionist and she tells me they made a mistake. She also tells me they have a one bedroom apartment that is not occupied. "Fine. Give me the key to the apartment." Spha gives me a stare. "Let's go, Sir." He shakes his head but follows me.

The apartment is really beautiful. I love the outside beach view. Sometimes I wish I was one of those rich kids who can afford

places like this. I have been in hotels a number of times before. The last time was when I represented my province at a quiz contest, the hotel wasn't so nice but I enjoyed myself there. Sne would love this place, I can imagine my sister sipping her ton and gin in that jacuzzi tub out there on the terrace. Sheila would definitely love to read a romance novel sitting on one of those chairs on the terrace. Oops! Day dreaming already.

"Nomtha, I'm really sorry about all of this." Spha apologizes for someone's mistake.

"It's okay, Sir. I'm used to sharing, I don't know about you?" He smiles. "Besides

its not like we will be sharing a bed anyway, I will sleep on the couch." He sighs.

"Hungry?" I shake my head. "I will be inside, I have to make a few calls. We will meet in the lounge 5:30 pm, our first meeting starts at six." I nod, he disappears into the bedroom.

I throw myself on the couch. Wow! So much comfort, this is the life. Sne hasn't called me up yet, I hope she's not still fast asleep at this hour. I take my phone and dial her number.

"Little Sis." She answers.

"Why are you being nice, if I may ask?" I'm surprised by this affectionate side of hers.

"Can't a girl be nice? Anyway, since you asked, I'm in the warm and strong hands of a handsome rich guy." Someone laughs in the background.

"Sne!"

"What? Are you jealous? How is your boss? And the hotel, how is it?" My sister is really crazy, and she expects me to answer all these questions.

"No, I'm not jealous. My boss is fine and the hotel is exquisite."

"I have to go. Enjoy your trip darling." She drops the call. I wonder who is this man keeping my sister busy. I decide to text my best friend.

Arrived safely. The hotel is just wow!

She replies immediately.

I was starting to worry. I'm glad you are safe. I would love to chat but mom sent me on an errand. Take care.

After calling mom and dad telling them I arrived safely, I decide to rest a bit.

I wake up to see a tray of food on the table, I wonder who brought this here. Spha is not inside, I wonder where he went. After eating, I decide to take a long hot bath. I dress myself in a black organza evening dress, black heels, matching silver earrings, neckpiece and bracelets, I then style my hair into a

beehive style and finally put on my red lipstick. I look myself in the mirror, I'm satisfied with how I look, I'm sure this is the reason why it is always said a woman must own a black dress for dressing up or down. I mean black is magical, it suits everyone. I take my clutch and leave the walk-in closet.

I'm met by Spha who is looking all kinds of dashing and handsome in his one of the most expensive black tuxedos, and a white shirt. Today he's not wearing a long tie but a bowtie. He looks up, our eyes meet and his mouth goes wide open. What? Is there something wrong with my outfit? He stands, walks towards me, our eyes are still locked, he stops when he's inches away from me.

"Wow! Nomtha, you look elegant, stylish and most of all, beautiful." He smiles revealing the gap in his front teeth and his dimples. Oh my word! For a minute I forget he's my boss and my insides melt. How can one man be so perfect like a sculpture? "Hey." He snaps his fingers and I snap out of it.

"Umh....thank you. You don't look bad yourself."

"Shall we?" He leads the way outside and to the elevator, down we go where the meeting is going to be held.

We are a few minutes late as everyone is sitting around the long table. They all look up, some smile but some make faces. One of the men leaps to his feet, shakes Spha's hand.

"Welcome Mr Tshabangu." Spha nods. He pulls one of the empty chairs and motions me to sit, the rest of the people seem like they just seen a ghost. A man sitting on the far left side clears his throat.

"What a grand entrance with a beautiful lady. I thought you were bringing your personal assistant but this stylish and sexy lady cannot be your employee." Spha gives him an ugly stare, he shuts his mouth.

"Ladies and gentleman, good evening. Most of you we met earlier---" What did he meet with them while I was sleeping? "Meet Miss Nomthandazo Mahlangu." They all look at me and back to him. I'm sure they expected more from his introduction. "Now, can we start with the business of this evening?" A short guy walks in, switches on the projector and the laptop. Spha stands up to give his presentation which goes smoothly with hiccups here and there as the investors keep questioning him. They ask him how much establishing a new plant will cost and how long it will take to finish.

"Ummm..... Nomtha, I trust you to give us an estimate of the costs and time." He helps me up, gives me the remote, he whispers in my ear. "I trust you." O-okay? I have always dreamed of holding down the fort in the conference room but I never thought my dream was going to come true this early, that too without even a warning. Nomtha, show time! Unprepared

and all, let's show these men and women your super intelligence. I greet them, and take on the challenge. I surprise myself when I actually talk for more than twenty minutes, when I'm done, everyone is on their feet and clapping, including my boss who looks on, amused.

"Wow! This newbie knows what she's talking about. Where were you four years back when the Tshabangu enterprises Ltd needed an intelligent someone like you." A man in brown tuxedo shakes my hand.

"I was still at school back then, Sir." I smile and he smiles back.

"Tshabangu better be paying you well otherwise I'm gonna steal you from his company." He kisses my hand.

"Easy Mr Kruger." Spha says looking at me still smiling. "Well done, Nomtha." He hugs me, I feel something happening in my body. What is wrong with me? Why am I developing crazy feelings for my boss?

The waiters come in with trolleys full of food, drinks and the fancy edible stuff. I'm not hungry, I have to think of how to escape this meal. I try to decline the food but Spha insists until I finally give in.

"So Nomtha are you part of the elite group?" A beautiful lady sitting opposite me asks.

"No. I'm just an ordinary someone."

"Doesn't look like it." Says the man sitting next to Mr Kruger. After eating dinner, he says our goodbyes and we leave to our small villa on the 32nd floor.

I throw myself on the couch, quickly remove my shoes and lie back. This is the more reason why I hate heels, my feet are killing me now. I feel someone touching them, my eyes are feeling heavy so I keep them shut until I feel warm soft hands massaging my feet. I try to move but whoever is working magic on them holds me still, my eyes spring open.

"Sir!" I'm really shocked.

"Spha. We are not at work now." He smiles making me melt inside once again. He continues working magic on my feet, I feel his hands moving to my legs. What is his intention? It's not the first time Spha has given me a massage, I remember the day we went on site, he actually worked his magic on my body. I'm used to his massage but not this tense yet so soothing.

"I think you should go to bed." I attempt to move but before I do he picks me up making me squeal like a child.

"Shhh. We don't want the management kicking us out, do we?" I keep quiet, he opens the door with his one hand, walks towards the bed and carefully puts me on the bed. "There." He smiles. What is this guy up to? I'm not sharing a bed with him, is he crazy?

"Why are you doing this?" I don't understand him sometimes. When I asked before why he was being nice to me he told me he liked my company and him being nice is his nature but this?

"May I sit?" I nod. "You're a beautiful young vibrant lady Nomtha, I don't know why I'm doing this but the first day I saw you in my office I felt something, something I hadn't felt for a long time. If I'm honest with you, I think I like you. I tried not to fall in love with your caring and bubbly personality but the more I tried, the more I fell hard."

"What? You're my boss Spha, how can you say that? What will your other employees say?"

"I know I'm your boss but we are talking matters of the heart here, Nomtha. I don't care what the whole world says as long as you are by my side." Woah! This is some revelation.

"This is wrong Spha." I scratch my head, I'm confused. I have developed crazy feelings for him, he's my boss and now he's saying such things.

"Forget the world. Follow your heart, if you don't feel the same way I will understand and I promise it won't come between our friendship and your job." He looks down. I crawl to him, tilt his head so we are face to face.

"I don't know what to say, you are a good man, yes..."

"But?" He raises his eyebrow.

"Umh.....Spha I don't know, I'm confused, this is all too much." I attempt to leave but he pulls me back.

"You need time, I will wait. I'm a very patient man, Nomtha. Get some rest, we have a big day tomorrow." I sigh.

INSERT 4

Our business trip was a success. Spha took me to some nice restaurants, I tasted some of the foods I used to see in movies. Mr Kruger invited us to his hotel grand opening where we did some wine tasting. I'm not really friends with wine and all the alcoholic stuff but I know how to taste good wine. It was fun and the fact that Spha revealed his feelings to me didn't affect our friendship. We are back at the Tshabangu Enterprises where I get stern looks everyday.

"Morning Ana." I greet the financial manager.

"What do you want you whore?" She gives me an ugly stare, what did I do wrong to her?

"What? Ana, I respect you a lot but I won't tolerate you calling me names. I came here in peace."

"Peace you say? You call stealing my man and my job coming in peace!" She blurts out.

"I'm not sure I understand where your anger is coming from."

"Listen here bitch! Stay away from the boss, I came here before you and he's mine, I won't let you steal him away from me! You were all over the newspapers and tabloids posing for photos with him, why did he leave me this time? Huh? Is your pussy any different from mine?" She's pointing her finger at me.

"I didn't come here to steal anyone. Your boss is a grown up man and real men can not be stolen." I fire back. Why am I even fighting for Spha? He's a friend, yes but this drama I did not sign up for.

"I want you to resign or else you will regret ever stepping your stinky feet here!" She pushes me out of the way and leaves me standing in her office. What is going on here? Does Spha know that Ana loves him or worse, are they sleeping together? I go back to my office, I have even forgotten why I went there in the first place.

I'm busy with my laptop when Spha comes in, I ignore him and continue with my work. He puts something on the table but I don't even look at him.

"Nomtha, everything alright?"

"I don't know, you tell me." Why am I even angry at him?

"Whoever pissed you off, I apologize on behalf of that person." He tries to touch me but I stop him.

"I'm busy, Sir. If you allow it I would like to finish this and go home."

"What's wrong Nomtha?" He keeps persisting and I know he won't stop.

"I have a headache." I lie. He closes my laptop immediately.

"Go home. You can finish this whenever you feel better." I thank him. I'm about to exit the office when he offers to drop me home but I refuse.

Dad is sitting with mom in the verandah when I arrive home.

"Good afternoon mom, dad."

"Angel, what's wrong you don't look well?"

"I have a headache mom nothing serious. I just want to lie down and rest." I go inside the house before dad says something. I'm really not in the mood, I feel like crying and I don't know why I feel this way. If Ana is sleeping with the boss then what's my problem in that? Spha is just like all of them! How could he profess his love to me knowing exactly that she's sleeping with Ana? Tears fall freely as I throw myself on the bed and let all the flood gates open wide. My mind goes back to my college days when I used to believe in all those 'happily ever after' fairy tales. I dated a guy who was in his second year studying law and I was in my first year, he was handsome and all but hell, the dude really knew how to cheat and use women. I lost interest in everything that has to do with love until Sheila convinced me that not all men are the same but turns out they are all pigs! Someone knocks on my door but I scream at whoever is knocking to leave me alone. My phone rings, it's Spha, I quickly switch it off. I don't want to talk to him, maybe later. I cry myself to sleep.

I woke up with a very bad headache, my eyes red from the crying, my throat sore and my voice hoarse. Once again someone knocks.

"What? Leave me alone!" I yell.

"Princess, someone is here to see you." Dad quietly says. Yes, I'm angry but I can't disrespect my dad. I wipe my face with a wet towel, unlock the door and go outside.

"Who wants to see me, dad?" I'm not looking at him because I don't want him to see the hurt written all over my face.

"It's the Prince." What? What does the Prince want from me? I have no business with the royal family.

"Ok, after you." I follow him to the lounge where mom, Sne and someone are sitting. Dad bows his head, says "My Prince" and sits down. I come closer to the said Prince, oh no, this can't be!
"Where is the Prince, dad?"

"He's the Prince, my child." He says looking at Spha. No! No! No! This can't be happening!

"You! You are the Prince, too! Unbelievable!" I really don't know how to feel about this.

"Nomtha, have you met before? He's the heir apparent to the throne, Spham-----" Sne tries to reintroduce him. I raise my hand to silence her.

"Save it, Sne. I know him or no, I thought I knew him." I give him an ugly stare

he looks on confused.

"Princess, you don't talk like that to the Prince!" Dad scolds.

"Dad, what if I tell you that I've been addressing him as Spha all along? What if I tell you that this lying bastard is my boss whom I thought we understood each other so well." Once again I can't stop the tears, dad was right men are just liars and all they want from women is sex! Sne leaps to her feet, she tries to hug me but I push her away. "I'm fine." I sniffle.

"Nomtha, what's wr-----" Spha too tries to comfort me but I move away from him.

"Leave me alone and get out of here. I don't ever wanna see you again!"

"Nomtha---"

"Get out!" I scream, he hesitantly leaves. I collapse on the floor and scream, I feel like some just stabbed me in the chest.

"Angel, what's the matter? Did he do something to you?" Mom asks, I hug her tight and cry even more.

"MaNkonjeni, I don't understand your daughter sometimes how can she scream to the Prince like that? Even if he did

something wrong, why not forgive the guy and continue squandering the royal money---"

"Shut up! Don't you start with taunting my daughter!" Dad reprimands Sne.

"Hay suka man! Nomthandazo Mahlangu awusule lezo nyembezi uyek' ukuzphathisa okwengane encane! (No man! Nomthandazo Mahlangu wipe those tears and stop behaving like a child)." Sne clicks her tongue and leaves.

"It's okay Princess. Hush now." Dad also comforts me. They all want to question me when I finally calm down but I tell them I don't want to talk about it.

SPHAMANDLA'S P.O.V

I really don't know what happened to Nomtha. We were fine until I stepped out of the office to get us some lunch. God knows what happened to her in my absence. Her anger seems to be more directed to me and I don't know what I did wrong. I hear car horns just then I remember I'm still driving on the busy road. I park my car in front of my friend's office, get down the car and go in.

"Dude, I've been calling you like million times." He says as soon as I enter his office. I throw myself on the couch and loosen my tie. "Spha, what's wrong?"

"I wish I knew what's wrong but now I'm just in the dark like you." I wipe my face with both my hands.

"What are you talking about?" He sits next to me.

"Nomtha is angry at me. For what? I don't know. I went to see her after she left work not looking good but she completely lost it upon seeing me."

"Did someone say something to her or did you hurt her in any way?"

"No. I wouldn't hurt her, I love her man. I really do and I revealed my feelings to her when we were away." I feel tears threatening to fall.

"Did she know you are the Prince?"

"Maybe thus why she's angry at me. I never told her that because I thought she knew but she said something like "you are the Prince too", I think there's more to her anger than only finding out that I'm the Prince of this kingdom."

"Do you want me to talk to her?"

"Anthony, no! I'm a man and I can't let you talk to someone I love on my behalf." I wipe my tears.

"It's okay, buddy. You will figure it out." He gives me water to drink and pats my back. I will have to find out what is wrong with her, I can't lose her. My friend and confidant Anthony gives me some relationship advice, I thank him and leave.

"Hey brother, I've been calling you promised to take me to my favorite restaurant for some Italian dinner today." Kayise says pouting. I smile at my one and only sister.

"Hey Sis." I kiss her cheek. "I'm sorry for arriving late and I'm really tired today I had a very tiring day, can we go some other time?"

"Thus not fair brother. Your work is now more important than me maybe I should just go back to New York because here nobody cares about me." She turns to leave but I pull her back and hug her tight.

"I love you Sis and I will always care about you. Saturday, I promise. We will even go to the movies." This is the only way I can pacify my sister.

"Really?" She pulls out of the hug with her eyes sparkling with excitement. I nod. "Brother, you are the best." She hugs me once again. I sigh, relieved. She runs back inside the house leaving me outside, I follow behind her.

"Good evening dad and mom."

"Evening son. How is everything going at work?" Dad asks.

"Fine dad. I'm really tired, I need to shower and lie down a bit."

"Ok Sonny. I will bring your dinner later." Mom says putting down her fashion magazine. Eish women and clothes and jewelry!

After taking a bath I take my phone, try to call Nomtha but it goes straight to voicemail. I hope she has calmed down a bit. I decide to text her and go to bed. I toss and turn but I can't fall asleep. I reach for my laptop on the bedside table, switch it on and go to my gallery. Almost all my photos are that of Nomtha, she's a happy soul, always smiling. I run my fingers on her photo that I shot when we went to the beach, I captured it without her noticing. She was busy building a sand castle.

"Spha, what are you doing?" She quickly ran to me.

"Nothing. Just capturing the best memories." She tried to snatch the camera but failed.

"Sorry. You're not deleting these ones, I want to show them to my darling sister."

"No! Why would you do that?"

"Because I can, because my sister would love to see what I was up to." She rolled her eyes.....

Someone opens my door without even knocking, I quickly close my laptop.

"Son, am I interrupting?"

"No mom. Come in." She's holding a tray.

"You shouldn't have bothered yourself mom, I'm not hungry."
How do I manage to eat when Nomtha is angry at me.

"Come on. I will feed you if needed." She forcefully shoves a spoonful of rice in my mouth.

"Mom----" She repeats the same. I tell her to leave it, I will eat later. She kisses my forehead and leaves my room closing the door behind her. Once I again I try to call Nomtha but it still goes to voicemail.

*****Nomtha, I'm going crazy trying to figure out why you are mad at me, talk to me please.***** I press send.

INSERT 5

NARRATED.

MaNkonjeni is up early like always. She is sleeping peacefully on Nomtha's bed. She tried to make Nomtha talk about what happened between her and the Prince but Nomtha remained mum. She lied to all of them saying it was nothing serious just a misunderstanding at work. I wonder why Nomtha is still asleep at this hour, can it be she's not going to work? Bab' uMahlangu knocks on her bedroom door, she puts down the book she is busy with. I try to see the title of the book hoping to see a romantic word until I see bold yellow words 'Rich Dad Poor Dad'. Arg! That's a boring book to be reading this early in the morning, I mean who wants to be stressing herself out trying to master all of those principles stated by Robert Kiyosaki? Anyway, maybe thus why the girl is a genius when it comes to accounting.

"Good morning, dad." She yawns.

"Princess you are still in bed?" Her father is surprised.

"Not going to work today daddy." She stretches herself.

"What? Is it about yesterday?" Questions her father.

"No dad, its my off day." She lies, her dad nods.

"Okay. I'm going to the market, if I'm late I won't be able to get fresh vegetables."

"See you later, dad." He leaves. She closes the door making Sne stir and grumble in her sleep. She smiles watching her sister sleeping so serene. She jumps on the bed, tickles Sne who jumps immediately.

"Nomtha!" She hits her with a pillow, Nomtha laughs.

"Wake up, Sis." She tickles her again. They have a pillow fight Sne still swearing at her. They play for sometime.

"You're such an annoying sister, you disturbed my beauty sleep." Says Sne panting.

"It's almost nine o'clock Sis. You sleep too much."

"I work hard too."

"And where do you work?"

"Slay Queens club." They both laugh.

Prince Sphamandla is in his office, he doesn't look good. He's flipping through a pile of papers looking for something I guess, Ana comes in without knocking.

"What the hell, Ana?" He's angry.

"Good morning Spha, I thought I should come and help you since that bitch isn't here t----"

"Don't you dare call her that! And yes, Mr Tshabangu to you. Get out of my office!" He hisses.

"Come on Spha. I can help you ease the tension," She walks towards him, tries to touch him but he moves away.

"Don't touch me! Leave!" He shouts pointing at the door. She pouts and hesitantly leaves. "Damn it! Ana is just a pain in the neck, I don't know how many times or which language must I use for her to understand that I'm not interested in her." Spha sighs in exasperation and sits down on his chair. He dials Nomtha's number but it's still unreachable. He buries his head in his arms and let's his mind wander.....

"My Queen, we can't keep postponing the crowning of Spha." Says the King to his wife.

"Melusi, I don't know what your problem is? You are annoying the hell out of me about this matter." Says the Queen using her native language.

"This have to be done before something happens."

"Stop being pessimistic, we will crown your son but we will do that when I feel like it." She puts her coffee mug on the table, and leaves.

"My Queen, motho wame-----" She turns, clicks her tongue and goes outside. She sits on the chair besides the pool area and dials someone.

"We have to meet."

"You don't sound good what's the matter?" Says whoever is on the other end of the call.

"The stupid King wants to crown his son. I won't let that happen, that crown is meant for Sbu and no one else."

"Calm down my Queen, we won't let that happen." She smiles and ends the call.

NOMTHA'S POV

I lied to my parents about why I was angry yesterday but for how long will I keep lying to them? I really need my job to help my family but can I still be able to work with Spha knowing that he is the Prince every maiden of this Kingdom is after? My jumbled thoughts leads me to my friend's place without even noticing, I knock, my friend quickly opens the door.

"Nomtha? Why are you not at work? And why is your phone off? You look troubled what's the matter?"

"Do I really have to answer all those questions still standing in this scorching sun?"

"Sorry. Come in chomie." She runs into the kitchen and comes back holding two glasses, one with water and the other with juice. "Water or juice?" She asks me, I shake my head. My friend is always a good host and knows how to take care of people. She puts both glasses on the table, switches on the TV and sits next to me. "O-okay?" She raises her eyebrows. I'm sure it comes as a shock to her because I have never refused fruit juice before.

"I'm confused. No, I trusted someone who I shouldn't have." Tears threaten to fall but I hold them in.

"Who is that? Is it your boss?". I nod. "What did the handsome guy do to my friend now?"

"He's 'thee Prince Sphamandla Tshabangu'". Her mouth goes wide open.

"No! You don't say!" She still can't believe what I just said.

"Yeah, I found out yesterday after being called names by one of his sexmates, girlfriends or whatever they call each other."

"Are you angry because you fell in love with the Prince or because someone called you names?"

"I don't love him!"

"You can fool all of them but not me. I saw it in your eyes when you talked about your trip, it's no sin to fall in love."

"What do I do?"

"Talk to him. Ask him all the questions you have and tell him how you feel, besides missing work because you fell in love with the boss and later found out that he's somebody else is not a good idea. It's like you are taking advantage of the boss's feelings. I'm not against you two falling in love with each other but you have to draw a line between pleasure and work. You need that money, Nomtha. Sort your issues before they escalate."

I thank my friend for a sound advice, just then my stomach grumbles reminding me that the last time I had a meal was the day before yesterday. I take the glassful of juice and down it. Sheila disappears into the kitchen, comes back holding a plate of rice and meat. I'm salivating already, the last time I had rice was when Spha brought me lunch at the office. My family cannot afford all this but I'm determined to change that.

The following day I wake up early

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clean my room, take a bath and go to the kitchen to prepare breakfast for my family. I'm setting the table when I realize that we have run out of sugar, teabags and milk. I will have to buy groceries but the company hasn't deposited my money yet. My phone? I search my handbag it's not in there, just then I remember switching it off and shoving it inside the drawer.

Damn! 987 missed calls, 52 text messages, 208 voice messages, 50 emails and 25 200 WhatsApp messages! Who in the hell was trying to call me? A notification pops up on top of the screen.

****Month end financial report meeting with the executives. 9 a.m****

Oh no! I didn't even prepare the report! I went to ask for the financial information from Ana but ended up receiving insults from her. What do I do now? All the messages are from Spha except for one, it's from the bank. I sigh and sit on my bed. I have let my boss down because of my silly behavior I just hope I won't get fired because of this. There is an email that catches my attention.

From: Anele P. Mthunzi

To: Nomthandazo Mahlangu

Date: 30 October 2017

Subject: Financial Report.....

Hi.

I hope you are fine. I overheard your conversation with Ana, please don't take it to heart she's just like that, a bitch of course. Mr Tshabangu is losing it without you, please do make it to the meeting otherwise that stern lady will win. Don't give her the satisfaction.

Attached is all you will need for that meeting.

Keep safe!

Your

Well wisher.

Intern at Tshabangu Enterprises Ltd. Accounts department..

@anele.p

I smile after reading it. I never knew Anele could be one of my well wishers. I close my eyes and thank the Almighty and Anele. I take my bag and exit my room, mom is now in the kitchen.

"Morning mom." I step close to her and kiss both her cheeks.

"Morning Angel."

"I have to leave early today, see you later."

I'm busy editing the report when Spha walks inside the office.

"Nomtha!" He hugs me from behind.

"Sir. How are you?" I say after pulling out of the hug.

"I wasn't good until now. We need to talk." He pulls a chair and sits next to me.

"Not now. I have to finish this report or else we both will be doomed." I try to be as much civil as I can be.

"No." He takes my hands into his. His touch sends electric waves all over my body. Oh boy! What is Spha doing to me? Can't my body understand that I'm still angry at him? "I want to know why you were angry at me?"

"I'm sorry for lashing out at you. I had a bad day, can we just forget that ever happened. But then if you can't forgive me I will understand, I'm sorry Sir."

"Why are you talking like that to me? Did I do something to hurt you?"

"No. Can we try and be professional and leave the personal stuff out of our conversations." He sighs but says nothing.

IN THE BOARDROOM

Ana looks like she's seeing something disgusting when I walk in followed by the boss. There are many faces I haven't met before, including the King and his wife. Most of the people may think I'm ignorant or something but that's not the truth.

Growing up I learned not to care about the people who are not in my class especially the elite group because I think they look down on us, commoners. Thus the reason I only know the royal family from the pictures.

"Mom, dad meet my personal assistant Nomthandazo Mahlangu." I'm about to shake the King's hand when I remember that I have to show more respect to him.

"Your Majesty, Queen Mother." I say with my head bowed down.

"Are you from this kingdom?" Asks the Queen.

"Yes My Queen." Once again I bow my head.

The meeting goes well, they are all impressed with my presentation except for Ana. The King congratulates me but I notice a change on the Queen's face the moment he shakes my

hand. I don't know maybe it's my imagination, but this Queen seems to be one of the proud and arrogant people. Ana softly clicks her tongue and exits the boardroom. Spha introduces me to all the executives, we shake hands and they leave.

"Lunch?"

"No I'm good besides I have to meet someone." I leave the boardroom and go to the interns office. I knock, they all nod and I go in.

"Afternoon everyone." Most of the girls scowl. I walk towards Anele's desk.

"Hi Nomtha." She smiles.

"Thank you so much for that report. I really appreciate you helping me."

"No need to thank me. You seem like a good person, I just don't know why people in this office hate you."

"Makes the two of us." I sigh. "Lunch? On me."

"You don't have to pay me for that report, I admire you as a person and I did that from the goodness of my heart. But if you really want to take me out, you will, just not today. I have to finish my work before Ana shows me flames." We both laugh.

"Anyway, I owe you one. See you around, once again thanks girl." I wave and leave.

I don't know what Spha thinks about my behavior towards him, I hope I won't get fired. I open my laptop, I have to check where I can get grocery at discounted prizes. Just then the boss opens the door holding a takeaway bag. He puts it on the table, walks back to the door and locks it, my heart starts beating faster, I'm scared, what is he going to do to me? He pulls a chair and sits next to me.

"Nomtha, I apologize for whatever I did to you. Please forgive me, I don't like us to have bad blood between us."

"Sir, My Prince, I'm really sorry for my behavior, forgive me."

"What's the matter? Why are you addressing me like that?"

"Are you sleeping with Ana?" His eyes pop out in shock.

"What? Is that how low you think of me?"

"Yes or no?"

"No! I don't sleep with my employees, you are the first employee I fell in love with nobody else." I don't know whether to believe him or not.

"Why didn't you tell me that you are the crown Prince?"

"I thought you knew, I thought everyone knew who I am but I was wrong. I'm sorry." He wipes a tear. Eish, I don't do well with tears so I look away hiding my own teary eyes. "So you hate me because I'm the Prince? Am I not allowed to fall in love

with anyone my heart desires? Is it a crime to be from a royal family?" Hurt is audible in his voice. Something moves in my heart and I find myself hugging him tight until he calms down and pulls out of the hug.

"Does your mother know that you are a crybaby?" I joke, he faintly smiles and pulls me to him.

"Thus not funny. I was losing my mind without you please don't ever leave me again."

"I can't promise that." I smile. He thanks me for forgiving him and I also thank him.

"I love you Nomtha."

INSERT 6

He hugs me for the longest time since we met, he inhales smelling my hair, he moves his head to my neck and lightly kiss it sending messages to my inner soul. I forget that he's my boss and the Prince and let myself enjoy his touch, his tantalizing cologne.....

"You smell nice. I missed this." He says making me blush. I pull out of the hug.

"Can we get back to work?" He laughs.

"No. I brought lunch for us, come let's sit here." He leads me to the couch holding my hand with his other hand, his other hand carrying a plastic bag. He puts the plastic bag on a small coffee table, sits down and takes me in his lap. He looks deep into my eyes making me bat my eyelashes. "Don't do that, please." I attempt to move from his laps but he holds me still. "Sit down."

"Don't you think you are getting too carried away too soon."

"No. What I feel for you is real, even if you don't love me back my love is enough for both of us."

"Do you think Ana's insults would have an effect on me if I didn't love you?" He kisses my lips. We eat our lunch with me still on his lap. Someone knocks as we just finish eating, I quickly jump to my feet making him laugh. He unlocks the door

and Ana comes in, she looks at Spha, empty takeaways and to me but says nothing.

"Good afternoon, Sir. I wanted to give you this." She puts the file on the table and turns to leave. Spha holds my waist and pulls me to him, his lips touch mine, I see Ana through the corner of my eye, she's red with fury, Spha wants to deepen the kiss but I slightly push him.

"What?"

"Time to get back to work. And Mr, you have to control your hands especially when we are in the office and remember I haven't said yes yet." He smiles.

After office hours Spha drives me to the mall. Since I already saw the prizes online I lead him into SaveRite supermarket. He asks what we are really looking for.

"Buying groceries that can at least last for a month."

"What? How are we gonna carry them?" I laugh.

"Spha, we are not buying these for the royal family."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning we only buy the necessities not all the fancy stuff." He nods. He picks a number of cereal boxes, coffee creamers,

snacks.... "Thus not part of the necessities." He looks lost.

"Okay my dear Prince, us commoners can not afford all these and if I pay for these who will buy sugar, mealie meal, salt, cooking oil and toiletry?"

"Ooooh! I'm sorry forgive my ignorance." He feels bad.

"It's okay I understand. You don't have to feel bad, this is probably your first time inside the supermarket." I laugh at him.

"Please don't laugh. One of the reasons why I hate being me." He faintly smiles.

"Don't worry I will teach you a few things only if you stick around."

"I'm gonna stick around for a very long time." He pulls me by my waist from behind making me giggle forgetting we are not alone. "Shh....people are looking at us now." I look around trying to see the said people, he slightly bites my neck.

"Spha!"

"What sweetheart?" He bites my earlobe.

"Stop! We are in public." He laughs and let's me go.

"You're naughty." We walk around the supermarket, I get all the things I need and some I don't need because Spha insists. I keep reminding him that I don't have all the money in the world to purchase the whole supermarket. We check out, the girls

serving us can't stop looking at this handsome charmer next to me. He acts as if he is not aware of this but I sense he knows how girls feel whenever he appears. The cashier calls out two guys who helps us carry the goods to the car. He opens the passenger door.

"Not yet, Mr. I still need to get a few things from the boutique." He smiles, takes my hand in his and leads the way. "Your face lit up when I mentioned boutique, what's up?"

"In here I can be me unlike in that supermarket."

"O-okay?"

"My sister loves clothes so I always take her out shopping." He answers my question. I see a beautiful short black dress with a bling detail on the neckline. I check the prize, its affordable.

"My friend will definitely look good with this on." I smile, more to myself not to the person next to me who's busy checking out a nude dress. The sales person comes running to us.

"Good afternoon Sir, ma'am. Are you looking for anything specific so I can help you." She smiles her professional smile.

"Not really. Pack this----"

"And this." Finally, Spha snaps out of his imagination. I pick clothes and shoes for my whole family but pick nothing for myself. "Come this side." We go to the jewelry section. He talks

to the sales person, I'm not listening to their conversation, the prizes of these things just made me lose my voice. How can one honestly pay for this? This is the more reason I don't have jewelry and accessories, I can't afford them. I'm brought back to where I am by Spha putting a diamond necklace around my neck. It looks wow! "I love this on your neck, babe." He runs his finger on my neck, eish that feeling again! Everything south of my west tightens, I'm getting wet down there. Nomtha! Get a grip on yourself! I scold myself. "Hey, you look lost." He whispers in my ear. I turn around and put my hands on his shoulders.

"Can you please keep your hands to yourself my dear Prince."

"What? Are you feeling the heat?" I slightly push him away from me, he laughs. The sales woman clears her throat.

"Uhm....sorry about that." He addresses the lady, all of a sudden feeling shy.

"It's okay my boy. Young love, once upon a time I was madly in love with my soulmate. Just like you two lovebirds, we didn't care about anything else but us." Her face falls and her eyes begin to be teary. "Embrace each other-----" Her voice trails off.

"Maa, what's the matter? Why are you crying?" I ask concerned for her. She wipes her tears and smiles.

"My soulmate now only lives in my memory. You two look happy together, may the Almighty bless your relationship." She sighs and smiles.

"Thank you Maa." We smile at each other.

We pay for our clothes and leave. The cold breeze hit my skin, I shiver. Spha looks at me, smiles, puts down the shopping bags, removes his jacket and makes me wear it. He opens the passenger door, puts the bags on the back seat and gets in.

"You are too delicate." He switches on the heater.

"Thus not a nice compliment My Prince." I rub my hands together. He leans closer and kisses my cheek.

"I love you the way you are, your delicacy is a bonus because now I will always get to see you wearing my jacket," he lowers his voice. "And I will be able to take care you my precious rose." He turns the ignition key, the engine rows into life. "Where to from here?"

"Take me home." His face falls.

"Am I boring you? Why do you want to go home so early?"

"No. You are not boring me but my family is probably waiting and praying that I bring something to eat."

"Oh! But there are no takeaways in your stuff."

"Spha I can't afford to be buying fast foods."

"I thought you said you had an older sister who also graduated with a first class degree, is she not working? You seem to have taken all the burden upon yourself." I look away from him.

"Babe, what's wrong?" He looks concerned for me. What do I tell him?

"Nothing. My sister is not employed as of yet and I promised my father to relieve him of all the household expenses once I start working. He sacrificed a lot for us when we were young

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it's time we take care of him." I smile my reassurance smile.

"Wow, Nomtha you are really a good daughter and you will make a good wife. And a good Queen too." He affectionately squeezes my hand.

"Hold your horses Mr Tshabangu." He smiles as if me calling by his surname tickles him somewhere on his body.

It's becoming dark outside, the royal workers are busy preparing the dinner table, Queen Clementine is flipping through the pages of the magazine probably trying to keep in touch with the trends. The King is chatting with his darling daughter in his chambers. Kayise is daddy's little Princess not

forgetting that she's also the most loved, they should have named her Thandeka, Thandiwe or something like that. Sbu is busy chatting with Samke who is sitting on the chair whilst Sbu lays his head on her laps.

"Crazy maiden, you know I love you right?" Says Sbu winking at Samke.

"What do you want Sbu?"

"Nothing." He lies.

"Don't forget who you are talking to." She plays with his hair.

"Okay." He sits up. "I need to blow off some steam, it's been a while since I had good rounds of good sex."

"You always find yourself a desperate girl and buy your way to pleasure, what happened today? Are you broke my dear Prince?" She laughs softly.

"Not really. I'm tired of those slay queens who know each and every style, I want something new, someone who will submit to me, someone who won't say no to my demands, preferably a virgin."

"We are talking about women or men here?"

"Women of course!" He lightly pushes her making her giggle.

"Don't bite please. With you my dear Prince I always have to make sure that we are still on the same page. But I wouldn't be surprised to see you with the latter."

"As long as I get to please myself, right?" They both laugh.

"Okay so what's the catch? What's in it for me?"

"Nothing just do this little favor for me."

"Hell no. Samke does nothing for free!"

"Okay the usual amount."

"Thus too small. Today is different because I will have to interview the person first." Sbu finally agrees to whatever Samke is charging him. Kayise walks towards to where they are seated. Her face changes as soon as Samke comes into view.

"Sbu! What the hell are you doing with this filthy maid?" She shouts.

"Mtcheew..." Samke clicks her tongue and leaves. The two are like cats and dogs there's no love lost between them. They hate each other, one would swear they are women married to a same men. You know how the polygamous lifestyle can be, right?

"Stop with the drama Kayise. Being a commoner doesn't have a same meaning as being filthy." Kayise tries to say something.

"Don't. I'm not in a good mood today." Sbu also tries to leave but she pulls him back.

"Are you sleeping with the maid Sbu?"

"No! What do you think of me? I may be the black sheep of this family but I still try my level best to maintain my status and class. Sis, I love sex yes, but I can't possibly sleep with the employees, can I?"

"I'm glad you are not. Mom is calling you for dinner." They go inside hand in hand, chatting and laughing as they approach the dinning table which has all sorts of foods. With the royal family, it's always a feast.

Spha parks his car in front of the Mahlangu house. He dims the lights but leaves the engine on.

"Thank you for everything you did for me today Spha. I really appreciate-----"

"Stop. We are friends, right?" Nomtha nods. "Friends don't thank each other instead they show their appreciation through actions. If you are really thankful my baby, then show me." He smiles. Nomtha quickly jumps onto his laps making sure her head doesn't hit the roof of the car, she puts her hands around

his neck while he puts his around her waist, they have an eye lock, one could see the sparks of love shining in their eyes, their love can definitely light up the room during an electricity cut. Their lips touch, they both feel the rush as they forget where they are and deepen the kiss. A moan escapes Spha's mouth as their tongues find a way to each other as they entangle in a harsh but passionate way. By the time they pull out of the kiss they are both panting. Spha holds her tight and whispers. "If it was up to me, I would never let you go." He kisses her forehead, making her blush in the dark. "I waited for this kiss for a very long time, I always imagined how your mouth tastes. Turns out my imagination was wrong because honestly speaking, you taste so sweet my love, more than I ever imagined." Just then Bab' uMahlangu opens the front door making the two lovebirds jump. Nomtha quickly gets down the car followed by Spha who opens the boot before exchanging pleasantries with his future father-in-law. Is it too soon to say that? Who cares, let's just go with the flow.

"Hi dad." Nomtha kisses his cheek.

"Princess, I tried calling you but your phone is off. Don't you have it anymore?"

"I'm sorry dad I guess my battery is dead, you know that old phone of mine. I'm sorry for coming home late, I went for shopping."

"With which money Nomthandazo?"

"Dad relax. The company deposited my pay in my account. I wanted to surprise you thus why I didn't say anything." He sighs, relieved. Poor man must have thought it was the Prince's money. Bab' uMahlangu might be poor but he doesn't lack morals and dignity. After offloading the groceries, Spha says his goodbyes, Nomtha's father thanks him and commend him for being a good boss unaware that he's more than a boss. He gets in his car and leaves. Nomtha and his father also get inside the house with the shopping bags.

"Dad, where is mom and Sne?" She asks realizing they are not in the lounge or the kitchen.

"Both in their bedrooms my child. Your mother's been crying since in the afternoon, we had nothing to eat and I couldn't buy my family food. I'm a failure my child."

"No dad you are not. You did a lot for us and I promise you, I will never again let your wife lack anything in this house. Do you remember my promise when you sold most of the property for me to go to university?" He nods. "I haven't forgotten. I will do everything I can to help my family." They hug each other. Bab' uMahlangu thought his sacrifices were in vain but Nomtha has proven him wrong.

"And then? What's all this?" Zandi can't believe her eyes. The last time she saw so much groceries was when she used to work as a domestic worker for a very rich family. Nomtha pulls out of the hug smiling.

"Maa, your sunshine got paid her first salary hence the shopping bags." Zandi smiles as her eyes begin to water, hugs her daughter and let her tears of joy fall freely.

"Sunshine, you finally shined on me. I knew you were going to make me proud one day. Oh my daughter." She kisses her all over the face making her husband laugh. They offload the groceries, the cupboards are now full including the refrigerator that they had long forgotten about. Zandi is about to light the stove when Nomtha stops her. She tells her she brought takeaways. They help each other to set the table. "Let's eat."

"No mom, I will be back. I'm going to get my sister." She opens the door without knocking.

"Have you forgotten your manners?" Sne shouts.

"Not really. Hi Sis, food is ready."

"What food? The last time I checked there was nothing to eat in this house and you keep telling me that your father is trying his best." She scowls.

"Come and see for yourself."

Sne can't believe her eyes, she rubs them and then realizes it's not a dream. They sit and eat all grinning from ear to ear. Christmas came early for this family. After dinner Nomtha washes the plates and give them the other surprise. Clothes and shoes? They are all happy and can not stop thanking her.

"Thank you little Sis. Is it too soon to brand you as a breadwinner?" Sne says, raises her eyebrow and the sisters burst into laughter. To say Zandi is happy after a long time will be an understatement, she's over the moon.

Nomtha is now lying on her bed smiling to herself remembering how her day went. She's playing with her diamond necklace. Her phone beeps, it's a WhatsApp message from Spha. They start chatting and laughing using emojis.

Spha: **I miss you already my honey.** **

Nomtha: **Me too.** **

Spha: **Can I come over? (Accompanied by a winking face)** **

Nomtha: **No! Are you crazy?** **

Spha: **(laughing) Crazy about you, yes.** **

Nomtha: (blushing)** Can yo stop making me blush.** **

Spha: (smiling to himself) **I like it when you blush.** ** He waits for a response for some minutes, he figures out she must have

fallen asleep but thus not the case, Nomtha is smiling to herself still not believing she finally kissed Spha.

Spha: **Sleep well my precious rose. I love you, Nomtha. (With kisses, hearts and smiley faces).

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AT THE ROYAL PALACE.

Everyone else is fast asleep except for Sbu. He's pacing up and down contemplating on whether to go and check with Samke if their deal is still on. Sbu is a sex addict although he doesn't want to acknowledge his problem and seek help before its too late. Someone lightly knocks on his door, he quickly opens the door, his eyes meets with of Zodwa the maid. He stares at her, feels his manhood erecting but fights the urge to grab her right away.

"My Prince you wanted to see me." Her voice comes out as a whisper, fidgeting with her fingers.

"Come in." He holds the door for her, she is not able to understand what is going on because Sbu has never allowed any maiden into his room except Samkelisiwe. He closes the door and locks it, she looks at him nervously. "Remove your clothes." He orders.

"My Pr-----"

"Just do as I say damn it! Or you want to get yourself fired?" She shakes his head and do as he says. "Leave your torn panties on and turn around, don't look at me until I tell you to." He steps closer to her, inspecting every inch of her body. She grabs her braided hair making her wince. "Shhhh..... If you behave

I'm going to take this slowly granting you the time to enjoy it but if you don't, I will just have to be quick and it will be more painful that way." He pulls the hair to the side exposing her neck, he sucks it, she tries to move but he holds her still. His right hand moves to her breasts, he plays with the tits, circling his fingers around it and then pinching it. His manhood is ready for the work but he decides to take it slow, it's been a while since he slept with a virgin. He picks her up, quickly throws her on the bed, tears stream down her face, he licks them and smack her hard at the same time. "Don't cry baby. If I'm pleased with your behavior and your p**sy I might consider making you my queen." He circles his tongue on her belly button, she moans involuntarily. "Thus more like it baby." He repeats the process earning moans from her. He tears off the already torn panties, pauses, looks at the cake, leans closer and inhales. "Mmmm.....smells nicer than I thought." He continues to play with her body until she's wet down there, he puts his finger into the cookie jar, removes it and sucks it. "Tastes even more sweet." Zodwa has stopped crying, she looks like she's enjoying what the prince is doing or it's the promise Sbu made to her. "I'm going to insert my finger, it will hurt a little." She nods. He inserts his middle finger, she moans and cries at the same time. His manhood can not wait any longer, he pulls his shorts down and his erection springs free, Zodwa's mouth goes wide. "What? Do you like it?" She nods shyly. "Here, take it." He

puts her hand around it, she moves her hand up and down and he closes his eyes enjoying every moment of it. "Stop! I don't want to come, not yet." He leans closer, kisses her and tries to insert his manhood, Zodwa cries. "Be a strong girl, baby."

After like how many rounds, I even lost count, Sbu finally falls on his back letting out a loud breath. Zodwa tries to cover herself using a bedcover but Sbu pulls it down. "Do you want to leave all my bedding dirty? Get off my bed!"

"But my Pr---"

"Shut up! We re done here, go and take a bath in your room." She shamefully grabs her clothes, puts them on, picks up pieces of her underwear, Sbu opens a drawer and retrieves an envelope. "Take this. It's \$1000 buy yourself some nice appetizing lingerie and try to find a perfume, lady million or something that smells nice." She takes the envelope tears falling down her face when she realizes that the Prince only wanted sex from her. "And yes, not a word to anyone about this. If you talk, I will deny everything and you will be fired for trying to frame the Prince of Umlazi Kingdom. Now leave!"

TWO WEEKS LATER.

Spha and Nomtha have been inseparable, even the blind can realize that the two are deeply in love. He treats her like a Princess that her father sees in her. They had a minor argument when Spha deposited \$10000 in Nomtha's account after they went shopping together. She felt like Spha was pitying her and her family. Spha tried to explain that he wants the best for her and wants her to be happy all the time not to be worried about financial problems. She was adamant but Sheila convinced her to keep the money or give it to her parents to start a small businesses. She decided to do the latter, now her parents run a tuck shop in the yard. MaNcube couldn't stop spreading rumors about Nomtha being a prostitute. It didn't take a few minutes for Sne to jump in and defends her sister.

Nomtha wakes up before her alarm goes off. She quickly does her everyday morning routine and goes to the kitchen. She's about to light the burner to boil some water for tea when her mom stops her.

"You won't be doing that anymore. Sne have to do the cleaning and cooking, we can't keep feeding a 26 year old while all she does is sleep, bath and slay."

"Maa, I don't mind doing this. I'm used to cooking for my family besides, Sne will always be my elder sister we can't make her feel inferior to me only because I'm earning a few thousands. Family is family when we still stick to our values and respect each other."

"Nomthandazo! I'm warning you, your sister will never try to find a job if we keep feeding her like a small child."

"Mom, I respect and love you a lot but please don't be too harsh on my sister please."

"So, Zandi you now want me to become Nomthandazo's cleaner?" Sne says leaning on the door frame.

"No Sis, it's not like that." She looks at Zandi, then to Nomtha and back to her mother

hurt and anger is written all over her face. She clicks her tongue and turn to leave but Nomtha pulls her hand. "Let go of my hand!"

"Sis please don't do this-----"

"I'm not your sister, if I was, you wouldn't be planning to make me your cleaner."

"Sne..." She gives her a deadly stare and walks away. "Maa, you see what you have done?" Nomtha throws a dish towel on the

table in exasperation and walks out leaving her mother calling out to her. She bumps into her father in the corridor.

"Princess, why are you running?" Asks her father after saving her from falling.

"Good morning dad. I'm sorry, I'm late for work."

"Good morning Sweetheart."

"Spha, what are you doing here?" I'm surprised and shocked at the same time.

"Are you not happy to see me?" He looks away.

"I am but the question is why are you here. You are the Prince Spha will you please behave like one. You can't be seen picking up a girl this early in the morning, people talk."

"Babe, I love you not the people. I won't be scared to express my feelings only because people will talk, let them talk I don't care." He hugs her and kisses her lips. "Get in." He says holding the door for her. He gets in drives off.

Spha tells Nomtha that he has business to take care of at the bank so he won't be going inside. He leans over and kisses her goodbye. "See you soon babe. Check your email as soon as you

get in the office." He says, gets down to open the door for her. She waves smiling as he drives off. She gets in still smiling to herself wondering what good deed could she possibly have done in the past to deserve a man like Spha.

"Hey bitch." Aisha greets her, just then Ana appears whistling to herself wearing sneakers, ripped jeans and a T-shirt.

"Nomthandazo Blessing Mahlangu." Nomtha's heart skip a beat upon hearing Ana call her full name. Ana walks around her and resumes her whistling. "What did you think? That you can get away with snatching our man? You were wrong baby girl, if we can't have him, so do you."

NOMTHA'S POV

I really don't know what these two are up to but I'm scared. Why did Spha have to leave me alone with these two devils....."Talk!" Ana shouts startling me.

"Seems like the lover girl just lost her voice but don't worry I will make her talk." I look around the reception area to try and see if there is no one or anything to help me escape.

"Only the three of us are in this building." Aisha grabs my chin making me wince, her long nails are sinking in my skin, tears

stream down my face as something that I feared comes to reality. She let's go of my chin but slaps me hard, blood oozes out of my nose. Ana kicks my chest making me cough as I feel like I can't breathe. I'm trying to catch a breathe when she again smacks me hard sending me crashing on the floor.

"What have I done to the two of you to deserve this? Spha won't spare you!" They both laugh looking down at me.

"We will go to jail but you will be gone to the land of the dead." My world stops! How can I die when I'm still this young? My dad will die, not to talk of my beloved mother. Ana's hand moves to her back as she retrieves a knife, I gasp for air. They both kick my ribs countless times until I can't cry anymore.

"Please don't kill me, I will resign and go far away from this place, I will even flee this community." I sob. Ana is about to stab me when someone's hand blocks her hand and the knife falls next to my head. Whoever just saved my life slaps her hard, Aisha tries to run from the scene.

"If you know what's good for you, you will quickly come back here." He says with a deep voice and pulls out a gun. Aisha reluctantly walks back. "Stay there. Run and you and your family will soon be history." To say that the two are shocked and scared at the same time will be an understatement, they are shivering. The guy turns to my direction, his face features are like that of Spha. He gives me his hand and helps me up.

"Are you ok?" I nod. "Sit here. I have to finish what I started with these two witches." He says helping me sit on the couch.

"Hey, take out your phone and report your selves to the police." He orders.

"P-p-lease!" They both beg him, he smiles.

"I'm not joking nor am I amused by what you just did."

"We will leave and never trouble her again." Ana says too fast almost choking on her own words. The guy pulls her hair.

"I'm not your boss who is a kindhearted man! You don't want to see what's behind this cute face." He lets go of her hair. Just then Anele comes in and her mouth goes agape.

"Nomtha!" She runs to me and hugs me tried tight but I groan in pain. She runs behind the reception desk and comes back with a first aid kit. She cleans my wounds. "Is it what I think it is?" I nod tears still falling freely. She charges towards them, it all happens too fast, I only realize what's going on when I see Aisha and Ana's bloody faces. Anele is raging. The guy holds her and tells her to stop. The police come and take the two away. The guy sighs and turns to my direction smiling.

"Sbusiso Tshabangu."

"Thank you for saving my life. God knows what could have happened if you didn't show up." Tears fall afresh remembering how I escaped death. Anele wipes them off and comfort me.

"I think we have to take you to the doctor. You might have a broken rib who knows?" He shrugs. This brother of Spha is something else. I tell them that I want to call my family and Spha before leaving.

"Don't worry I will call them. Go to the hospital, please."

Sbu carefully picks me up and rushes to the car. He balances the weight of my body on his knee as he opens the door. Attentively he puts me on the back seat, gets in and drives off. We are about to reach the hospital when I start having blurry visions, I try to say something to him but I black out, immediately.

NARRATED.

At the royal backyard Clementine is arguing with her friend Agnes. They seem to be having a huge misunderstanding about something.

"Agnes, I told you to bring me that portion. The King can not start to open his eyes now that we are close to our goal. If he's not put on a leash we will lose everything that we have worked

so hard for. Why didn't you go to that witchdoctor? Huh? Is this what I'm paying you to do?"

"Clementine, don't you dare raise your voice at me! Do you hear me? I told you that man wants a heart of a ten year old child in order to help us, where do I get that? Huh? You think it's easy, why don't you do it yourself?" Agnes turns to leave but the Queen pulls her back.

"Friend please let's not fight. Find your guys and let them do the dirty work, I'm ready to pay anything." Her words are music to Agnes's ears.

"Anything?" Clementine nods.

"Okay. I want that plot I told you about and a brand new SUV. Also, cash to pay the boys."

"Noted." Smiles the Queen.

"Consider it done." They hug. Agnes uses the small gate to exit the palace smiling to herself.

Bab' uMahlangu is feeling nervous, he feels like something bad is happening to someone close to him. Zandi tries to calm him down saying its his paranoia but the feeling is more than just that. Sne comes in the tuck shop holding the phone to her ear.

"Okay thanks." She hangs up. Both her parents' eyes are on her because this is her first time inside the tuck shop. "Mom, dad--- --"

"What is it Snegugu? Is my daughter Nomtha alright?" She looks down but quickly gets a hold of herself.

"Nomtha was attacked. It's nothing serious but her bosses have taken her to the hospital."

"No! No! Not my Princess!" He grabs his jacket, wallet and runs out.

"They took her to Umlazi mission hospital." Sne calls out to her father who's already on his motorbike. Zandi collapses on the floor and screams.

"Mom Nomtha is not dead please stop this screaming. You know how our neighbors are like, they will start flocking in here like someone has died. Please, calm down." For the first time after so many years, Sne hugs her mother. "It's okay mother. She will be fine." She comforts her.

"My Rose." Spha cries as he collapses on the chair next to the hospital bed. Nomtha is sleeping peacefully with her bruised face, bandage around her ribs. The machine next to her has green lines and then it keeps beeping continuously. "Nomtha, please wake up my love. I'm sorry for leaving you alone. I didn't

know that Ana's obsession was out of control. It's all my fault, I should have protected you. Please forgive me honey."

"Control your emotions bro. She will be fine." Sbu says lightly patting his brother's shoulder. "You didn't tell me you were in love, why? And that too with your employee brother!" All of a sudden Sbu is angry at his brother.

"I'm sorry bro, I was waiting for the right time to introduce you to her." Spha apologizes with tears in his eyes.

"It's okay brother." Just then Bab' uMahlangu enters the ward, he charges towards Spha and grabs him by his collar, it's clear he heard everything.

"If my baby dies, I swear on my ancestors, I will burn you alive!"

INSERT 8

SPHA'S P.O.V

I'm face to face with Nomtha's father for the very first time. I don't know how to react, he's seething, his lips are trembling with anger.

"How dare you let your girlfriends hurt my daughter? Is it because she's poor and not royalty like you?" He shakes me, Sbu interferes.

"Listen here old man, you don't talk to my brother like that!" Nomtha's father let's go of my collar and charges towards Sbu who steps back. Dear Lord in Heaven please don't let them fight, I know my brother. He's capable of anything dangerous, thus not how I want my in-laws to have a bad impression of me and my family. I'm silently praying.

"Or what? What will you do? Let me tell you something kid, Nomtha is my everything, my life, my reason to still wake up every morning with a smile but you want her dead, huh?" Sbu tries to hit him but he jerks the fist. When his own fist is about to connect with Sbu's jawline, Nomtha screams.

"Dad!" He quickly turns with one of his hand on Sbu's collar. Nomtha shakes her head, tears fall down her face. "Don't do it dad. Let him go, he's the one who saved my life." Her voice

comes out as a whisper. I reach for a glass of water and make her drink.

"I'm sorry darling. I'm really sorry, I should have listened to you. I didn't think they were that dangerous. I'm sorry-----"

"Nomtha what is this? I'm really disappointed in you Princess. How can you fall in love with your boss? How do you know if this rich kid is really genuine about his feelings?" He wipes his face and sighs in exasperation.

"Spha, Sbu, can I please talk to my father in private." We exit the room quietly leaving them alone.

"Why did you keep quiet when that man abused you?"

"Sbu, he didn't abuse me. Besides, how can I possibly talk back to my future father in-law? I understand his anger, I would have done the same thing if my daughter was lying on that bed with bruises all over her face because of some random guy."

"Bro, you are not a random guy but a Prince. People have to respect you, not grab your collar."

"You and I are different. I earn respect, you demand it so you wouldn't understand."

"Whatever. Do you really love her?"

"More than anything. She is everything I want and love in a woman. Thanks for saving her life, I owe you one." We fist pump.

"Do you love her more than your late girlfriend?" Sbu's question almost knocks me down.

What? Did he just ask me that question? It took me years to move on from losing the girl I thought was my betrothed to a very fatal car accident. Florencia was every man's dream in my varsity days. We understood each other, but not the same way I connect with Nomtha. With Nomtha it's different, I can listen to her heartbeat and hear everything thus in her mind. I can tell by only looking into her eyes that she has something to say but holding back.

"Yes. I have never loved anyone the way I love Nomtha."

"What's so different with her? Have you slept with her?"

"Sbu! No! I love her not infatuated by her. Not every one of us have to sleep with women in order to confirm our feelings!" Sbu has never asked me so many personal questions, I'm getting annoyed by his questioning.

"Okay fine. Don't bite my head off, I was just making sure. I don't want you to get hurt in the process, I also wanted to see if you really have let go of Florencia's memories." I sigh and sit on

the bench. "She is a fine girl, I don't blame you for falling head over heels for her."

NOMTHA'S P.O.V

"Dad. Look at me please, I'm still your Princess." I beg him, he is really angry at me. I also feel like I have disappointed him to some extent but what should I have done? I love Spha.

"How do I know you're still my Princess when there is a rich kid whispering nice things to your ear and promising you heaven on earth? Where do I fit in that equation?" Hurt is audible in his voice.

"Dad I love him. You always tell me that we can't control who we fall in love with. I tried to fight my feelings for him but I couldn't hold back anymore."

"So you replaced my love just like that?" He snaps his fingers.

"Dad no! I would never replace you, you are my first love and you will always be my number one." He faintly smiles. I know my father thinks that I will forget about him and channel all my love and energy to my boyfriend.

"I love you Princess. I don't want to lose you to some rich kid only because I can't afford to provide you with luxuries and money." He looks away.

"Dad, it's not about the money or who can afford, I love you dad with or without money. It's the same with Spha, I love him not his money or status."

"Are you sure about your feelings for him?" I nod. "Who attacked you and why?"

"My dear father, after all the questioning it's now that you remember why I'm here." I laugh but stop as soon as I feel stinging pains on my abdomen, I shut my eyes involuntarily.

"Are you okay baby?"

"I'm fine dad just mild pains those witches did a good job trying to break my ribs. Okay, back to your question, I was attacked by my two colleagues who think I stole Spha from them."

"You see what I'm trying to tell you? Darling it's not too late to stop this. Your problems are just starting, you've officially declared a war against all the maidens of this kingdom. Pray that the royal family will support your relationship or else you are both in for a rough ride." He sighs.

"Are you okay with it?"

"You know I can't say no to you. If you love him, I won't stop you darling." He kisses my forehead.

"Thank you dad. I love you."

Dad goes outside, the nurse checks me, I wince and groan in pain when she checks my ribs. I feel like I have a broken rib despite what all these doctors are saying, dad even joked saying it's because I've never fought with anyone before or get beaten up. Dad comes back in followed by the two brothers, Spha looks at me

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his eyes are full of sorrow. I formally introduce them to one another, dad wants to hug Spha but he is hesitant. I nod for him to go on, they hug and I smile.

"Well, pleasure meeting you sister in-law." Sbu who hugs me forgetting that I'm still in pain says. He hugs me for a very long time until Spha clears his throat. They look at each other, I don't know why but I feel like behind their love and affection for each other there is broken trust.

"My Prince, I haven't given you my daughter to do with her as you please, your relationship is still on probation, okay?" Dad cautions but this time with a smile.

"My King, rumors are saying our Prince is seen roaming the streets with a beautiful girl, who is she and what happened to our agreement?" Asks the king's right hand man, chief Mseleku.

"What are you insinuating, Mseleku? Are you trying to tell me that my son is in love with someone?" The King seem surprised by the news. Him and Spha have a close relationship, he should have told him, right?

"Melusi, don't try and act dumb! I know you two are in cahoots, is this how you repay me for my loyalty?" Chief Mseleku is angry.

"Justin, I know nothing about what you are saying. What if rumors are not true? My son knows he's not allowed to do anything with a girl until we crown him. Besides, I'm a man of my word, I won't forget that."

"Better not. My daughter is still a virgin waiting for your son, you better not break her heart or all hell will break loose." He sips his beverage.

"No need to threaten me. My son will do as I say." The King reassures his friend as they continue sipping their bourbon whiskey. It's the King's special treat, even the royal bartender knows that it is only saved upon the King's request. Chief Mseleku is lucky to have him as a friend because every time he feels thirsty, he visits the King for a drink.

"What is taking them this long? I hope my daughter is fine."
Zandi paces up and down in the lounge after peeping out of the window to try and see if they were back.

"Zandi you worry too much, Nomthandazo is not dead. Sit down please, you are disturbing me from enjoying my telenovela."

"Sne! Remove your dirty feet from my new couch. You can't even afford a lollipop but you like sitting as if you own the world. Your age mates are married and have families but you're still here enjoying being a maid to your younger sister, why did you waste your time, our money studying for a degree you are not even using. Get out there, find a job or better yet, a herd boy and get married. We are tired of feeding a full grown up woman!"

"I'm not Nomthandazo's maid! I'm me, the fact that she's earning a few dollars doesn't make her any better!" Sne fires back.

"Go to the kitchen and wash those plates before my daughter comes back, also prepare a light meal for her. She must be hungry."

"I have tolerated your insults for a very long time now. I won't take orders from you anymore!" Sne storms out of the house

bumping into Nomtha on her way out. Nomtha balances herself on the doorframe as she almost falls.

"Sunshine!" Zandi rushes to her and takes her inside.

"Maa what was that? Did you two fight, again?"

"Forget about her my child. She's a curse, can you imagine she called me a useless mother? Me?" Zandi cries even when she's busy lying to Nomtha.

"Mom don't do this. We both know my sister didn't say all those things, she might call you Zandi but will never call you useless." Nomtha defends her only sister.

"You will always take her side----"

"Maa, I'm in pain not now please! Why do you want to make this harder for me than it already-----! Ouch! Aww!" She cries out and her father storms in the lounge.

"Princess! What's wrong? What have you done to my daughter? Couldn't you wait for her to rest at least? I'm sorry darling, calm down." Nomtha hurt herself trying to go to her room in anger, now Zandi is feeling bad. Her and Bab' uMahlangu calm her down, give her the painkillers and pacify her till she feels better.

Zandi asks what happened to her? She tells her the whole story. She hears everything, she cries and runs outside. She sits on the

rock behind their house, lights a cigarette and smokes with tears still falling down her face.

"Maybe Zandi is right, I'm cursed! Everyone loves Nomtha, including me, I do love my little sister but she overshadows me every chance she gets. Sometimes I feel like I don't exist, in this house and in the whole world. She was blessed with brains, I had to work my butt out to qualify as an average student! This might sound funny to anyone but she was my damn tutor throughout my schooling years despite me being the elder. She helped me with my varsity assignments when she was still in high school. It was embarrassing but what choice did I have? She's beautiful, attractive, a 'good daughter, whilst I'm the bad apple of this family. God is so unfair! Now she's about to become the queen of this kingdom! I hate my life because of this constant unfairness towards me. I am older than her so I should be the queen not her." She cries her heart out as she feels like life's been unfair to her. She feels like the stars only recognize her younger sister not her.

INSERT 9

Sne gulps a hundredth shot of vodka, she is now wasted. Her friends tried to stop her from getting wasted but she kept shouting that she wants to drown her sorrows and shame. She's an alcoholic but she's never been too drunk to such an extent.

"My sister, I think you should go home." The barman tries to stop her from ordering more liquor.

"Who are you? Are you my father? Are you Zandi my mother? Or my aunt?" She laughs out loud, everyone in the bar turns their head. She stands up, trips and balances herself using a barstool. Again she tries to walk out of the bar, she trips and almost falls but this time strong arms catch her. She tries to open her eyes to see what's going on but just then the alcohol takes its toll as she passes out in Prince Sbu's arms.

"Dude, who is this girl? I thought you like them conscious and not reeking of alcohol?" Sbu's friend taunts him when he comes outside of the bar carrying an unconscious Sne.

"Stop blabbering nonsense and help me get her inside the car." His friend quickly open the door to their car's backseat. They carefully make her lie down, she's sweating so they decide to take off her shoes and top. She's now left with her ripped bum short and a bra.

"Wow! Look at that ass bro, I can imagine having her tied to my bed and under my mercy-----"

"Stop! This drunk girl is Nomtha's elder sister. From what I have gathered this girl is Nomtha's everything so no, I'm not interested nor will I let you take advantage of her." Sbu is annoyed by his friend fantasies.

"What's wrong with you dawg? Did that Nom what what girl put you under a spell or something? Does this girl even exist or you are imagining things?"

"Mike shut up!" Sbu punches his car and his knuckles turn bloody in seconds. He repeatedly punches the car and cries as he collapses on the parking lot.

"Sbu, I'm sorry. What's the matter, bro?"

"You don't understand. Nomtha does really exist but I can't have her! I can't!" He cries like a small baby whose candy has just been taken out of his mouth.

"I don't understand Sbu, which girl can say no to you? I mean, you're handsome, you're the prince and rich, what more could this girl ask for? Usually the girls cry to have you not the other way around."

"I will never be able to win her heart, my brother beat me to it. They are madly in love with each other bro!" He sobs.

"I'm sorry dawg. What's your plan? Are you going to fight your brother or let it be?"

"Fate has never been in my favor. My brother wins like always." Sbu's never broken down like this. Something must have shifted in him the day she met Nomtha the Precious Rose.

Nomtha was born under aberrant circumstances, Zandi didn't know that she was pregnant until the very day she felt sharp pains in her abdomen. The excruciating pains she felt that sunny afternoon of December 19 of 1993 led to the birth of what people termed the miracle baby. Her father didn't believe in miracles back then but in God he believed. He held her for the very first time, still not able to believe that his wife had given birth without both of them noticing her pregnancy. It is then that he named her Blessing while her mother named her Nomthandazo. Everyone loves her, she's everyone's darling but I never thought the two princes of this kingdom would fall head over heels for her.

"Maa, what did you say to my sister? She's not at home and not picking her phone?" Nomtha questions her mother.

"Forget about that sister of yours. She's always troubling us."

"No mom. She might be trouble but you are not helping the situation at all. You should stop comparing us all the time. She's

my sister and I don't like it when you always treat her like a stranger, you never allowed her to be herself, you always expect her to be the splitting resemblance of me. Thus not fair on her, allow her to be her and you will see the beautiful daughter you gave birth to twenty six years ago." She pauses and wipes a tear. "I'm going to find my sister." She slams the door behind her and leaves.

"I'm starting to get worried about her, darling, what if your dreams are becoming reality? Her love for her sister is something I don't understand, she's even sacrificing her health for her." Zandi says to her husband.

"I always knew that she was a special child. You know the day she was born I questioned God and my ancestors. That very day same day God answered me, 'be still and know that I'm your God' was what He whispered in my ears, I have since then stopped worrying about Nomtha. I know she will not disappoint no matter what decision she takes. She's always guided by God although she doesn't know that yet." Bab' uMahlangu speaks with confidence.

"Brother, you don't love me anymore. You are always on your phone or laptop, you don't spend time with me anymore."

Kayise pouts.

"Sis, I still love you. Listen my dear sister, I have something to tell you." Spha smiles as he browses through his gallery.

"You look happy, what is it brother?" Kayise raises her eyebrows.

"Okay. Here she is, I finally found love Sis." He shows her the picture.

"What? You're lying? You pulling my leg, right?" After Florencia's death, Spha has never said anything about love, let alone have a picture of a woman.

"No I'm not. She's your future sister-in-law." He grins, Kayise's reaction is not clear. She stares at the picture for a very long time. "What are you thinking, she's beautiful isn't she?"

"Yeah she is but I'm not happy brother."

"Why? What's the matter? I thought you liked everything I choose?"

"I'm afraid she's here to take my place in your heart." They both smile.

"Relax. She's not here to take your place. Can I let you in a secret?" She nods with a smile on her face. "She's a sweetheart, lovable, you will love her I can promise you that."

"I'm happy for you brother. If you feel happy then I'm happy." She hugs her brother but frowns without him noticing. It's now clear she is not genuinely happy about this relationship.

The King storms into Spha's room not looking happy at all.

"Kayise, I would like to talk with my son in private."

"Dad-----"

"Kayise!" He shouts startling both his children. It's so unlike him to shout at any of them. Kayise cries and leaves the room.

"Everything okay dad?"

"I should be asking you that! Who is this girl you are seen roaming the streets with? Have you forgotten who you are? Huh?"

"Dad, with all due respect, I didn't choose to be a prince. You don't understand how hard it is to try and live by the rules of the society all the time."

"What are you saying son?" King Melusi looks panicked.

"Dad, I haven't broken any of the rules and customs of this kingdom. I promised to never let you down. The girl in question is Nomthandazo Mahlangu, I love her dad."

"What?-----

Just then Spha's phone rings. He checks the caller ID and takes the call forgetting that his father is still in the room.

"Babe? Wait, what's with the noise in the background?"

"I'm at the mall looking for my sister, I can't find her anywhere Spha. I'm scared." Nomtha sniffles.

"Nomtha, you should be resting. Where are you right now?"

"In a bar opposite to my favorite restaurant."

"Stay there. I'm on my way

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okay? Don't cry please babe." He hangs up, takes his jacket and car keys. "Dad, I'm sorry but I have to rush somewhere." He doesn't wait for him to reply or say something. The King calls out to him but he's already driving off.

SPHA'S P.O.V

Nomtha and her stubbornness! I know she loves her sister but does she have to always sacrifice her life for her all the time? I hope nothing goes wrong. I'm driving as fast as I can until I reach the mall. I park my car and run inside the bar, it is crowded and too noisy for my liking. I can not even imagine what my babe is going through right now. One guy stumbles and before I know it I'm drenched and I smell like a bar itself. Shit!

Nomtha is sitting on the bar stool, a guy tries to touch her shoulders, she fights him off but the idiot is persistent. I step closer and grab him by his shirt.

"Dude, stay away from my babe."

"Or what cheeseboy? What will you do, huh?" I laugh. I'm a very calm and collected guy but I can react otherwise, especially when someone messes with my loved ones.

"Boy, let's go. This cheese boy is the Prince of this Kingdom. Don't get in trouble with these people from the royal family if you don't want to find yourself homeless." They drag each other and leave.

"Spha!" Nomtha hugs me tight and sniffles.

"I'm here babe, stop crying. It's okay, we will find your sister. Come, let's get out of this stinking place." I take her in my arms and exit the bar.

"My Rose, why do you always risk your life for your sister? I get it you love her but have you forgotten the doctor's instructions?" Tears fall down her cheeks. What have I done? She doesn't like being scolded, shit! "I'm sorry babe, I care about you and I worry a lot especially when I feel like you are out alone with no one protecting you after what happened earlier. I'm sorry, okay?" I hug her until she calms down.

"I don't like it when you scold me. My parents never scold me."

"I know I'm sorry." She smiles. "But I won't promise to never scold you again." I smile at her. "So? What happened to your sister?"

"Their usual fights. I'm tired Spha. I feel like I'm failing as a daughter and as a sister because their fights are always about me. She left in anger and now I don't know where she went. I called her phone she's not picking up, her friends haven't seen her since yesterday. What if she's lying drunk somewhere out there?"

"No babe. She's fine, we will find her."

We drive around the mall but there is no trace of Sne. Nomtha seems really sad, I wish there is something I can do to help her cheer up. After about three hours we get a message from Sne

telling Nomtha not to worry as she is fine. Finally, my girl can smile and maybe we can grab a bite or have a nice chat.

"Babe, I haven't eaten anything since morning, are not hungry?" I take a quick glance at her before turning back my eyes on the road.

"I'm hungry too. Let's go home so we can both have something to eat."

"No. I can't go home smelling like a bar like this, mom would definitely murder me." We both laugh. I love it when she's laughing like this. My soul becomes happy by just looking at her happy face.

I flash the headlights, the gate opens immediately. A security guard comes rushing to us, he bows his head out of respect like always. Nomtha is looking at me with questioning eyes, I smile. I'm sure she's asking herself where are we.

"Okay. We are here babe." I hold the door for her, she gets down. I throw the keys to one of my trusted guards and ask him to wash my car. I lead her inside. I talk to the guy in the reception area, collect the key to my private room, I take Nomtha's hand into mine.

"Spha?" She stops below the staircase. I knew it!

"Babe, this is one of my father's many hotels. My favorite." I smile, pick her up, she's now used to it so she doesn't scream.

The receptionist guy looks at us and shakes his head smiling. By the time I reach the room and put her down, I'm tired. "You are gaining a lot of weight, sweetheart." I say opening the door.

"Is that your polite way of telling me that I'm fat?" She raises an eyebrow.

"No babe, not fat but you have gained a lot of muscles. It must be those gym sessions with Anthony." She lightly smacks me.

"Ouch! That hurts." I'm about to take her to the bed when I remember that I still reek of alcohol. "I think we should shower first." Her eyes pop out in shock.

"Do what?"

"Relax. I did not say we will take a shower together, you use this bathroom, I will use my brother's. His room is next door." She relaxes, I laugh.

"Hey thus not funny."

She disappears into the bathroom and I leave. To my surprise my brother's room is locked from the inside. I knock, he opens the door with a cigar in between his fingers.

"Bro, I didn't know you were also here?" He says when our eyes meet.

"So did I. Are you alone? I need to take a shower." He looks confused. "Nomtha is taking a shower in my bathroom, I can't invade her privacy."

"Ooh!" My brother swallows hard as if I just insulted him. "Uhm....I'm sorry bro but I have company. Sorry." He shrugs apologetic.

"It's okay. Thanks and have responsible fun." We fist bump.

"Don't forget you are the crown Prince." He says as I turn to leave. I turn back, smile and give him a thumbs up. Nomtha is applying body moisturizer with her one foot on the bed, one on the floor. Her skin is flawless, her hair is not tied like always, it's a beautiful mess on her head. I smile to myself admiring her natural beauty. She sees my reflection on the mirror and stops.

"How long have you been standing there?" She asks.

"Long enough to confirm that I really chose well." She laughs. I smile at her and step closer. "You look beautiful darling." I want to hug her but I haven't taken a shower yet.

"Why are you still wearing these? I thought you were going to take a shower?" I tell her what happened, go inside the bathroom and come out a few minutes later wearing only my shorts. My babe looks at me and swallows. Yeah I know darling, these abs can make any normal being drool.

"Like what you see?" I smile my almost forgotten naughty smile.

"Nah. Not really impressed." She smiles. "While we are at it, will you please put on your shirt my dear Prince, please."

"Your wish is my command."

INSERT 10

It is said that love is a beautiful thing. Every girl or boy wishes to fall in love someday, the widowed also wish the same, even the ones who the world has termed as prostitutes, thugs they also wish to fall in love. But, what happens when the two brothers fall in love with the same person?

"Hey, wake up." Sbu wakes Sne up. Her eyes spring open, she's shocked. The environment, the voice and the fragrance of the room is not familiar to her.

"Who are you? Why am I here?" Sbu looks straight into her eyes. "Prince Sbu? What am I doing here?" She can't believe she's in bed with the prince.

"You passed out in my arms yesterday, don't you remember?" She tries to remember but her mind is blank. All she remembers is how she ran out of the house after finding out that Nomtha is in a relationship with the crown Prince.

"I don't remember anything." She looks away embarrassed.

"Why were you that drunk? Is it your lifestyle or something happened?"

"Why do you care?" Sne attempts to get off the bed but Sbu pushes her back down.

"Don't start with the attitude! I'm only being polite to you because I know that you are Nomtha's sister although it doesn't look like it, judging by the way you behave of course. If you were not related to her you wouldn't be sleeping in my bed and with your clothes still on. I don't care about anyone darling. Why were you wasted?"

"I'm always wasted, thus the story of my life. Thanks for taking care of me. Now can I leave?"

"Where do you think you will go stinking of alcohol like this? Go in there, take a shower and adorn yourself like a lady." Sbu orders.

She shamefully goes inside the bathroom, Sbu checks if he has something that she can put on in his wardrobe. He finds unisex tracksuits and a vest, he keeps them on the bed. She comes out with a towel wrapped around her.

"Put these on."

"Thank you. You are not as bad as people portray you to be." Sbu smiles.

"It's just a pretty face darling. You don't want to know half of the shit I've done in my life." He absentmindedly looks out of the window. "Can I ask you something?"

"Yeah go ahead."

"Physically you look like Nomtha but your behavior and actions are different, what's the matter? Why are you wasting your beautiful life drinking alcohol, slaying in expensive clothes you can not afford on your own, without sleeping around with rich older men?"

"Can't I be myself? Why does everyone else want me to be like my sister? I'm not perfect, she is. There, you have your answer." She snaps.

"I'm not trying to pick a fight with you. Do you even know how much your sister loves you? She looked for you everywhere, she's hurt but didn't care about that. Will you please stop being selfish and think about her? I know, you might be asking yourself why a bad boy like me is giving you such advice, Sne, people think I'm the black sheep of the royal family but thus not true. I hurt the world but not my loved ones. My brother and sister have never shed tears because of me. I'm not selfish, I know they both love me so I try and be good to them. You hurt the very same person who loves you the most in this world, she will never be happy if you are not. My family too wanted me to be like my brother, he's not perfect but he is the ideal son. I always thought that my parents loved him more, I thought they were not happy about me being me but I later realized it wasn't the case. They wanted me to walk in the right path like him, I misinterpreted them for a very long time, I even

hated my brother for being the perfect son. I did so much shit that you won't even believe it when I tell you about it, I was arrested in America for murder. You know what it's like to be arrested in a foreign land. My brother and his friends kidnapped me from the holding cell leaving my brother behind to take the fall for me. That very same day I learned a lesson I will never forget. Don't be jealous of the people who love you to an extent of turning a blind eye to their love-----"

"I'm not jealous of my sister, I just want to be allowed to me."

"Will you shut up and listen to me! Listen, I met Nomtha only once. I googled her, yes I did because I wanted to know her better thus when got to know that you are her favorite. She loves you a lot more than you can imagine. I want you to do a little favor for yourself, look yourself in the mirror and ask yourself who you are? Who is your inspiration? Where do you want to be in the next two years? Are you that bad as people say you are? Is sleeping around with old men who have no teeth at all worthy your youthful life? Is drinking alcohol the only way to escape yourself?" Wow what a sermon from Sbu, I never thought he can talk sense. Snegugu is in tears.

"I love my sister. Yes I do, the problem is I don't know how to show it. Sometimes I think I don't deserve to be called her, she's too nice." She sniffles.

"I understand how you feel, believe me I do. Try and be a better person, don't be her but a better version of yourself. I'm willing to help you."

"You said you are a bad person, why are you being nice to me?"

"Nomtha is my future sister-in-law. My brother told me good things about her and he loves her. If she is not happy then my brother won't be happy too. I won't let you and selfishness take their happiness away from them. My brother deserves to be happy, thus why."

"You really love your brother but I feel like you love Nomtha, is it so?"

"Yes I do but not in the way you are thinking. Like I said, I want them to be happy. Pull your life together, I will help you overcome your alcohol addiction, deal?" She nods.

"Babe, My Rose, wake up." Nomtha slowly opens her eyes and rubs them. "Good morning my sunshine." Spha kisses her lips.

"Morning my dear Prince." She yawns.

"How did you sleep? How are you feeling?" She turns and looks at him.

"I slept like a baby in the strong arms of my dear Prince. Thank you darling, I love you Sphamandla Tshabangu." He grins from ear to ear.

"What did you just say?"

"I love you sweetheart." He takes her into his arms, his lips find hers and they kiss.

"I have waited like forever for you to say those three magical words. I love you more, honey."

They both take turns to shower, Spha calls a doctor to check on Nomtha. The doctor removes the bandages and tells them that Nomtha should continue taking her medication and come for check up after five days.

"Hungry?" Spha asks her.

"Not really. Please take me home, I have to see my sister." She stands up and walks towards the door.

"Babe wait. I got a call from my lawyer and the police. Ana and Aisha have been charged with attempted murder. They are going to spend at least five years in prison." He smiles.

"This is not right. I understand they broke the law but five years in prison? I'm not dead, am I?"

"What are you saying? Are you saying we should let them go free?"

"I don't know. Can you take me home please." Someone knocks at the door, it's Sbu.

"Good morning bro, sister-in-law, how are you?"

"I'm fine. And you?"

"Super. I brought you someone I would like you to meet." He steps aside and Sne comes forward.

NOMTHA'S P.O.V

"Sne!" She literally run to her, hug her and spin her around. "Sis

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where were you? I looked for you all over the kingdom. Why do you keep doing this to me?" I can't stop the tears.

"I'm sorry baby Sis. I was angry and I don't even know where my phone is. Sorry." My sister is always apologizing but she keeps doing the same things that hurt me.

"Okay fine. Where did you meet him?" I nod towards Sbu's direction.

"On his bed." She bluntly says.

"Wha-a-t?" Her and Sbu both laugh. Spha looks away, embarrassed.

"I told you not to trouble my sister-in-law but you are doing it nonetheless. She passed out in my arms yesterday in a bar. I realized she is your sister and I brought her here." I sigh, relieved.

"Thank you so much Sbu." I hug him tight.

THREE MONTHS LATER.

I always told mom and dad that Sne was going to change, I told them not to lose hope. I don't know how Sbu did it, Sne is now a responsible woman. At first I thought they were sleeping together but they both swore on my life that it wasn't like that, he was only helping her with her addiction. Sbu hired my sister, she's now running the Tshabangu hotels as the manager.

Today Spha is taking me to meet his family. I've already met Kayise, she's a lovely girl just spoiled a little bit. She told me to my face that if I try to keep her brother to myself she's gonna show me flames but I promised her to never take her place in her brother's heart. We had a long conversation and after that we were on good terms, I like her. I hope the parents will be as

welcoming as their children. I'm getting ready in my room when my sister comes in my room still wearing her pajamas.

"Good morning Sis." I say looking at her reflection on the mirror.

"Can I help you?" This is a first. My sister is offering to help me with my hair and makeup?

"Yes, sure. Don't make my face look funny, I want a natural look and my hair-----"

"Shut up." She spins the chair around, I look at her confused.

"I'm the one doing the work, you don't need the mirror." I do as I'm told. She does her work in silence. After a few minutes, she breaks the silence by saying. "Make-up and hair done. Now we need to find a beautiful dress and shoes. You have to dress like you are already one of them, we don't want them to look down on you."

She opens the my wardrobe, takes out all of my dresses. Oh no! Who will pack these now? She picks up a long maroon dress, checks it out.

"This will do. Get dressed." My phone vibrates, it's a text message from Sbu.

Put on a head wrap. My dad will like it and it's custom.

I smile after reading it and show the message to Sne who laughs out loud.

"Head wrap? Like seriously? Seems like the royal family is still living in the 18th century." We both laugh.

"Sne, I'm nervous." I confess.

"Why is that?" She asks doing final touches on the head wrap.

"What if they don't like me? What if the parents are not as welcoming as their children? What will I do Sis? I love Spha----"

"Shhhh." She puts her finger on my lips. "Breathe in, out. Relax, they will like you. No one can ever resist your charm." She assures me. "There. How is my work?" She turns me to look myself in the mirror, I look good with a head wrap and my hair flowing down to my shoulders. Dad comes and tells us the Prince is here.

"Thank you Sis. You're the best sister ever." I kiss her cheek.

We arrived at the royal palace, my heart is pounding, I'm really nervous.

"Babe, calm down. My parents don't bite, okay?"

"What if they don't like me?"

"I will always love you, whether they approve of this relationship or not." He kisses my hand. "Come on, let's go inside."

The maidens are standing by the main entrance, they all bow their heads as we make our way inside. One of the guards opens the door for us. Wow! The place is magnificent. Classic interior decor and classic furniture. Spha leads me to the lounge where her parents are sitting. The Queen looks at my direction, our eyes lock, my heart is now pounding even more as fear takes over. I'm not nervous anymore but scared. The King is sitting on his throne. It's my first time seeing the throne of my kingdom. It's a golden chair, with animal print covers. There are lion sculptures on both sides of the throne. There is a picture of a man on the wall, there is something strange about this picture. By looking at it, it's like I'm looking at the man in the picture in flesh and blood. I blink rapidly and look away from it.

"Mom, dad, meet the love of my life Nomthandazo Mahlangu." Spha says still holding my hand.

"Babe, meet my lovely parents."

"Your Majesty, my Queen." I bow my head.

"Sit down my child." Says the King. "How are you?"

"I'm fine thank you."

"Are you not the girl we met at the office? The one our son introduced as his personal assistant?" The Queen finally says something.

"I am the one, my Queen." She sneers.

"Wow son! Since when do you sleep with your employees, let alone think of introducing them to us? Is this a joke to you, Spha? You are the crown Prince for crying out loud! You need to find yourself a woman of your class and sophisticated one at that!"

"Mom, I'm not sleeping with Nomtha. I love her."

"Where is the difference in that?"

"My Queen will you please stop with this! Stop embarrassing my son!"

"Who the hell are you to tell me what to do? Huh? Spha is my son and I have the right to want what's good for him. This girl is not suitable for him, I'm not like you who sees a person in every riffraff. My son will never marry a commoner, never! Let alone a daughter of a man who can't even afford to take care of his family-----"

"Maa, I will not allow you to say such things about my girlfriend." I can't stop the tears, I let them fall freely.

"Look at him, talking back to me. Did this girl bewitch you or what? Listen here young lady, my son is not going to marry you, do you hear me?" I nod with tears in my eyes. "Now, get out. Spha sit down." She orders.

"No mother. I brought her here, I'm not letting her leave alone."

"Spha----".

"My Queen." The King calls out.

"Shut up Melusi. I'm talking to my son not you!" She hisses. A man walks in followed by a girl. He gives me an ugly stare, I don't know this man but he seems to know me very well.

"I thought we had an agreement? What is this girl doing here? Are you trying to cheat me Melusi, after everything I did for you? Is this how you are going to repay me? My daughter has never been touched by any man, she's still waiting for your son but here you are, looking on as your son breaks my daughter's heart." The man shouts.

"What are you talking about chief Sokhele? What agreement do you have with my father? Why do you say I'm breaking your daughter's heart when I don't even know who your daughter is?" Spha looks confused. As for me, I don't know what to say.

"You are supposed to marry my daughter. She is here to meet you and your parents but you are holding another girl's hand what is going on here?"

"Stop!" The King shouts, the strange picture frame falls from the wall.

INSERT 11

"Stop!" The King shouts. The strange picture frame falls from the wall.

"Dad what's going on? Who is this girl I'm supposed to marry?" Spha questions his father.

"Nobuhle is the girl you are supposed to marry. She's from a reputable family and has much better taste of fashion than this hag you brought here!" The Queen snaps. The Nobuhle girl smiles and looks at me with evil eyes.

"No! Hell no! If it's about the crown I'm ready to forfeit it for my true love. I can't marry someone I don't know and don't love. Father please don't this to me." The Queen smiles. Spha kneels in front of his father and begs him. I'm still standing where he left me, tears rolling down my cheeks. I have never been insulted this way.

"My hands are tied son. Chief Sokhele and I agreed on this alliance a long time ago, when you were young I can't change it now." The King looks away from his son.

"Even if your hands were not tied by this agreement I was never going to let this stinking low life, a gold digging whore to marry my son."

I can't take this anymore. I have been insulted and its enough! I turn to leave running, a thunderous sound followed by a flash

of lightning stops me in my tracks. To say I'm scared will be an understatement. I try to be brave and leave but again the thunderous sound stops me dead in my tracks. I try to shout to Spha but my voice betrays me as it comes out as a whisper. I try to run to him or somewhere I can hide but the man in that strange picture is standing right in front of me. He's smiling at me, he calls out my name with his arms open, his voice echoes in my head making me scream.

"Stop!" I collapse on my knees and cry. Someone touches my shoulder, "No! Leave me alone! I don't know who you are!" I sob.

"Babe, its me Spha." Hearing his voice I hug him tight. "It's okay, I'm here. I won't let anything happen to you. Stop crying my love." He calms me down.

"Brother what have you done to her? Nomtha are you alright?" Kayise storms in the room.

"She's astraphobic. Bring her some water please."

"If you dare move Kayise, I will forget that you are my darling daughter." The Queen hisses.

"Spha take me home, please. I want to leave." I sob. He picks me up and goes outside where his car is parked. To my surprise there is no rain outside, only a few patches of clouds in the sky. Where did that sound come from?

NARRATED.

The queen is pacing up and down in the lounge. The King is still sitting on his throne with his head buried in his hands. He stands up, just then he realizes that the picture frame is no longer where it's suppose to be. He looks down and sees the pieces of glass scattered around his throne.

"Nooooo!" He screams and kneels down picking up his grandfather's picture.

"Dad what's wrong?" She also kneels next to her father.

"Something is about to go horribly wrong in my kingdom."

"I'm sure the useless ancestors of this kingdom are trying to say something about that wretched, useless girl." She sits cross legged on the couch.

"Mommy, I love you so very much. Will you please do me a favor and not call her names, please!"

"You're right Melusi. If your son doesn't marry my daughter then I swear on everything thus dear to me, everything will go horribly wrong in this kingdom. I won't let you ruin my

daughter's life! You better talk to your son and do it very quick." The Queen laughs out loud clapping her hands with long decorated nails.

"Listen here you old fool! You don't come here and threaten my husband, we have an agreement but that doesn't give you the right to insult us."

"Will you shut up you crazy woman!" Chief Sokhele is playing with fire here.

"You listen to me you old fool," She steps closer so only chief Sokhele can hear what she's about to say. "I was born and bred in Malawi, I can make you disappear into thin air by just snapping my finger. Don't test me, I'm no one's playground." She smiles her evil smile that can make even the strongest men wet their pants. Before I can bat an eyelash, Mr Sokhele is on his knees begging for forgiveness from the Queen.

"You can stand up now little man." This woman is really disrespectful. "Now you listen to me, go back to the hole you crawled out from. Don't you ever show your ugly face here unless you are called." Chief Sokhele drags her daughter who is in tears after experiencing the most humiliating thing of her entire life. No matter how strong you are, you can't help but feel sorry for your father who gets ordered around by a woman. "Oh! Before I forget? Take this money, try to buy some nice clothes for your.....what word can I use now?"

Your.....shapeless pig you call a daughter." She throws a number of notes on them, they both pick them up and leave.

"Mom, what is wrong with you? You can't even notice how your husband is stressed out!" Kayise is annoyed.

"My child, don't talk like that to your mother." The King wipes a tear.

"No dad-----"

"Kayise! For the very first time during my reign we all quarrelled in hear, in front of my throne, look what happened. My grandfather's picture fell from the wall, this is a bad omen. I'm begging you my child, let's all stop fighting."

"I'm out if here. I can't keep listening to this nonsense, bad omen my ass!" Clementine picks her phone and leaves Nomtha comforting her father who looks really worried.

Clementine calls her friend and tell her everything that happened, they laugh and compliment their witchdoctor who gave them the portion to tame the King so he can dance to their tune. Agnes proposes that they go out and celebrate their victory.

"That useless Spha seem determined to marry that girl, what do I do about that?"

"Talk to him or make him or the girl disappear and your problem will be solved just like that."

"I can't make him disappear, I need him as my puppet. I don't want to push him away, that might lead to disaster. I don't trust him that much." Clementine voices her fears.

"Make the girl disappear. Give her cash, tell her to stay away from your dear son." They both laugh. "Or bribe the parents, I hear they are poor than the word itself."

"Let me wait and see if she will still want to marry him after what happened today."

"Wise decision. See you at 7 p.m for dinner celebrations."

NOMTHA'S P.O.V

I don't know who that man is and what he wants from me. Why did he appear only to me? Should I ask Spha who that picture belongs to? His voice was so loud, his smile affectionate but how does he know who I am?

"Babe, I've been calling you, are you still upset about what happened back there? I'm sorry my love, I really am. I didn't know my mother was going to act like that, I'm sorry." I sigh, takes his hands into mine.

"It's not your fault, stop apologizing. Parents want what's good for their children, I don't blame your mother but-----"

"But what honey? Tell me how you feel."

"I love you Spha that will never change. I just don't like the way your mother insulted my father, that man made me who I am, he sacrificed the little he had for me and my sister, he is my hero and I can't tolerate it when someone insults him not even the Queen herself."

"I know my apology won't erase her hurtful words but I apologize on behalf of my mother. I will talk to my parents and make them understand that I love only you."

"I love you too, sweetheart." Despite the insults from his mother, I still love him deeply.

"Thank you." He kisses my lips.

"For what?"

"Understanding and forgiving me. I don't know how I would have felt after all those insults, you're really a strong and a special woman Nomtha. I thank heavens for sending you to me."

"Okay. Can we go inside now?"

"No babe, I have to return home and confront my father about that agreement they were talking about. I will call you later, or maybe we can go out for dinner later?" I nod. "Okay. See you

then, don't remove that jacket, in fact wear tracksuits and socks when you get inside. It's a little bit cold and we both know what will happen when you catch a cold." He smiles and again kisses my lips.

"Ok honey

I will." He gets down, opens the door for me, kisses my cheek and leaves. I watch him as he drives off, I wave at him.

Sne, mom, dad, my aunt who lives nearby and Sheila are all sitting in the living room watching TV. Sne turns her head, she sees me and runs to me.

"How did it go?" She's already asking questions.

"Sne, will you please let my daughter sit down first?" Dad says.

"Good afternoon Maa, dad. Aunt how are you?" I hug her.

"I'm fine darling and you?" I tell her that I'm doing fine.

"What about me? I have been waiting for you like forever." My friend pouts. I hug her tight, just then I remember all the insults from the Queen, tears fall afresh. "Hey, what's wrong? Why are you crying sweetheart?" My friend too cries.

"Nomtha, I love you a lot little Sis but can you stop with the childish behavior and tell us what's wrong? We are no prophets to guess the problem." My sister scolds me, she thinks I'm childish, sometimes she blames mom for not having another child after me. But I know she does love me.

"Nomtha what's wrong?" Mom asks sitting next to me.

"It was horrible mom. The Queen insulted me, -----"

"What? How dare she? No one insults my sister and gets away with it, she's gonna hear from me today!" My sister is raging. She is about to exit the door when I call out to her.

"Sis, please don't. A lot happened already, Spha said he will talk to them, please don't fuel the fire." I sob.

I tell them everything that happened at the palace but not the picture frame incident. I myself still don't understand what happened to that picture frame but I strongly feel like I'm in for a shock or something. I will have to find out who that man is. After talking to my family and calming down, I excuse myself, Sheila follows me to my room and locks the door.

"Why did you lie to your parents?" She asks as she sits on my bed.

"I don't know what you are talking about." I continue looking for warm tracksuits, my sister neatly folded my clothes. My

wardrobe looks organized but the problem now is I don't know where she put my stuff.

"Should I remind you that I'm your friend and I know when something is bothering you but don't want to talk about?" She's right. I can never lie to her and get away with it. "Out with it, young lady. What else happened?"

"Something strange happened but I'm not getting into details until I understand the meaning of it." She nods.

NARRATED.

Spha storms in the house. He's ready to confront his parents.

"Mom, dad!" He calls out.

"Brother you are back. Dad is in his chambers, he's distur-----"
Before Kayise can finish her sentence, Spha is heading towards the King's chambers. He opens the door without knocking, his father looks up alerted.

"Dad, care to explain why you promised your friend I would marry his daughter?" The King looks at him but says nothing.

"Dad, I'm begging you in the name of my great grandfather,

don't make me lose my temper and forget that you are my father." Spha is the ideal son but his temper doesn't know that. I don't want to start to imagine what will happen if he loses his temper and the beast in him takes over his mind.

"Son, you can kill me if you want to. I'm already dead." The King cries, his words hit hard on his son. Spha quickly sits next to him realizing the state he is in.

"Father, what is the matter?" He wipes away his father's tears.

"We are doomed! Your great grandfather's picture fell from the wall after so many years, I'm scared son, I don't know what this means but I feel like something is about to go horribly wrong in this kingdom?"

"Thus strange. Do you think this has to do with me bringing Nomtha here?"

"I don't know. That girl looked pure to me, I don't think she can be the bearer of bad news to this kingdom. There is something about her, something extraordinary, I can't name it but it's there. When she walked in I felt something, what is her surname?" The King is deep in thoughts.

"Mahlangu. Father, I don't understand. You're saying something bad is about to happen but Nomtha is not the cause, then who is?"

"I don't know son but I will find out. I don't know what to say about my agreement with Sokhele, I'm sorry my son. I didn't know you would fall in love with someone else maybe I should have told you about it. Please forgive your old man."

"Father I love Nomtha and I intend to marry her, please don't make me choose between this kingdom and her because I will definitely not choose the kingdom over the love of my life. Talk to your friend, explain to him that I already love someone else."

"I will try son. Let me clear my head and think a little bit."

"Okay dad, thank you." He hugs his father and exits his room.

Samke lightly taps on Sbu's bedroom door. He opens and quickly let's her in.

"I told you not to come here unless I call you. What if mom sees us together? Do you want to get fired?" He reprimands her.

"Forget that. I have news for you." She throws herself on Sbu's bed, lies on her stomach balancing her weight with her elbows.

"I saw her!" She exclaims loudly.

"Who? Can you stop beating around the bush and tell me already!"

"The beautiful girl who stole both hearts of the Tshabangu brothers. She is really beautiful like you said, I don't blame you dude. That beauty can hypnotize any man." She smiles.

"Are you done?" He raises his eyebrow.

"No. Chaos erupted when she arrived! Your mother rained insults on her, on top of that that stupid Nobuhle girl arrived claiming to be your brother's betrothed!" She claps her hands.

"What? What did you say my mother did?"

"I mean she insulted the poor girl, I even cried on her behalf." She tells half the truth, half lies.

"Are you sure?" She nods. "Get out of my room, now!" All of a sudden he's angry.

"Haa Sbu! I just briefed you on the latest but you are kicking me out without even greasing my palms? Be generous Mr, my palms are twitching already. \$20 will do." Sbu retrieves his wallet, removes a fifty dollar note and throws it at her. She picks it up grinning from ear to ear, winks at him, kisses the note and puts it in her bra as she exits the room.

"Mom better not be planning anything sinister against Nomtha. I won't let her harm that innocent girl and my brother, never! Whoever wants to hurt them will have to kill me first!" Sbu hisses to himself pacing back and forth in his room.

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Chief Sokhele and wife are really angry at the King for cheating them. They waited for a very long time to become the royal family's in laws now what will they do? Their friends will start laughing at them for getting their hopes up.

"My husband, why would the King be so cruel to us? What wrong have we done to him?" His wife laments.

"I also don't understand. We have an agreement but the Prince brought someone else to meet them on the very same day that he was supposed to meet our daughter."

"My daughter is shattered! She's been crying ever since you came back, she's about to become the laughing stock of this kingdom. Why is the royal family so cruel?"

"I won't let them destroy my daughter's life and get away with it, never!"

"What will you do? They have all the power in the world."

"I will kill that girl if I have to. She can't come from wherever she came from to destroy my only daughter's life. As for the King I will persuade him. My daughter is going to be the Queen of this kingdom!"

"Father, after what that woman did to us, I'm not interested. I can not be her daughter-in-law, no I can't." Nobuhle says entering the dinning room. Her eyes red from the crying.

"I don't care if you are interested or not, you are going to marry the crown Prince. Do you hear me?"

"Yes father. But what if he doesn't love me?"

"Love doesn't matter. All we want is access to the royal money, you can both hate each other, what's important in marriage is tolerating each other. Love doesn't pay bills nor does it buy status, money does." He chews on his meat.

"Nobu, my daughter, don't worry about the insults. Act as if you are deaf, learn everything about their business after that you can poison all of them at once. You will then become the ruler of this kingdom." Her mother smiles assuring her daughter.

In jail Aisha and Ana are talking I'll of Nomtha. They think she bewitched Spha.

"I can't believe I'm in this stinky place because of that girl! I hate her Aisha! How dare she steal our man?"

"What I don't understand is where did that girl come from. We know all the maidens of this kingdom but not her, she just

appeared like a witch that she is and our dear Spha couldn't think straight. That girl did something to him."

"I'm with you on this one. We can't let our Prince marry that witch, we have to convince him otherwise."

"How are we gonna do that? By the time we get out of here they will be happily married and have children too. We should have killed her when we had the chance to."

"We will make a plan. She won't live a fairytale of a happily ever after while we rot in here."

NOMTHA'S P.O.V

I'm lying on my back chatting with Spha and Kayise on WhatsApp. Kayise apologizes for what happened earlier, I tell her not to bother herself about it as it's not her fault. She promises to take me out for shopping next weekend. Kayise and shopping! I don't know what I will do with all the clothes that these siblings keep buying for me. She also spends almost half her salary shopping clothes, expensive designer handbags, shoes not to forget the make-up kits! My wardrobe is full already.

Spha:**Darling, I'm really tired today, can I sleep?**

Me: **Since when do you need my permission to sleep my dear Prince.**

Spha: **Since I married you, in my dreams of course.(with laughing emoji)**

Me: **Goodnight sweetheart, I love you.**

Spha: **Love you more My Rose. Goodnight.**

I smile to myself, switch off the lights and sleep. I close my eyes but just then that man appears. He smiles and sits next to me, I want to run but he shakes his head. I'm scared, sweating and shaking.

"Who are you? What do you want from me? Go away!" I scream.

"Shhh.... You will wake up others and they will think that you are losing your mind because they won't be able to see me. Only you can see me." He pauses. "Come with me, I want to show you something."

"No! Leave me alone or I will scream. Go! I don't know what you want from me!"

"I won't harm you. I'm harmless, to you of course. Follow me." He orders.

"But I'm scared of the darkness."

"Nothing will happen to you. Let's go." I follow him as he takes me to a secluded place near the river. I'm wondering what this man wants from me.

"My name is Ntabakayikhonjwa Tshabangu, great grandfather to your boyfriend Sphamandla the crown Prince."

"What do you want from me? If you are Spha's great grandfather that means you are dead. What do you want from the living?" His faces changes and he looks away.

"My flesh is dead but not my spirit. Do you know who you are?"

"Yes. I'm Nomthandazo Mahlangu." He laughs.

"I like your confidence but I despise you for being a coward sometimes. Why do you always let people do as they please to you? You're not just Nomthandazo Mahlangu, you're a special child born for a reason, is it so hard for you to realize that you are not an ordinary human being? Why are you scared of being who you are?"

"You said you were not gonna harm me but now you're insulting me, what is wrong with you? You appear from nowhere and tell me to be someone I'm not, why are you after me? I'm not a Tshabangu but a Mahlangu. Leave me alone, don't you ever show your face to me."

"I'm scolding you because I can. Have you ever wondered why everyone loves you? Ever wondered why you are so scared of thunderstorms?" I blankly look at him. "Find out the reason, I will be back. Let's go back to your bed."

He takes me back to my room. He waves and leaves. I pinch myself to see if it was all a dream or reality. What did he mean by me being a special child? There is nothing extraordinary about me, I'm just a girl who is scared of thunderstorms thus all.

ONE WEEK LATER.

"My Rose you are awfully quiet, what's wrong?" Spha asks. I've been staring to this laptop screen, I don't know for how long, I sigh, look at him and smile. "Talk to me, what's the matter?"

"Nothing hun, can you take me out of this office? I need fresh air."

"Are you sure thus all?" I nod. How can I possibly tell him that his great grandfather is following me? "Fine. Let's go." We leave to where, I don't know. I just want to distract my mind.

I look outside the window and my mind wanders. Does my parents know that I'm not a normal child like what that man keeps telling me? If they knew, they would have told me, right? The engine goes silent, I realize we are now parking in the section marked authorized parking outside one of the Tshabangu hotels. The one my sister loves to spend time at, she enjoying staying in these hotels for free.

One of the guards opens the door for us. We go in, Spha is holding my hand. I think he's saying something but my mind is a million miles away. He talks to the receptionist and gets the key to one of the private rooms. He punches the up button on the elevator.

"That was quick." I say as we enter inside the elevator.

"This elevator is a private one, for family and authorized staff." He says.

"I see." I lick my lips and bite my lower lip.

"Babe stop!"

"What?" I'm confused.

"Your lips are my weakness. Every time you do that, I feel like you are teasing me and my feelings." Ooh! I smile at him, run my tongue on my lips again, before I know it his lips are searching for mine. His tongue passionately invades my mouth, his hands on my waist. I decide to tease him, I break the kiss.

He looks at me with longing eyes. I pull him closer to me and kiss him like it's my last kiss. The elevator stops.

"Eish, this damn elevator!" We both laugh exiting. "Thank you." I raise my eyebrow. "For making one of my fantasy wishes come true."

The room is nicely decorated. Spha picks a yellow rose from a bunch of roses. He gives it to me.

"Babe, you see this rose?" I nod. "It's rare to find a yellow rose, it's special and bright just like you. This is the reason why I call you My Rose. You brightened my life when you stepped into my office, your bubbly personality

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your smile, you make me feel like we are living in our own world, only the two of us." He kisses my lips. "I love you, darling."

"I love you too, Spha."

"Honey, can you tell me more about your family?"

"What do you want to know? I mean where do I start?" He toys with my hair.

"I want to know your family tree. Start from your great grandfather."

"Okay I don't know much about him but I know he was the first king of this kingdom. Apparently this kingdom never existed back then, all these four neighboring kingdoms were under the rule of one king. He was a cruel man, from what I heard he never regarded women as human beings, to him they were just toys created to satisfy men's needs. Great grandfather got tired of it and challenged the king which led to war. They fought for years and he(great grandfather) won. Thus how he became the first king of Umlazi. After his death, his son Ndlela, my grandfather took over the throne. He ruled until his last day in this world then my father, Melusi Tshabangu took over. If you noticed the picture on the wall where my father's throne is, that man is my great grandfather. Satisfied?" He asks.

"Yeah. You're not a historian but you tried." He tickles me making me giggle like a school girl. We run around the room until I lose my balance and fall on the couch. He comes on top of me and pins me down. My heart starts pounding.

"Babe, breathe. I just want to see something." He grabs the hem of my blouse and pulls it up leaving my belly naked. I'm starting to panic wondering what he's up to. "I like your waist and your flat tummy." He circles my belly button by his fingers. I feel everything south of my waist tightening. "Open your

eyes." He kisses my neck. "Babe, open your eyes. I want to see the effect I have on you." He bites my earlobe.

"Spha!" He laughs and stands up. "You're very naughty." He smiles and sits on the couch taking my feet on his laps.

"I didn't know you are that scared of sex." He laughs at me.

"Thus not funny." I attempt to stand but he holds me in place.

"You don't have to be scared of me. I won't bring you to one of my father's hotels to have sex with you like you are some kind of a time pusher girlfriend, I respect you a lot Nomtha. I won't defile you, not before our wedding. I just want to play with you, don't be scared, okay? This boyfriend of yours can control his emotions, I will have to teach you how to control yours so we both won't be tempted to sin." He kisses my lips.

"Dad, who am I? Who is Nomthandazo?" I question my father looking straight into his eyes. I thought he will be shocked but he's calm.

"I've been waiting for this question for six years now. Why did you take so long to question your identity?"

"I had a beautiful life, dad. I got a job in a prestigious company, fell in love with the Prince and something strange happened when I went to the palace."

"I'm listening." I tell him everything about the picture frame incident.

"That man is tormenting my dreams, dad. He says I'm not just an ordinary child, I should find out who I am."

"I also have questions my daughter, I can't tell you who you are but what I can tell you is that you're a special child. We never knew your mom was pregnant until you were born. I think God created you for a purpose." He concludes.

"If it was God, then why am I being followed by a dead man?" This is all so confusing.

"All to be revealed to you in due time my child. Don't stress yourself about it."

ONE MONTH LATER.

That man hasn't stopped bothering me. He requested that I call him grandfather, I'm no longer scared of him. He appears

whenever he feels like. Spha is suspecting me of hiding something from him. I wish I can tell him that his grandfather is tormenting my soul by his demands.

"Hey, why do you seem lost these days?" My sister snaps his fingers bringing back to my room.

"You don't love me anymore. Where is my takeaway? I don't want to talk to you." I decide to distract her.

"Stop pouting! You are not a baby anymore, you know sometimes I feel like strangling you." She laughs.

"Really Sis? Will you strangle your one and only sister?" I feign sadness.

"Look here, someone sent you your favorite chocolates." She brings her right hand forward and gives me me my favorite chocolates.

"Woow! Sister! Who gave you these?" I take a bite, "mmmh, I love this stranger. Mcwaa, thank you stranger." I shout, she slightly slaps me, we both laugh.

"At least you said you love me. I tricked you, duh."

"You are so mean. Why did you lie to me?" I hit her with a pillow.

"Good night baby sister. Some of us don't sleep with the bosses." She laughs as she leaves.

NARRATED.

The Queen is screaming in her sleep, she's probably having a nightmare.

"No! Not my crown please! No!" She screams.

She looks around and realizes that she's alone in her room. She puts on her black gown with red lines, a red head wrap, retrieves her broom under the bed. She calls out with both hands open, something that looks like an egg but its yellow in color falls on her right hand while a black bird sits on her left hand. She says something using her chewa (Malawian) language, before I know it Queen Clementine is flying using her broom.

"There us trouble!" She exclaims as she lands.

"My child, what brings you here at this hour of the night?" A dark tall old man asks her.

"That child is here to destroy me, I can't let that happen! I've worked very hard to be where I am today. She appeared in my dream, she took off my crown, my beads and ordered me to wear clothes that belong to slaves, people laughed at me, they

all made fun of me including my friends. The entire kingdom bowed their heads and worshipped her. What is the meaning of this?"

"Is she the girl?" The old man points at a big mirror, where Nomtha appears sleeping peacefully. Queen Clementine nods.

"Worry not my child. What do you want your father to do to solve this little problem of yours?"

"Kill her." She bluntly says.

"Worry not my child by the time you reach home, she will be long gone to meet her ancestors." They both smile their evil smiles.

Back at the Mahlangu household, everyone is sleeping peacefully. A thunderous sound wakes Nomtha from her deep sleep.

"Get out of the house, now!" A voice calls out to her.

"By why grandpa?"

"Question me later. Please leave this room, now!" Nomtha runs outside. She realizes the house is on fire.

"My parents, my sister, no! Grandpa do something please, if my family dies in there, I will die too." She calls on her knees crying.

By some miracle Sne and Zandi manage to get out of the house unharmed but not Bab' uMahlangu.

"Dad, no!" Sne screams. Zandi faints.

"Father!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

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NOMTHA'S P.O.V

"Dad, no! No! My father can not die like this. Mom, Sne, do something!" I scream as people start to gather in our compound. I want to run back inside the house, maybe I can rescue my dad. Grandpa pulls me back.

"You are not going in there." I give him a deadly stare. "I'm sorry my child, I couldn't save your father. Please forgive me." Grandpa looks away from me.

"You promised to protect me and my family, you lied to me. You lied to me grandpa, just leave, go!" I scream at him. He pats my shoulders, looks at me pitifully and walks away. He turns, looks at me and says.

"I will send my grandson. I wish I can hug you but I can't, he will be here in a few minutes. I'm sorry." He disappears.

Seeing my family so heartbroken, my mother lying there unconscious breaks my heart even more. I never thought I would live to see this day, why my father?

"God I know I don't pray so often but did You really had to punish me like this? Didn't You think of my sister and my

mother? What of his siblings? Grandma? Did they also deserve all of this?" My heart breaks into pieces.

Sne tries to comfort me but she also is heartbroken. Spha enters the compound running, his eyes are searching for me.

"Babe, are you alright? What happened?" He takes me into his arms as I cry inconsolable.

"Spha, my father.....he is....." I fail to say something as I feel a lump stuck in my throat.

"I'm sorry babe. Please be strong for your mother and your sister. Seeing you in pain will kill them, please my baby. Calm down." He calms me down.

"Why him Spha? Why not me? My dad sacrificed his youthful life for us, he worked 24 hours a day, people laughed at him when he sold everything to send us to school, now he's gone without having to enjoy the fruits of his hard work, this is so unfair. Noooooo!" I scream. It feels like someone just stabbed me in the heart and twisting the knife.

"I'm sorry babe, calm down." He tries his best to calm me down but the pain I'm feeling is just too much.

I look around me, grandma, mom, aunt, my sister, they are all dejected.

"What will I do with Nomtha? What will become of her without her father, tell me mother-----" My mom's voice trails off. Grandma has no answer to her daughter-in-law's questions. Aunt and Sne both look at me and faint. I wish I can run to where my sister is lying unconscious but I have no strength left in me. How will my mom survive alone? She's worried about me but I'm worried about her.

The fire extinguishers are still trying to put off the fire. This is strange. They have been trying for more than five hours now. What's so different with this blazing fire?

NARRATED.

It's around 5 a.m in the morning. Sbu is lying on his back feeling uneasy. He wonders what the problem is? The last time he felt this way was when his brother, Spha, was involved in a fatal accident that claimed Florencia's life.

"Brother? Nooo!" He quickly wakes up, runs to his brother's room. He storms in, Spha's bed is still done. He's not at home. "No! No! No! Where are you brother?" He dials his brother's number, it goes straight to voicemail. He panics, he's sweating, the thought of seeing his brother lying peacefully on the

stretcher bed like what happened five years ago brings tears in his eyes. He tries to search for a clue of where his brother could have gone but finds nothing. He is on his way when he steps on the TV remote, the television switches on, he's about to exit when he hears sirens. It's the news channel, people are gathered, some are crying, the firemen are trying to put off the fire.

"We are gathered at the Mahlangu household where a fire broke out in the middle of the night-----"

He doesn't wait for the reporter to finish his statement, he runs back to his room, puts on his T-shirt, grabs the car keys, barefooted, he runs to the garage. He's driving as fast as his car can go. His mind is racing.

"Dear God, I know You said we should ask everything in Your holy name and it shall be granted. Today, for the very first time in my life I come to You, please let Nomtha and my brother be okay. Thus all I'm asking for."

He almost hits a cow but steers the steering wheel missing the cow by a few inches. He parks his car and runs into the yard pushing everyone else standing in his way. His heart stops when he sees Sne and her mother lying on the ground with people trying to console them. He pushes an old lady, who almost falls.

"Sne, tell me my brother and Nomtha are fine." Snegugu just stares at him. "Please say something." Tears start rolling down his cheeks. Sne points at them (Nomtha and Spha). He sighs, relieved.

"Brother, Nomtha!" He hugs both of them. "I almost died." He wipes his tears. "What happened?" Finally, he asks.

"The house caught fire. Bab' uMahlangu was in there." Spha points at the pile of ashes, teary eyed.

"No! Nomtha, who did this? Brother?"

"We don't know yet. What makes you think that someone did it? Is there something I'm missing here? Sbu? What's going on man?"

"Never mind. I will find out what caused the fire. I'm sorry for your loss, sister-in-law. Take care of her brother, I will go and console Sne." He pats his brother's shoulder.

"Sne, I'm really sorry for your loss. Elders my deepest condolences, we all empathize with you." Sbu briefly hugs Sne and leaves.

The fire extinguishers have finally managed to put off the fire. Now the question is, was Bab' uMahlangu inside or not. One of the firemen approaches the Mahlangu family.

"Just tell us, son. My only son died in there, right?" Nomtha's grandma is ready for the bad news, the fireman shakes his head. Nomtha jumps to her feet, pulls the man aside and whispers something in his ear. The man comes back and tell the family that they will have to do DNA tests to prove that it is really Bab' uMahlangu. They all cry but nod anyway. Spha is looking for Nomtha, she's nowhere to be seen. Where did she go?

Nomtha is running to the river where she usually meets with the old man. She's panting.

"Grandfather!" She calls out.

NOMTHA'S P.O.V

He appears immediately smiling. How can he smile when my family is in so much pain?

"Where is he? You took him, didn't you? Why grandfather? Is it because you want me to believe that I'm someone I'm not?"

Bring him back or I will go and never turn back. Bring him back now?" I'm out of breath.

"Finally!"

"What do you mean finally? I want my father back!" I scream at him. A thunderous sound followed by lightning almost knocks me down. It continues until I'm not scared of it anymore. He's still standing in front of me saying nothing. It starts to rain. Oh no! My family doesn't have anywhere to go. This time I'm not worried about my allergy and astraphobia but my family.

"Nothing will happen to you and your family will just be fine. Have you figured out who you are?" I shake my head. I'm annoyed, I want my father back but this old man is busy asking irrelevant questions. "You're a daughter of the ancestors, a special child born for a greater purpose. The reason why you were scared of thunderstorms before is because you did not want to acknowledge and embrace who you are. You wanted to behave like a normal human being when you are not. You are the rain of blessings, a child who will deliver this kingdom from the clutches of the evil."

"Wait? You put my house on fire, took my dad, only because you wanted me to realize who I am? You're very cruel grandpa!" I'm really angry.

"I didn't. I only came to save you. Close your eyes." He orders.

"You're joking, right?" He fixes his intense gaze at me. I feel my body trembling with fear.

"Close your eyes. You will find all the answers to your questions." I do as he says. There she is, Queen Clementine flying in the skies wearing a black scary gown, she lands in a place which is in the outskirts of Chilumba near Chitende where the historic shrine used to be. She stomps her feet down, a dark, tall

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ugly faced man emerges from the ground. She tells him there is trouble, the man asks what she wants to be done. "Kill her." Are the words from her mouth. A man strikes a full length mirror with his rod and there is my house, catching fire from nowhere. I open my eyes.

"Spha's mother wanted to kill me?" I can't believe it.

"We are not done here, close your eyes. You wanted to know what happened to your father, right?" I nod and close my eyes once again.

My father wakes up, smells smoke, he quickly puts on his robe and runs to my room. There is no one in my room, he screams, an eagle picks him up like he is a day old chick and flies away. He tries to fight but the eagle is just too strong for him. He is

now sitting, tied on the tree, at the very same place where Queen Clementine was.

"My daughter will not spare you!" He spits on the man's face. The man laughs, take out his knife, cuts his finger and thick red liquid oozes out.

"Nooooooo!" I scream as I open my eyes.

"What do you want me to do?" Grandpa asks.

"Go and bring my father back, alive please."

"Fine but you have to promise me one thing. Spha is not Clementine's son, he doesn't know that yet. The real Queen is out there waiting for you to rescue her-----"

"What? Who is the Queen then?" This is all too confusing.

"You will find out soon. Here comes Spha, he doesn't have to know anything. He will freak out or do the unthinkable, handle him and your family. I will bring your father back. You will feel my presence when I'm back." He disappears.

"Babe, we have been worried about you?" Spha hugs me from behind. I'm even scared to look him in the eye after what that evil woman he calls mother did to my family. "You are drenched, you will fall sick." Like always, he makes me wear his jacket.

"I'm sorry for leaving just like that, I needed fresh air." I lie to him.

"I understand your pain honey. Just let me comfort you, don't push me away please." I hug him tight and let the tears fall freely.

NARRATED.

"Mother! Clementine!" Sbu screams waking up everyone.

"Sbu, are you crazy? Did you see what time it is?" Kayise scolds him.

"Stay out of this Sis. Where is that evil woman? Clementine!" King Melusi can not believe his ears. He knows Sbu is a crazy son but for him to call his mother's name like this?

"Sbu!" The King is about to slap him but he grabs his arm.

"I don't want to disrespect you father but if you dare slap me, I will have no choice but to defend myself." He hisses.

"What's the matter son?" Asks the Queen. Sbu grabs her by the neck.

"Why mother? Why do you want to kill Nomtha?" His hands press hard on his mother's neck, she's finding it hard to breathe. "Talk! Why mother? I warned you to stay away from that family but you didn't listen, why?"

"Sbu! Brother stop you will kill her?" Kayise tries to separate the two.

"Son, whatever it is, we can talk about it." Begs the King.

"Talk? How will talking bring her father back? How?" He lets go of her neck, she coughs and catches a breath. "Why are you so cruel mother? You wanted to burn the whole family alive, like really?" He wipes a tear.

"Why are you blaming me? I did nothing of the sort."

"Next time think twice before trying to harm Nomtha or I swear on my ancestors, my dear sister, my dear brother and your sorry pathetic life mother, I will kill you. Before doing anything just remember this, I've killed before and I'm your son." Sbu pushes his mother and storms out of the room followed by Kayise who still doesn't understand what is going on.

"Brother is sister-in-law okay?" Kayise asks, concerned.

"She is not hurt physically but heartbroken." He tells her everything that he saw when he went to see Nomtha.

"Did you try to kill that girl?" A hot slap lands on the King's cheek.

"How dare you? Do you think if I wanted to kill that girl she would still be breathing right now? Don't get on my nerves this early in the morning!" She storms out of the room leaving the King nursing his cheek which is burning from the slap.

Sbu is sitting on the edge of his bed with his head buried in his arms. Samke who was eavesdropping comes in without knocking. Sbu lifts his head, their eyes meet. Poor Sbu he's really hurting.

"Sbu, are you crying?" Samke can't believe it. "I'm sorry dude, I just saw it on the news." She hugs him as he cries uncontrollably. "Calm down Sbu. Someone has to be strong for her. Your brother won't be able to handle this alone, be strong for them. Prince Spha may not say it but he needs you right now. Be a man."

SPHA'S P.O.V

I wish I can tell her that it will be fine. I wish we can trade places, I wish I had powers to bring back her father, I can't bear to see her in this state.

"Babe, have some water."

"I'm not thirsty Spha. Thank you for taking care of my family. I don't know where I would be without you, really thank you. I hope you won't get in trouble with the management for misusing the company property. Did you evict the guests in order to shelter my family?" She asks.

"No. My brother is the one who took care of everything. He's the one who runs the hotels." She's looking outside the window. Nomtha is usually scared of the thunderstorms but not today. I don't think she understands what is going on outside, the pain she feels seems to have clouded her mind.

"My Prince, how is she?" Her aunt asks.

"Still the same. I think she's in denial or she just lost touch with everything around her. I don't think she really is aware of what's happening."

"They were so close. She was his everything, my brother listened to nobody when it had to do with his daughter's wellbeing. He worked all his youthful life in order to provide for them, he loved his family and they loved him too. I don't know how they will manage without him." She sighs.

"I'm here aunt. I heard everything you two said. I'm fine, I'm not in denial but I'm confused. I can feel him, he's not dead. My dad is alive but hurt." Nomtha turns to her aunt's direction.

"What are you saying? The house burnt down to ashes." Just like me, her aunt is confused.

"They didn't find any human remains in there." Nomtha quietly says.

"Babe are you sure?"

"Yes. The fireman wanted to break the news to the family when I pulled him aside. I asked him not to say anything until I'm certain that my dad is alive. I can feel him Spha, he is nearby. Aunt handle the family, I'm going to get my father. Spha, are you coming with me or not?" I don't know what to say, I just follow her. I hope and pray her intuition is right.

The rain is still coming down hard. I open the passenger door for her. She directs me to the bush.

"Stop the car."

"Are you sure he is here?"

"Let's go. This way." She leads the way to where we find her father lying unconscious and covered in blood.

"I knew you were alive, dad. Wake up, your Princess is here to take you home." She puts her hand on his chest, he coughs as

he wakes up but he looks weak. I'm astounded, how did she know where to find him?

"Princess." His voice comes out as a whisper.

"I'm here dad. Let's go, your wife is waiting for you." I'm still shocked. "Spha help me out. We have to take him home."

"Babe, what will you tell your family? I mean you mourned for him, you let your whole family cry their hearts out when you knew perfectly well that he was still alive. What's going on, babe? Do you know something I don't?"

"My father and I have a deep connection that even I can't understand or explain. I cried because I couldn't feel him, I tried to connect with him but I couldn't. Seeing my mom and sister crying like that broke my heart. When that fireman came towards us, I felt something that assured me he was still alive."

"And you chose to keep this from me too? Don't you trust me, babe?"

"I do trust you. I'm sorry." I sigh and concentrate on my driving. I have a lot to say to her but I know if I continue, she will feel like I'm scolding her and starts to cry. I will talk to her later.

Everyone is shocked to see Bab' uMahlangu walking through the door. Nomtha assures them he's not a ghost but alive. I already called a doctor to check on him. The doctor cleans his wounds and bandages them. Everyone including me wants to

know what really happened. How did he end up in the forest?
He's not burnt but has deep cut wounds.

NOMTHA'S P.O.V

I can't let my dad talk right now. If he does, everything will be ruined. I have to do something. Grandpa said I have powers to do anything, it's time to put them to test. Dad tries to say something, I act as if I'm giving him water to drink.

"Don't say anything. Go to sleep, now." I inwardly say as I help him drink the water. He immediately dozes off.

"What is wrong with him, Nomtha?" My sister finally questions me.

"Must be shocked or it's probably the effects of that sedative." I lie.

I'm sorry father, my dear family I have no choice but to lie about this. Spha, my love, I'm sure you have so many questions, I wish I can tell you but I can't. Your great grandfather forbade me from telling you anything. Forgive me my love.

Spha gets a call from the bank. He takes me outside, away from everyone.

"Babe, I need to authorize an important transaction at the bank. I will be back before you know it. I love you."

"I love you too."

Clementine, you touched the wrong person. No one dares to hurt my father and gets away with it.

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I'm in a taxi to the palace and my mind is racing. Grandpa spoke in riddles leaving me confused about the whole thing. I feel like I'm dreaming, like I will wake up and this nightmare will be over.

"The real Queen is still out there waiting for you to rescue her...."

Who is Spha's mother? What led her to leave her son behind? Spha will be heartbroken if he ever finds out the truth. On the other hand, how do I keep lying to him about the whole thing? Dear God please give me wisdom to solve this mess. I can not bear to see my dear Prince hurt. Show me the way.

"Driver, stop here." I look at the tall walls of the royal palace, I feel my blood boiling, it's like I'm possessed all of a sudden.

NARRATED.

Nomtha knocks the gate, the gateman opens for her.

"Where is that evil woman?" She's asks one of the royal guards.

"You have to calm down or we will have no choice but to kick you out of this palace." Says the guard, she laughs.

"Try me." He pushes him away and he falls hard on the paved floor. The other guards can not believe their eyes. How can a slender girl like her push a man who is regarded as the great warrior of this kingdom just like that?

Queen Clementine is having drinks with her friend Agnes. They are overjoyed as they feel like they have found a way to get rid of Nomthandazo.

"Let's toast." They both raise their champagne glasses. "To getting rid of that useless, stinking, low life of a girl." Their glasses clink, both smiling.

"You are the boss Clemza. I salute you friend." Agnes is about to sip her champagne when she sees Nomtha standing right in front of her. Her eyes blazing fire, she looks so unlike her, she is a beast in human form. Agnes is dumbstruck, her champagne glass falls making a shattering sound which startles the Queen.

"Agne-----" She turns her head, her eyes meet with Nomtha's. The light in Nomtha's eyes blind her as she blinks rapidly. "You! What are you doing here? You should be mourning for your father not roaming around. I told you to stay away from my son, look where your infatuation and gold digging tendencies has led you to. You're now fatherless and if you continue messing with me you will soon be homeless and jobless." Clementine boasts. Nomtha laughs.

"You are very foolish if you think I will leave your son. I'm not scared of you, Clementine." Nomtha sneers, both the friends look like they have just seen a ghost. Her audacity to call the Queen by her name.

"How dare you address me like that?" Clementine attempts to slap her but Nomtha slaps her hard. The Queen feels like her cheek is on fire.

"What? How dare-----" Before Agnes can finish her statement, Nomtha grabs her using her left hand and throws her in the pool. Clementine's eyes pop out in shock. She tries to flee but Nomtha pulls her back by her expensive Brazilian weave.

"Where do you think you are going? We are not done here, my dear Queen."

"You're hurting me..... Guards!" She screams, they(guards) all come running. They are all ready to use their swords on Nomtha when a loud thunderous sound followed by lightning knocks all of them down. "Somebody please help me, my friend is drowning in the pool! Sbu! Melusi! Spha! This girl is here to kill us all!" She cries. Nomtha drags Clementine to the pool where her friend is. Agnes is about to give up on fighting the water when Nomtha pulls her up by her braided hair and throw her on the floor, she steps on her stomach and she vomits all the water.

"Listen to me carefully, you touch my family once again I will kill you!" Nomtha hisses. "And ooh! You failed to kill me nor my father, we are both still breathing. Next time up your game. Enjoy your drinks." Nomtha smiles and let go of the Queen's hair and leaves both of them bewildered. She snaps her fingers, all the guards wake up, they try to attack her again but she warns them.

"Don't even think about it!" Nomtha mutters.

The two friends can not believe what just happened. How can a tiny girl like Nomtha do all those things? Queen Clementine fixes her wig and helps her friend to sit up.

"What just happened here? Am I dreaming or what?" Agnes coughs and wipes her face using both her hands.

"I too am confused. That girl is not the same girl Spha brought here. Her eyes were sparkling fire, the power and strength she had to toss you in a pool like that? I felt like I was burning when she slapped me, it's like she's some kind of dark power or something." Clementine says holding her still burning cheek.

"We are in deep shit friend. We need to act fast. How come they all survived the fire?"

"I don't know. I'm just as shocked and confused as you."

"Mommy, what happened here? Why do you both look like this? Aunt Aggie is drenched, what's going on mom?" Kayise questions.

"Nothing serious darling. Your aunt slipped and fell into the pool, she can't swim as we both know so I had to save her." Clementine lies and fakes a smile.

"You both better go inside and get yourselves cleaned up. You look terrible." Kayise suppresses a laugh. "I'm going to meet my friends. I won't be back for dinner. Ciao." She blows her mother a kiss and leaves.

"My Rose, I've been waiting for you? Where did you go?" Spha asks Nomtha.

"I went to the pharmacy to get grandma and dad's medicines." She lies.

"Okay. I want to talk to you about something important, come and sit here." He takes her onto his laps. "Babe, I don't like it when you hide things from me. Besides being your boyfriend I'm a friend you can trust. I opened up to you, I told you everything about me and my family, I also opened up to you about the accident I never thought I would ever talk about. Isn't that enough reason for you to trust me? I feel hurt when you push me away, I want to be part of your everyday life without

making you feel suffocated. What's bothering you?" The last part of his question almost sends Nomtha to a coma. Where does she start to explain what's going on.

"I'm sorry you feel that way, my love. I do trust you but I'm afraid if I tell you what's bothering me you will run out of this room and never look back."

"Try me. Whatever it is, I will deal with it."

"Where do I start? Spha, this is hard even for me. Whatever happens after this conversation always know that I loved you back then, I love you now and will forever love you."

"You are scaring me. What is it?"

"I'm not a normal child, Spha. I just found out that I have supernatural powers, I don't know how to deal with this." The Prince is still calm.

"Babe, is that all you have been hiding from me? When did you find out?" He raises his eyebrows.

"Those days when I used to be with you only physically. The day you took me to your house, strange things happened. On your great grandfather's picture frame on the wall, I did not only see a drawing on the canvas, I saw an older version of you. To me that man was not only pictured but in flesh. The frame fell and I saw him standing right in front of me asking me to take his hand thus why I screamed. I later confronted dad about it, he

told me he knew there was something extraordinary about me but I wasn't aware of that. I've been talking to your great grandfather, he told me I'm a special child born for a greater purpose, everything about this mystery to be revealed soon so he says." Nomtha stands up and fixes her gaze to the moving cars outside. The Prince follows her and hugs her from behind. "Even if you were a mermaid, a ghost, a seer, I would still love you. I love you with your supernatural powers, My Rose. I love the whole baggage that comes with you." Nomtha face lights up as she grins from ear to ear.

"Really?" She turns and looks at him.

"Yes really. Dad told me that there was something about you. He assembled all the seers of this kingdom and they all confirmed that you are a special woman. I knew all along, I just wasn't sure if you were aware of it. I'm sorry for not telling you I didn't know where to start. I love you." Nomtha hugs him tight.

"I love you too my dear Prince." They are about to kiss when Sne clears her throat standing by the doorway. The two lovebirds laugh.

"You can kiss her I will close my eyes and ears." Sne sits on the bed.

"Sis, you should stop intruding please. Don't you know how to knock?"

"Why should I knock when the door is open? You both should learn to behave especially when you are not alone."

"What do you want my dear sister?" Nomtha sits next to her.

"I want us to talk."

"Sounds serious. Do you want him to leave?"

"Yes. Mr Prince, if you don't mind. I would like to discuss something of importance and urgency with my sister." She shows him the door. Thus Sne for you, bossy as hell sometimes.

"It's okay. I still have to tell you something important, don't disappear once again." He kisses her cheek on his way out making her blush.

Sne waits for the Prince to leave the room and then tells her sister that their father is awake and is already stressing about the house, what he will do to shelter his family and so on.

"Don't worry about it Sis. I will talk to him, he needs not to worry about all of that. I don't know how I will do it but I think buying a new house will be a good idea." Says Nomtha. Nomtha has already convinced her father to lie about what happened. Bab' uMahlangu told the family that he was kidnapped by three

guys who set the house on fire after robbing them of all their valuables.

"Where will you get the money? It will cost atleast 70k to buy a three bedroom house also not forgetting that we lost everything. I only have 10k in my account, I don't know how much dad and mom have in their joint account."

"I have money in my account, you don't have to worry. Since real estate is your field just find a nice house I will co---"

"Where did you get the money? Don't tell me Spha bought your body because there is no amount of money that equals to that."

"Relax, you have to stop worrying about Spha. He's a charmer boy yes but he hasn't tried to charm his way into my panties. He has self control and respects me a lot. He deposited the money into my account because I was the one who won that government tender I told you about, it was my idea and I managed to convince the investors to build the new plant."

"How much money are we talking about? You know dad will want us to buy the exact house he had built for us, I mean with the ensuites and fitted wardrobes, everything. Also, I need my Indian make-up kit, I can't go out looking like this." They both laugh.

"Trust you to be thinking about makeup at the time like this. Let's just say your sister is a millionaire-----"

"What? You're kidding, right?"

"No I'm not. I'm dead serious."

"Then why are you still behaving like a poor somebody? How I wish that money was in my account, trust me, this kingdom would have seen all the fashion trends, I mean the hair, the shoes, handbags not forgetting that I would be the first lady to drive a Lamborghini."

"You're impossible! Okay, stop dreaming. Get on to work, log in to those websites and get us a beautiful home. I'm sure you don't need any help with anything because you know all the passwords here Ms Manager."

"I'm on it. Go and find your lover boy, kiss him on my behalf. You're very lucky to have him by your side baby sister. Don't mess this up, okay?" She smiles at her sister who nods and leaves.

NOMTHA'S P.O.V

Everything happens for a good reason. God let it happen because it was in His plans. I know it came to us the evil way

but God said yes to it. He has better plans for me and my family. My dad will be fine and grandma too. Mom is fine but the crying almost messed up her health, I know she will be fine in no time because her pill is by her side. My parents love each other, I've seen them fight a couple of times but in all their fights I have never failed to see their love for each other shining in their eyes. Someone taps my shoulder, it's Kayise. She jumps on me hugging me tight.

"I'm so sorry sister-in-law. Brother Sbu told me everything that happened. I wanted to come earlier but mom prohibited me and dad from coming to see you and your family. I lied to her saying I was going to meet my friends." She smiles her rare affectionate smile.

"Thank you for coming. I hope you won't get in trouble." We both laugh.

"I'm not staying for too long I still have to meet those friends in case mom calls them up and inquire about my whereabouts. I didn't know what to bring so I only brought these, whenever I'm stressed I binge eat the sweet stuff. I hope it will help you too." She smiles shyly.

"Thank you." We say our goodbyes and she departs.

I'm now standing and smiling alone in the lobby. The receptionist asks me if I need anything but I shake my head.

Sometimes I don't like it when these workers treat me like I'm their boss or anyhow superior to them only because I'm dating their boss. I spot Spha and Anthony sitting on the bonnet of Anthony's car outside. I walk towards them, they stop talking and smile at me.

"Will you guys stop staring you are making me shy." I turn my back to them.

"You and shy can not be in the same sentence. Come, our eyes are closed." Anthony lies and laugh at the same time.

"Dude, stop making my girl shy." Spha lightly smacks his friend. These two friends make me miss my best friend. Sheila went to visit her sister, I don't know when she will be back I really miss her. "Babe, are you two sisters done?" I nod. "And where do you think you are going not wearing a jacket? For crying out loud, I hate hospitals and even worse seeing you fall sick is something I'm trying by all means to avoid." Anthony is amused as he watches his friend scold me. "Wear this. Please babe, always wear your jacket." He sighs, I smile.

"Thank you for caring, honey. My aunt took that jacket you gave to me earlier so I don't have another one."

"Okay. Anthony and I wanted to tell you something, please don't be angry with us. Sbu came up with the idea and we supported him. I know you have your pride, you don't accept

handouts but please accept this from the three of us." He hands me a bunch of keys.

"What is this?" They both look at each other.

"We just purchased a house for you guys. Spha told us your parents didn't have an insurance so we thought we should help." Anthony says and shrugs apologetically.

"I appreciate this but I think you guys are gifting the wrong person. That house was my father's, if there is someone you should be giving these keys it's him not me. I'm sorry but I can't accept this. Spha, of all people you know how much I respect my father, how can I accept this on his behalf? Go and try to give this to my dad." I give him back the keys.

My father is a man of his integrity. I hope these two boys are up for the challenge, my father won't accept this easily.

"Sir, we as the Tshabangu boys and our friend here would like to give you a gift. It's not much but we are hoping you will accept it. We empathize with you and your family. Please accept this small gift from us." Spha stretches his hand to give him the keys but he just stares at him.

NARRATED.

At the royal palace Nobuhle is busy preparing Spha's favorite dish as per Clementine's orders. After all, they say the way to a man's heart is through his stomach.

"Brother! Brother, you're finally home. I missed you." Kayise is about to hug his brother when Nobuhle comes from the kitchen and says.

"Welcome home my soon to be husband."

INSERT 15

Spha cannot believe what is happening and what he just heard. He's taken aback and dumbstruck. Nobuhle tries to hug him but he pushes her away.

"Ntombi, what's going on here? What is this girl doing here?"

He asks his sister.

"I brought her son. She's here to fulfill the duties of a daughter-in-law. This is how things are done in the Umlazi kingdom---"

"Mom just stop, okay! My girlfriend is in distress and you are here planning my wedding with this girl? What is wrong with you mom? Why can't you understand that I love Nomtha and I will marry only her."

"Spha, I'm your mother I know what's best for you." Clementine tries to reason with him.

"Mother, I don't want to disrespect you but the sooner you accept that I love that commoner as you call her the better!"

He hisses and goes to his room.

Spha is really pissed off. The Queen really went overboard with this. We can all agree that yes, Spha is the Prince but for his mother to bring someone as his future wife without his consent? I think thus ludicrous. Spha gets inside his room and slams the door behind him.

"How could she do this to me? What will I tell My Rose? She will surely lose it if not dump me the moment I tell her about this." He paces in his room. He fishes his phone out of his pocket, he is about to dial Nomtha's number when he remembers that she doesn't have a phone anymore. His mother knocks on his door.

"Leave me alone. I don't want to talk to anyone!" He screams, throws his iPhone and it smashes on the wall. "Damn it!" He curses. He dials the hotel's number using a landline.

"Tshabangu Hotels. Good evening." The receptionist answers.

"Can you please put me through to room number 203?"

"No Sir. I'm sorry but I can't do that. Our hotel prides ----"

"Do you even know who you are talking to? I'm your fucking boss, just do as I say damn it!" He mutters.

"But Sir I will be violating our rules and regulations. It's against--
--"

"Listen to me young lady." Spha takes a deep breath calming himself down. "I own that damn hotel, I approved that mission statement and all the rules and regulations. I just want to talk to my girlfriend she doesn't have a phone otherwise I wouldn't have bothered you to do this for me. Please." He says calmly.

"Ok Sir. Going through." He sighs and sits on the table. A few seconds later someone answers the phone in room 203.

"Hello." Nomtha's aunt has the receiver on her ear.

"Good evening. May I please talk to Nomtha, it's urgent."

"She's in the bathroom. Do you want to leave a message for her?"

"No. Tell her to call me as soon as she gets out the bathroom." He drops the call and wipes the sweat on his face using both hands.

In the kitchen Nobuhle is crying while stirring a pot of rice pudding. Samke, Zodwa and two other maidens are helping her to prepare the dinner.

"Why did you bother coming here if you are not strong enough. If I were you I would take my China bag, leave this place and never turn back because believe me, that Nomtha girl is going to feed your skinny ass to the stray dogs." Samke says to Nobuhle and smiles.

"Spha is mine. His parents are supporting me and watch me win his heart in a few days." Nobuhle wipes her tears.

"Keep dreaming baby girl." Samke continues to chop the vegetables.

The Queen comes in the kitchen and notices Nobuhle's tears. She literally drags her outside.

"You better wipe those tears. Half a million is a huge amount money I paid to your father for you to come here and start being a crybaby. I brought you here to make my son forget about that witch not for you to be crying. I don't know how you will do it but I want this done. Is that understood?"

"Yes my Queen." She sniffles.

"Good. I don't have to keep reminding you why you are here. Get back to your work and wipe those tears, save them for those who care because I don't." Nobuhle wipes her tears and returns to the kitchen.

The maids have set the dinning table. The King is sitting on the couch waiting for them to call him to the table. His wife deprived him of food after he disagreed with her regarding Nobuhle. Kayise comes in when the maids are informing her parents that dinner is served. They all go to the dinning table and sit down. Nobuhle, like a good would be daughter-in-law serves them their food.

"This is delicious. Mmmmmh." The King compliments her dish.

"I'm sure this girl put something in the food, the King never compliments our cooking but boom, here he is complimenting

this girl." Samke whispers to Zodwa who pinches her to keep quiet before they get in trouble.

"You see why it is good that I choose the wives for my sons?" Clementine smiles. Sbu walks in whistling.

"Oh oh! Mother, did you get yourself another chief maiden?" Kayise suppresses a laugh.

"Sbu!" His father scolds.

"Just asking. I'm the prince so I should be informed of such decisions." He pulls a chair and sits.

"Sbusiso, have some manners. She is not a maid but your sister-in-law." Clementine clarifies. Sbu spits the vegetable soup he just put in his mouth.

"What? Tell me you are joking mother?" He gives her a deadly stare.

"Can we please eat in peace without fighting." Intervenes the King. Sbu angrily leaves the dining table sending the chair crushing on the floor.

"Don't mind him my daughter. They will both come around. Sit down and eat with us." Orders Clementine.

"Mommy, I think you should have asked brother Spha before bringing Nobuhle into the house. My brother loves his girlfriend, she's lovely why is it so hard for you to accept that?"

Or do you want your son to marry two wives?" Kayise questions her mother's decision.

"If thus what it will take to have my son marry the girl of my choosing so be it. Nobuhle will be the first wife." Nobuhle smiles revealing her dimples.

After a long wait, the landline finally rings in Spha's bedroom. He quickly picks the receiver.

"Babe, there is trouble here. My mother.....she...she..." He fails to say something as he feels a lump rising in his throat and tears flooding her eyes.

"Sweetheart breathe, okay? Breathe in and out..." He does just that. "Now tell me what's wrong?"

"My mom brought Nobuhle home. She called me her soon to be husband when I arrived." Nomtha laughs.

"Is that why you are crying my love?" She asks still laughing.

"This is no laughing matter. I'm angry, I feel like punching the walls. I don't trust that girl, what if she forces herself on me?"

"Spha, you're a man and as far as I know, you're capable of controlling your emotions and feelings. She will try her luck but I trust you not to disappoint me, I can share everything in the

whole world but not my man. If you give in to her advances consider us done."

"Babe please don't say that. I love you and you know that. What should I do to get rid of her? Should I leave the palace and go to my private room in the hotel?"

"Spha, you're not leaving that palace for a stranger! You are the prince so act like it at times."

"Babe, why are you angry at me. You are not helping my situation."

"I'm not angry with you. I gave you a warning now I will give you a piece of advice. Don't you ever in your life run away from your problems, face them head on no matter how difficult it is. Difficult situations make us realize that we have the potential to do anything we want to do. I know you are angry but no violence, don't swear or curse your mother, she is your mother and thinks that she is doing this for your wellbeing. In a polite and respectful manner make her understand that you don't love that girl nor do you intend to try. As time goes by, this girl will also realize that she has no place in the palace and eventually she will pack her bags and leaves. Do not drink alcohol in a bid to escape reality and your anger because that alone is a recipe for disaster."

"Thank you babe thus why I love you."

"Go in the bathroom, prepare a bubble bath for yourself it will make you relax. I love you my dear Prince. Goodnight, sending you hugs and kisses."

"I love you too My Rose. Sleep well." He puts down the receiver, smiles as he walk inside the bathroom.

Someone opens the door to his bedroom, he starts to panic thinking it might be that girl. Quickly

Advertisement

he gets out of the tub and wraps a towel around him without even drying himself.

"It's me bro. Calm down." Sbu laughs at his brother.

"Dude, you almost gave me a heart attack." Spha sighs and relaxes. "How did you get in?"

"I unlocked the door. I have the spare key, remember. I didn't see you at the dinning table instead I saw your future wife so I thought I should check on you." Sbu teases him.

"Don't you even start!" The two brothers laugh.

"You know something brother, I used to envy you but not anymore. I mean, who comes home and finds out that he has a wife to be without his consent or knowledge? Our mother is

really something else." Sbu shakes his head in disbelief. "What are you gonna do? Did you tell Nomtha about this?"

"I don't know what I'm going to do. I told her, she told me to calm down and not give in to this girl's advances because if I do it will be the end of us."

"What?"

"Yeah bro. She said she doesn't share a man."

"Do you want to be shared?"

"No! I love only Nomtha. I'm going to make mom understand that too."

"Good. You got me a little bit scared right there. Bro here is a warning from me, I won't spare you if you hurt Nomtha. She deserves all the happiness she can get in this world."

"Sbu, you love her don't you? You have never cared about what happens to anyone but you care for her. Don't lie to me because it's written all over your face." Spha raises his eyebrow.

"I'm sorry bro but the answer to your question is yes. I don't know if I love her the way you do but what I know is I don't want to see her hurt. I won't pursue her so relax, I cried and got over the fact that I won't have her. I respect you a lot bro and

I'm not planning to backstab you anytime. She is a lovely woman, love her, treat her good and you and I will be okay."

"Can I trust you really? Remember what happened with Florencia?"

"I do remember and I will spend the rest of my life proving to you that I'm a changed man. Like I said, I used to envy you, I wanted everything that was yours but that changed the day you proved me that you will go to any lengths to protect me. I love you brother and you can rest easy knowing that your little brother will do anything to protect you, Nomtha and your relationship even if it means fighting our very own mother." Sbu is now teary eyed.

"I believe you bro. Thank you for having my back. Someday you will find someone you will love and will also love you back. Only if you stop treating women like trash, of course." Spha pulls his brother up and for their brotherly hug.

The following afternoon. Bab' uMahlangu is sitting outside while Nomtha, Sne and Zandi are busy unpacking inside their new house.

"I think the sitting room is done now. I'm really tired, why did those boys dump this stuff here and not unpack." Sne says with her hands on her hips.

"Those boys bought this house for you stupid." Nomtha throws a duster at her.

"Am I missing something? Why didn't the lover boy grace us with his presence today, what did you do to him? I hope you didn't upset him after everything he's done for us." She raises her eyebrows.

"Why do I feel like you're taking his side? Back to your questions, he's busy thus why he sent Sbu, Mike and Anthony to help us. I will go and see dad outside he looks lost." Nomtha is about to exit when her sister pulls her back.

"Who paid for this furniture? I saw they even bought clothes who told them our sizes and style?"

"Sis you ask too much questions. I paid for all this stuff, of course they wanted to pay for it but I refused. Can I go now?" Just then Sbu, Mike and Anthony come inside.

"We are here to help you unpack. We unpacked the food stuff earlier this morning before you arrived I hope you don't mind guys." Anthony informs the two sisters.

"It's okay, thank you. She will keep you company I have some important things to do and please, don't play music my mom has a bad headache." Nomtha warns them. She knows what they can do if left alone.

"Dad, you look lost. Care to share your troubles with your daughter?" Nomtha says as she sits next to her father.

"What happens when you and the prince fight? What happens when that evil woman comes to know that her sons bought this house for us? Am I that hopeless of a father that I can not even provide for my family? What happened to my pride Princess?"

"Dad, Spha and I will fight our own fights that has nothing to do with you and mom. You're are not a hopeless father, you are the best father anyone can ask for. Those brothers bought this house for you because of your daughters and the respect they have for you. Dad, your Princess will never let anyone take away your pride. Don't worry about Clementine, her and I have unfinished business to talk about. She won't do anything to hurt my family that I promise. Besides, if you don't feel comfortable here I can buy a new house for you, I have money dad. Before you ask, Spha didn't give me the money but the company did. It was a payment for my hard work and determination at the Tshabangu Enterprises." Nomtha hugs her father.

"I knew you were never going to let me feel the void of not having a son. Your mother is right, you are really a blessing." He kisses her forehead.

"Okay cheer up father. I have to sort out some things at the palace and please don't forget to take your meds. I love you dad."

"Please don't go around looking for trouble." He calls out as his daughter smiles and leaves.

"Your Majesty. My Queen." Nomtha bows her head and take the King's blessings. The Queen too is about to bless her when she stands up and gives her a deadly stare. Nobuhle comes from inside wearing like a future daughter-in-law of the royal family. She looks at Nomtha and smiles mockingly while Nomtha checks her from head down to toe. The King clears his throat.

"Ummmmh..... I'm here to see the crown Prince. With your permission Your Majesty, may I?" She smiles her affectionate smile making the King smile too.

"No. First you have to meet my daughter-in-law, Spha's wife." Says Clementine.

"It's a pleasure meeting you Nomthandazo. I hear you are my husband's personal assistant how is the work going?" Nobuhle says mockingly.

"It's all good. But I think you're mistaken about something. Spha is mine and will never be your husband, I can share all my toys, clothes, parents but not a man. Always bear that in mind." Nomtha winks at Nobuhle.

"How dare you talk to my daughter-in-law like that?" Clementine wants to slap her but quickly remembers what happened when she tried that before.

"Carefully My Queen lest you fall and break your back."

"So disrespectful! Where did Spha get this riffraff of a girl?"

"Now. May I please see Spha?" The King gives her permission.

Nomtha is met by Kayise on the passage who informs her that her brother didn't eat anything since last night.

"I'm here you don't have to worry about your brother anymore. Bring me something to give him. Something light it's been a while since he ate something." Kayise nods and goes to the kitchen downstairs. Clementine comes from behind and violently grabs Nomtha's arm.

"What do you think you are doing? Do you want to die?"

Nomtha laughs.

"Not dying any soon 'mother in law'." She sneers.

"Don't you call me that! What do you want? How much will it take for you to leave my son alone? Name your price I will give

it to you and just disappear from my life please!" Clementine tries to reason with her.

"I'm here to protect what's mine. Spha doesn't have anyone to protect him since you made sure that he doesn't meet his real mother.----"

"W-what?" Clementine stutters.

"Stay away from me Clementine and you and I will have no problem. But if you want to continue playing these dirty games go ahead but be careful not to dig your own grave."

"Are you threatening me?"

"No. I'm giving you a wise counsel. Don't mess with me Clementine or I swear on my father's life I will make your life a living hell! Not only that, I will also reveal all your darkest secrets to everyone. You will not only lose Spha but your husband and your children too. The ball is in your court, play wise."

INSERT 16

Looks like Queen Clementine is in for a very bumpy ride. Nomtha is not playing games with her. Who would have thought that a girl who spent her childhood life running every time someone wanted to beat her could be the chosen one.

"Who are you? Clearly you are not the same girl that Spha brought here before."

"Thus the thing my Queen, don't judge people too quickly you might be surprised."

"Where did you get that information? It's a lie, Spha is my son! I won't let you come here and destroy my life with your lies!" Clementine hisses.

"Keep believing your own lies one day you will regret ever messing with other people's lives." Nomtha pauses. "I'm not a kind of person who will use this information against you, I don't do blackmail. I just want you to leave my family alone and let me and Spha enjoy ourselves. I'm not a vindictive someone but if you keep poking your nose in my business.....trust me, you don't wanna find yourself on top of the list of my enemies. I don't fight dirty but if you want I can try. Think about it, I'm going to see my boyfriend." Nomtha turns leaving the Queen stunned.

Nomtha lightly knocks on Spha's bedroom.

"Leave me alone!" He shouts and grumbles.

"Fine. Suit yourself I'm leaving." The door opens immediately.

"Babe, I'm sorry I thought it was someone else. Please come in." He holds the door for her. He is about to lock when Nomtha hugs him and surprises him with a French kiss.

"Hi darling." She says looking deep into his eyes. "I missed these lips.....and these dimples..." She runs her tongue on her lips and bites her lower lip.

"What are you trying to do, babe? Do you want me to break my own promise? If you keep doing that and looking at me with those sexy eyes you will end up naked on my bed." He smiles and naughtily touches her bums.

"You wish." Nomtha pushes him away, he laughs. "Spha, what is this? I told you to calm down not lock yourself in your room and vent your frustration on food. She cooked so what? I don't like this at all. Go in there, wash your face and brush your teeth Kayise will be here soon with your food."

"I'm not hungry."

"Mr Man, I'm not begging you thus an order. We will only talk about whatever shenanigans you and the Queen are up to after you eat something."

"Are you always this bossy to your loved ones?"

"Ask my father or my mother they will tell you that I'm the sweetest child but I don't condone crazy behavior. Better get going." He sighs and goes in the bathroom. He comes out minutes later with a towel wrapped around him. Nomtha's mouth goes agape as she can't help but drool over this beauty in front of her. Spha's boner is slightly visible under the towel, he has drops of water running on his chest reminding us of those sexy models we only see on TV and on the magazines. Let's not talk about his abs because right now.....

"Babe, you can close your mouth now before you swallow a fly." Nomtha shyly smiles and looks away. "Why do you always do that? You should get used to this and please don't get shy it's okay for you see me like this. I like it when you just can't get enough of me, honey." He pecks her lips.

"Okay. Get dressed. Don't be a temptation please, I'm a girl whose feelings are still hyper active, I don't want to end up going to jail for forcing myself on you."

"Try it. I won't even scream or call the police. I will just close my eyes and enjoy it."

"Spha!" She scolds her..

The two lovebirds are now lying on the bed. Nomtha has her head on Spha's chest.

"Babe, did you talk to your mother?" She breaks the silence.

"No. I don't know what to say to her. You said I shouldn't swear or curse her but if I go out of this room now I will surely do just that. And that girl, I don't know how stupid can one be to agree to this nonsense!" He mutters.

"It's not nonsensical to them. Darling, you are the prince of this kingdom it's every maiden's dream to be close to the prince so I don't blame that girl. Also I don't blame your mother, she doesn't like me so to her the best option was to bring that girl here in order to chase me out. You have to deal with this soon or I will deal with this my own way and you won't like it."

"Is this you talking or my great grandfather?" Spha teases her.

"Stop. I haven't seen him for some days now I'm sure he's angry. I was suppose to keep that a secret but I felt like I was betraying you somehow. Can we please not talk about that I'm still a little bit confused."

"Your wish my command."

Someone knocks on the door, they both look at each other, Spha shrugs innocently. Nomtha tells him to permit whoever is at the door to come in. Nobuhle comes in holding a tray with fruits and juice. Spha tenses, Nomtha smiles.

"My husband I brought you and your PA some fruits and juice. I thought you needed something to refresh while working." Spha is about to tell her off but Nomtha stops him.

"What's your name? Ehm....Nobuhle, right?" She nods. "How old are you?" Nomtha asks.

"22. Why are you asking?" She raises her eyebrows.

"Because you are too naive for my liking. Have you ever worked before?" She shakes her head. "Okay. Here is what you need to know. Business deals and transactions are not made in bed while people are naked that is bad for business. Secondly, a good CEO/boss doesn't allow his PA to sit on his bed. So please will you stop calling me his PA because I'm not, I'm his girlfriend. Or should I say his future wife? And one more thing, if you and I are going to be co-wives please try and educate yourself on such little things."

"What is this my husband?" She asks Spha with tears in her eyes.

"Nobuhle, I have nothing against you. I just don't love you nor will I ever try. I love My Rose and she's the only person who has the right to call me her future husband. As for you, you can go ahead and call my mother your future husband because she brought you here. You can take whatever shit you brought here and leave."

"No....darling. Remember what I said before? Never vent your anger on food. Thank you Nobuhle you can leave as you can see we are still busy here unless if you want to watch you can sit on that chair. Feel free....." Nobuhle storms out of the room sniffing.

"Babe?"

"What my dear Prince?" Their eyes meet and they get lost in each other's eyes until a tear escapes Spha's eye. "No sweetheart don't cry." Nomtha hugs him tight, he sobs. "I know baby, I know how you feel I feel it too. Be strong everything will be fine." She strokes his back.

"Thank you for loving me." He kisses her lips.

"Spha, you have a scooter, right?" She asks as a thought crosses her mind.

"Yes?" He's wondering what's on her mind.

"Get dressed. I want to take you for a very exciting ride to a place where I've never took someone before."

"What? You can ride a scooter?" He's amused.

"Come on let me show you what this girl is capable of." Her face falls suddenly. "On another thought no. I forgot I'm wearing a dress not trousers." She looks sad. Spha picks her up

and goes inside the walk-in closet. He puts her down, she looks at him looking for answers in his eyes.

"Ta-da!" Spha says turning her around to face where clothes are hanged. Her eyes widen in surprise. "Yes My Rose you have more clothes than me in this closet. I always buy something for you when I go shopping with my sister and don't worry about the sizes because I have you pictured in my heart and mind."

Bab' uMahlangu calls out Sne who runs outside and kneels before him.

"Are you trying to impress those boys?" Her father laughs. "Get up and bring me my meds. Is your mother still asleep?"

"No she's in the kitchen, cooking I guess. Do you need something from her?"

"Not really I just miss my wife I've been sitting here for a very long time."

"Dad! At 50 and still romantic, wow mom is a very lucky lady." She bursts into laughter after teasing her father. Sne likes teasing her parents whenever they show their romantic sides.

"Being an old man doesn't meant I don't have blood pumping through my veins. Find yourself a soulmate you will

understand." Her face falls and tears flood her eyes as she runs inside the house.

"Sne my baby

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are you okay?" Her mother asks.

"I'm okay mom. Something got in my eye. Dad is missing you outside." She looks away hiding her tears. She takes her father's meds and returns outside where she put them on the couch without even looking at her father.

"Sne, come and sit here." She does just like that but she bursts into tears hugging her father. "It's okay my baby. I'm your father you don't have to hide your tears from me. You don't have to close the door to your bedroom whenever you feel like crying. Your mom and I are your shoulders to cry on." He strokes her back.

"How do I tell you how I feel dad? Where do I start?" She sobs.

"You don't have to worry about that because I know everything. I know the things you did when you thought we were being unfair to you. You thought life always favored your younger sister, you degraded yourself trying to find your self worthy but you still feel empty. I understand my child, we all have at some point felt like that the difference is how we handle our emotions when self doubt takes over. You made

mistakes, it's okay stop crying but learn from them. Don't hate or punish yourself for the past, you're doing perfectly fine and if you start loving yourself again, a good man will come your way. By loving yourself I don't mean putting on all the makeup and dressing up well, I mean accept who you are. Accept and love yourself first then the world will follow suit. As for me, I still love you my baby."

"But I disappointed you father." She sniffles.

"Yes you did but what's important is that you know you made bad choices, don't repeat those choices again. Be true to yourself, you're beautiful and worthy the way you are. Now stop crying, okay?" She nods wiping her tears.

"Thank you father. You are the best." She hugs him once again.

"Eeeeh.....knock....knock....." They both look at each other.

"Here comes trouble. I don't like this woman all she does is gossip. I don't know why mom is even friends with her? We haven't settled in yet but here she is-----"

"I'm here Snegugu." MaZikhali says from behind, Sne clicks her tongue.

"Mxm! As if I care if you're here or not. Mom is not home you can leave now." Snegugu wipes her face using her father's handkerchief.

"Sne, thus no way to talk to your elders." Her dad reprimands. She leaves in a huff.

Queen Clementine paces up and down in her bedroom trying hard to find a way of getting rid of Nomtha. She can feel her, she's stronger than she had imagined. Nomtha's powers are overpowering hers.

"Agnes!" She shouts as soon as her friend answers the phone.

"Ah ah! Are you alright Clementine? Why are you shouting at me?"

"That girl is here and I feel like she's about to wreck havoc in this palace. She knows I'm not Spha's mother, I hate to admit but I'm shaken." Clementine says too fast almost choking on her own words.

"If you keep stressing yourself like this you will die before she even kills you. Who told her that secret? I told you that skinny girl is a witch but you didn't believe me." Agnes sighs.

"Stop with the I told you so's. Right now we need a solution. That stupid Nobuhle is also not helping at all!"

"Maybe it's time you use that poison, don't you think?"

"Thus too risky. Both Sbu and Spha are doubting my intentions recently. I'm not worried about Spha but my own son Sbu. He

told me straight to my face that he will kill me if hurt that girl and knowing him, he doesn't talk for the sake of it."

"Use others. Use the stupid so called chiefs, give them some money to hold on to they will surely chase that girl out and Spha won't disobey his elders."

"I guess you're right. I'm transferring half a million to your account, let's get this done soon." She hangs up and smiles.

Nobuhle is crying in her room. She asks herself if she's up for the challenge.

"They look so in love. So perfect together. Where do I fit in their relationship?" She asks herself. "Maybe I should just pack my bags and leave." Sbu claps his hands coming in her room.

"Great idea! I like that idea of yours. Pack your China bags, leave this place and we will all forget that you tried to ruin my brother's relationship." He sits on the bed.

"I'm not leaving from here. Spha is mine!" She shouts.

"Keep dreaming. Another thing, don't you ever raise your voice at me!" He hisses.

"Or what? What will you do? Will you rape me like you do with all other girls?" A hot slap lands across her face, she gasps. She is about to recover from the shock when Sbu again hits her

hard, she screams in pain and fear. Sbu grabs her by her new Brazilian wig.

"I'm not my brother or Nomtha. I don't take shit from people like you!"

"You're hurting me! Somebody please help me prince Sbusiso wants to kill me!" She screams, Sbu laughs.

"You really have a death wish." He shakes his head. "Stop messing with my brother or I will kill you, bury you and your parents won't even report me to the police-----"

"Sbu!" His mother shouts. He let's go of Nobuhle's hair, charges towards the door and locks it.

"Oh my dear mother. I see you have been talking about things that doesn't concern you. How does this girl know about what I do behind closed doors? Did you tell her mother?" His eyes are red with fury. Clementine knows he gave birth to a beast in human form so now she has to act fast before all hell break loose in the palace.

"What? No! I would never do that! You, who told you my son's secrets? I brought you here to chase Nomtha out of our lives but you're here provoking my son-----"

"I did nothi-----"

"MOTHER! I don't really care why you brought this girl here but my warning still stands. Deal with her before I kill her, I'm not my brother mom. I won't let you do as you wish with my life, what I do behind closed doors is my fuckin' business. You little rat, stay away from my brother and Nomtha. It's not a threat but a friendly warning." He winks at her and leaves the room.

"Why did you that? I told you to steer clear from my son and now?"

"I'm sorry my Queen it won't happen again." Nobuhle apologizes with tears all over her face.

The lovebirds are coming out of the ice cream hand in hand and smiling like school kids. A middle aged couple stop and admire them.

"This used to be us fifteen years ago. They look so good and happy together." The wife compliments.

"Yeah. Gone are those golden old days." The husband looks at them once again and smile.

I wonder who told people that love does grow old or weary. I mean love is a very beautiful thing it doesn't have to wear out no matter the age.

"Come on. Hop on." Nomtha smiles naughtily.

"Are you sure you can do this?" Spha still doesn't trust what she is saying.

"Mr Tshabangu...." He sits behind still uncertain about the whole thing. "Your helmet Sir..." She starts the motorbike.

"Hold on we are about to fly my dear darling Prince." He puts his hands around her waist.....

"Damn girl." The prince can not hide his amusement. "That was.....wow! Who taught you how to ride this thing?"

"My dad did. Come on, follow me I want to take you to a place where you will forget all your troubles." She smiles.

"Where are we going? I mean we are deep in the forest."
Without saying anything she pulls his hand and off they go to the top of the mountain. It's Spha's first time to go on a hike and now Nomtha is taking him to the top of the mountain.

"Here we are. This is where I spent most of my childhood days, away from everyone only me, the trees and sounds of the chirping birds." She smiles. Spha hugs her from behind and kisses her neck.

"Thank you. I love this place already."

After about an hour since the two lovebirds arrived Nomtha feels grandpa's presence. She stands up and looks around,

Grandpa is smiling at her. Spha is not aware they have company he's enjoying the view.

"I admire your honesty but be careful not to reveal too much information. That was brave, I mean telling Spha who you are. There is a storm brewing, whatever happens in the palace always control your temper. You can't lose it. Enjoy your date." He smiles and disappears.

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TWO MONTHS LATER.

"Sweetheart, I have to go." Nomtha says and tries to pull out of the hug.

"Please don't go babe. Stay My Rose." Spha hugs her tight.

"I can't darling. If I stay here that financial report will have no one to complete and I can't sleep at the palace. It's against my values and my dad will sure be mad at me."

"Okay. Can I take you home?"

"No. Your sister needs you she's been complaining about you spending a lot of time with me lately. She loves you and don't make her feel like I came into your life to snatch you away from her. You must learn to balance your priorities honey."

"Fine. I will take her out for dinner, is that okay?"

"Sphamandla Tshabangu! I'm not Kayise so don't expect me to answer that question. Do what you two love to do, don't make her feel abandoned. Give me the that helmet, I also have debts to pay to my sister. See you tomorrow at work." She kisses his lips and leaves.

Kayise sees Nomtha leaving and sighs in relief. She's starting to develop hatred towards her as she feels like her brother doesn't love her anymore.

"Finally! Now we can have our private chats like the good old days. You know brother I think I prefer the heartbroken you not this lovestruck someone you have become." She smiles.

"Then you don't love me. How can you love to see me hurting all the time?"

"Don't bite my head off I was just joking."

Sne comes home in a new SUV. All the neighbors watch from a distance as she honks making lots of noise. Just then her parents come outside to see what is going on. She gets down the car smiling, Bab' uMahlangu and Zandi can not believe their eyes. Nomtha also arrives riding a scooter.

"Hell no! You didn't buy this car Sis?" Nomtha asks getting down the motorbike.

"Hell yeah, I did." Sne grins from ear to ear. Her parents hug her tight and congratulate her. Who would have thought that someday Sne will buy her own car and stop sleeping with old men only for a ride.

"I'm happy for you Sis. Wow! I'm really proud of you big Sis." Nomtha hugs her sister and cries. She was the only one who believed Sne could still be a normal lady, she didn't give up on her.

"Thus what a Mahlangu born does. I'm proud of you my baby. Come and give dad a hug." Sne hugs him and cries remembering how bad she treated him. "It's okay. Dad understands. Stop crying and leave the past where it belongs." She wipes her tears.

They all go inside the house where Zandi is almost done preparing dinner. Nomtha notices something different.

"Nooo! Daddy you cooked today?" Her eyes light up with excitement and amusement. Sne's eyes pop out in shock as she also realizes that Bab' uMahlangu is wearing an apron. The last time he cooked for them was when they were still young, when he used to work as a security guard at the hospital.

"Daddy, are you okay? Did mom give you something to intoxicate you?" Snegugu teases her father.

"Stop teasing my husband. What's wrong with him being romantic and helping in the kitchen?" Zandi throws a dishtowel to Sne who laughs out loud.

"I think you two should leave this romance thing to the youngsters. I can't be a sister again, one sibling is enough for

me but with this love and affection you two are displaying I'm starting to get worried." Both sisters laugh.

"Shut up you two. We are still your parents." Bab' uMahlangu scolds them.

"We were just saying dad." Nomtha shrugs and smiles.

The Mahlangu family gather around their dining table and enjoy their dinner whilst chatting. Bab' uMahlangu tells her children how he used to cook for his parents and siblings since he is the oldest child.

The following day Nomtha gets up early, cleans her room, take a bath and run to the kitchen to make breakfast. Zandi is already in the kitchen sipping her usual steaming black coffee.

"Good morning mommy." Nomtha kisses her cheek.

"Morning Sunshine. Why are you up so early?"

"I have a meeting to attend. Since Ana was arrested the company hasn't hired a new financial manager, Spha and Sbu gave that responsibility to me." Nomtha pours cereal in her plate.

"I made jungle oats for you two don't you want them today?" Zandi asks.

"No thanks mom. I heard you and dad talking about going out for shopping do you have money?"

"Yes. We haven't spent the money you deposited into our account. Your father was talking about renting a shop or restaurant he doesn't like spending time sitting at home and doing nothing."

"It's okay but does that mean you and dad will be running the business?" Zandi nods. "If thus the case then no. Mom, I won't let you and father work like you used to do before. Sne and I will take care of all your expenses. If you're not satisfied with the money we are giving you then just tell us we will add more."

"It's not about the money my baby it's about our dream. Your father and I have always wanted to open a restaurant and serve traditional foods. It has been our dream since we started dating years back, we didn't have money back then but now we have the money. Please don't say no." Zandi begs her.

"I will only be fine with your idea if you two won't be in the kitchen or serving customers. I know you want this thing to be done your way and you like doing things for yourselves but not this. You can manage the place and leave the labour to the employees." Sne says coming inside the kitchen.

"But-----"

"No buts mom. It's either that or nothing at all. Nomtha and I can not be working and you two want to go back to work, who do you want to fend for?"

"Sne is right mom. Talk to your husband, if he agrees then Sne can find a perfect place for you to rent or buy. I will help you register your business."

"Okay then if thus what you two want. I will talk to your father."

NOMTHA'S POV

Spha is not at the office, where is he. I try to dial his number but it's unreachable. What will I do if the investors arrive before him?

"Anele, will you please come to my office."

"Yes. Coming right away."

A few seconds later she knocks, I let her in.

"Good morning Anele. I need you to do something for me." She nods. "I want you to be present at the meeting with the investors. Here is the report they need, you have at least 30 minutes to study the report. Make fifteen copies, no one is

supposed to see this report before the investors do. Can you do that?"

"Yes I can." She smiles.

"Thank you. You can go."

The meeting went well but right now I'm getting more worried about Spha. How could he miss such an important meeting? Is he okay? Everything was fine when I left yesterday. Why do I feel like my better half is not doing fine? I feel like he needs me right now. Darling, I'm coming to you. I'm about to exit when the phone rings.

"Ma'am, someone wants to see you. Should I send him in?" The receptionist ask.

"Who is he?"

"Mr Sokhele." What the heck? Why is Nobuhle's father here?

"Okay. Let him in."

I take a deep breath and relax before letting him in. He comes in and sits down looking all dapper in his tuxedo.

"Good morning Chief Sokhele. How may I help you." He looks at me and smirks.

"No young lady I'm the one here to help you. Stay away from the crown Prince and my daughter. What do you want? Don't you see that you are trying to mess with God's plans? My daughter and the prince would be happy if it wasn't for you, please I'm begging you to leave this community and never come back. I won't let you ruin what my daughter has worked so hard for."

"Are you done?"

"Did your parents not teach you any manners?"

"My parents raised me well. They also taught me how to deal with parasites like you. Listen here chief, I'm not scared of you, your wife, your daughter, the Queen or whoever tries to stand between me and Spha! Spha is mine and will never love your daughter no matter what!" I hiss, he laughs.

"You're mistaken because they are having their engagement as we speak." He smiles. No! Spha cannot betray me like this, never!

NARRATED.

At the Royal palace, Spha is screaming at everyone present in the meeting. Sbu is still keeping his cool.

"Father, if it's about this crown then I'm ready to relinquish it. I love Nomtha and I will not marry this girl!" He shouts.

"You will marry her Spha. We can't let this kingdom be doomed because you're foolishly mistaking lust for love! You will forget about that useless girl and you will learn to love Nobuhle!" Says the Queen.

"Mother! Don't you dare call her useless! If there is something thus useless and ridiculous it's you and your plans to control everyone around you! I'm sick and tired of you trying to play the role of God in other people's lives!" Everyone is shocked except for Sbu who smiles watching his brother defend Nomtha. "Take this girl back to wherever you found her, I don't love her!" Spha shouts. Clementine is about to slap him but he holds her hand. "No mother. Not anymore." He shakes his head. Clementine sits back shamefully. It's the first time Spha has spoken to her like that.

"My Prince, it's your parents' responsibility to choose a wife for you. According to our culture you will have to marry the one your parents choose for you as a first wife, then you can marry whoever you love as a second wife." Chief Mseleku says calmly.

"No. I'm not getting married to anyone except Nomtha. To hell with this tradition and culture

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my ancestors can strike me dead right now if they wish to because I'M NOT MARRYING THIS GIRL!" Spha wipes tears from his face.

"Son, I really don't know what to do my hands are tied." Says the King and sighs.

"Father, your hands can be tied and all but I'm not marrying this illiterate girl who I don't even love."

"How dare you call my daughter illiterate?" Chief Sokhele barks from the entrance.

"With all due respect Mr Sokhele, it's not a secret that your daughter is uneducated. She's not even close to what my type of wife is-----"

"And that daughter of a commoner who have nothing in his name is? Spha, are you really going to downgrade yourself and be the son-in-law of a man who doesn't even own a wheelbarrow?" Clementine says mockingly.

"It seems like I'm a bit late. Let's all rewind this meeting so that the daughter of that commoner can defend her father. I hate cowards my Queen. What you're doing is the act of cowardice, you don't degrade absent people, tell them to their faces so they can defend themselves." Nomtha also joins the meeting.

"How dare you call me a coward?"

"The same way you dared to call my father those nasty things. I won't tolerate anyone talking bad about my father, not even you my Queen."

"Who do you think you are?" Clementine is fuming but she knows better now.

"Nomthandazo Mahlangu. I won't try and sugarcoat what I'm about to say because I'm standing before the king. Your Majesty, respected chiefs and My Queen, I'd appreciate it if you exclude my father in all your conversations. I won't even bat an eyelid before defending the man who raised me to be who I am." Bab' uMahlangu's Princess firmly says.

"Babe, calm down. I'm sorry about all of this." Spha tries to hug her but she steps back.

"I'm sorry darling but we have to sort this thing now and for all. If I'm going to be in a polygamous marriage I need to know right now." She folds her arms.

"Who called you here? You are not invited in this meeting, please leave before-----"

"Before what chief Mseleku? You are busy talking about me, planning my future and you tell me that I'm not invited?"

"My King, do you see how disrespectful-----"

"No! No! No! You don't get to call me disrespectful, you're the ones being disrespectful here! You talk bad about my father in his absence!----"

"Baby calm down-----"

"No darling let me say my mind. That man you say doesn't own a wheelbarrow is a better man compared to chief Sokhele and you chief Mseleku. My father made sure her children went to school and graduated, what did you do? Mr Sokhele, you have one child but you couldn't even afford to send her to school---" Chief Sokhele tries to say something. "I'm not done talking. If the King is silent and listening who are you to try and stop me? I may be a daughter of the commoner but as long as Spha loves me, I'm not going anywhere."

"Well then Your Majesty, this means the two girls will have to stay in the palace until our ancestors decide who they want to be our prince's wife." The kingdom's seer concludes the meeting and leaves.

"Mother. That girl will never leave Spha alone, she even agreed to being the second wife I think she's up to something and the Prince doesn't even love me. He doesn't even look at my direction or notice my presence. I feel like a slave only because

I want to be the future Queen." Nobuhle paces in her mother's kitchen.

"Sit down my daughter. I have a solution to all your problems."
Her mother smiles.

"Really mother!"

"Yes my darling. Take this, since you are officially the chief chef in that palace, put this in her food and tomorrow we will be wearing our all black gear crying and empathizing with the Mahlangu family." The duo smiles.

"My wife, you're the best. This is one of the reasons why I married you." Chief Sokhele kisses his wife.

At the palace Agnes and her friend are also planning to kill Nomtha using rat poison.

"Friend, do you think she will die really?" Agnes questions Clementine.

"Yes. She can't escape this. Let's get rid of this girl once and for all. We can't be sleeping with our eyes open because we are worried she will use that information against us. Can you imagine, even that powerful witchdoctor says he can't do anything to her. Apparently, that Nomthandazo girl is shielded

by God and her ancestors. What nonsense is that?" Clementine says and sips her red wine.

"Don't you worry this poison will put an end to our problems." The two friends laugh.

Later in the evening.....

Nobuhle is busy in the kitchen humming along her favorite song by Bonakele.

"You look happy today, what's going on?" Samke asks.

"Nothing. I just decided to not worry about that witch."

"No offense but that girl is way more beautiful than you. Let's not talk about how educated she is, I too would choose her over you." Samke shrugs as Zodwa runs to the bathroom to throw up. Zodwa looks pale and tired, she's been vomiting since last week.

"Is your friend okay? She's been acting strange lately?" Nobuhle asks Samke.

"I don't know. I will ask her later." They all continue with their assigned work.

Queen Clementine comes inside the kitchen, opens the fridge and takes out orange juice. She pours a glassful, adds

something that looks strange and orders Nobuhle to give the juice to Nomtha who is sitting outside with Sbu discussing about ways to expand her parents' business. Sbu might be a crazy son but he's very intelligent. He graduated with a first class degree in economics.

"Do I have to give her this now?" Nobuhle asks.

"Yes. Only give this juice to her." Nobuhle nods and leaves.

"Surprise!" Clementine's sister who just landed from China shouts standing by the main entrance. Kayise runs to her aunt, hugs her followed by the Queen herself.

"Priscilla! Oh my baby sister!" Clementine hugs her younger sister. The last time they saw each other was when Clementine married the King.

"It's me. In flesh and blood!" She turns around showing off her figure. They all laugh.

"You look ravishing aunty, the Chinese must be treating you well." Kayise compliments her beauty. Nobuhle is still staring at her with the glassful of juice still in her hands. She's awestruck, Priscilla's skin is flawless, her face is smooth like that of a baby. Such beauty is not common in this kingdom.

"Hello there. You must be my nephew's future wife." Priscilla greets Nobuhle. "Wow! How cultured, you welcome guests with a glass of juice." She takes the glass from her. "Thank you

"I'm really thirsty." She gulps all the juice before Nobuhle can stop her.

Clementine is unaware it's the same juice she prepared for Nomtha until her sister groans in agony.

"Sis, my stomach.....noooooo.....sister!" Blood comes out from her nose and mouth as she collapse on the floor.

INSERT 18

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"Sis, my stomach.....noooooo.....sister!" Blood comes out from her nose and mouth as she collapse on the floor.

"Priscilla.....!!!!!" The Queen quickly kneels next to her sister.

"Aunt!!!! What's wrong? Mama do something!" Kayise screams. Priscilla takes Clementine's hand and puts it on her (Priscilla) abdomen.

"Tell....my.... husband.....that....I was....finally...pregnant....after ten....years of.... being...called... barren." She struggles to say.

"Please stay with me baby sister. You and your unborn child will be fine. Kayise call an ambulance!" She shouts, Priscilla shakes her head.

"Its...too...late." And she breathes her last.

"Nooooo! Priscilla please don't do this to me! Someone please help!" Clementine cries. Sbu and Nomtha run inside the house.

"What is going on? Why are you screaming mother?"

Clementine says nothing as tears run freely down her cheeks.

Nobuhle too is crying, Kayise is still holding the phone to her ear waiting for the ambulance service number to get through.

"What. The. Hell?" Sbu steps back after noticing his aunt lying lifeless with blood coming out of her mouth, eyes and ears.

"Who is she? What happened to her?" Nomtha asks. Sbu kneels down, checks her pulse and shakes his head.

"No! No Sbu, don't tell me....."

"Sorry mother but she's dead." Clementine gives Nobuhle a deadly stare. "What happened to her? Actually, when did she arrive? Was she sick?" Sbu has so many questions.

"Aunt was fine a few minutes ago. She just landed from China." Kayise tries to comfort her mother.

A few minutes later, the ambulance arrives. They check on her and confirm what Sbu just said.

"I'm sorry my Queen. You will have to call the police, they will then take to the hospital for autopsy." Clementine storms outside the house bumping into Spha on her way out. Spha rushes inside.

"Babe? Are you alright?" Nomtha nods, he sighs in relief but just then notices Priscilla who is still lying lifeless on the floor.

"What happened to her?" He's shocked.

"I don't know bro. I heard mom and our sister screaming I came in to find her already dead. Looks like food poisoning." Sbu says thoughtfully.

"What? Aunt Priscilla flies in top flights where could she have ingested the poisoned food and why poison the food in the plane, it's not like she boarded the flight from the countries which are well known for terrorist attacks? Does anyone know which flight she was in?" They all shake their heads.

Nobuhle runs outside where Queen Clementine is crying alone sitting in the garden where Sbu and Nomtha were seated before. Clementine pours herself a glassful of wine and gulps it in one go. She calls out the maids, orders them to bring her something strong. The maid brings her vodka which she drinks straight from the bottle.

"My Queen, I'm sorry." Nobuhle apologizes, Clementine looks at her and laughs. This is not a good sign, if Nobuhle has little brain in that head of hers she must start running and never look back.

"You are sorry----" She's cut short by the police van arriving. "This conversation is not over. Stay there, don't move or say a word to anyone." She nods and snuffles at the same time. Clementine wipes her face and approaches the police van parking near the front entrance.

"My Queen." The three policemen removes their hats and say in unison.

"Come inside." She leads the way.

"What really happened here?" Sbu, Spha and Nomtha shrug indicating that they know nothing about the incident.

Clementine clears her throat.

"My sister just arrived from China. She was happy and energetic when she entered, we exchanged pleasantries, she cried holding her stomach and fell on the floor bleeding." She lies.

"Did she eat something here?" Before the Queen can answer Kayise blurts out and tells the police that her aunt drank juice. One of the constables collects the broken glasses. "Is there anything else?"

"Thus your job to find out!" Clementine snaps. The policemen collect Priscilla's body and leave telling everyone that they will be back with the results.

The king is appalled to find out what just happened in his palace. Nomtha is shaken but has all the answers to everyone's questions. She felt it, she saw it in her vision, she warned Nobuhle and the Queen to refrain from whatever evil they are planning because they are going to get hurt. The Queen laughed it off but look where her ignorance has led to. Sbu too has his own doubts and knowing him, he will definitely investigate the matter.

"Father, Nomtha is a bit shaken may I please take her to her room?" Spha asks for permission from the King.

"It's okay son. We all are shaken by this, give her some sugar water it will help calm her nerves down. Nomtha, be strong my girl, I know you are." He nods for them to leave.

Spha takes her in his arms infuriating Nobuhle and his sister.

"I'm starting to doubt this Nomtha girl. I mean we are the ones hurting but brother is more concerned about her seeing a dead body, what the the hell? My brother is under a spell for sure!" She clicks her tongue.

"Ntombi, be careful not to say things you will regret later. Nomtha did nothing wrong, her and I were sitting outside discussing about the business it's not her fault your aunt is dead. If you really want to know the truth, find it, don't blame Nomtha because you and I will have a problem if you try and paint her as the bad guy here." Sbu cautions.

"What is wrong with the both of you! She surely bewitched-----"

"Ntombikayise! Behave yourself before I lose my temper and do something I will forever regret!" The King shouts.

"You too daddy!" She cries and leaves the living room.

"Son, I know you and I don't talk a lot but what are you thinking? What's on your mind? I see you have so much to say,

you can talk to me I'm still your father despite being the King." The King addresses Sbu when they are left alone.

"Father, is it a crime to love someone so deeply that you can choose that person over everything or everyone else?" Sbu asks.

"No son. Love is a beautiful thing."

"Then why is it so hard for mom and Kayise to understand and accept that brother loves her and she loves him too. I don't like this constant fighting at all!" Sbu sighs in exasperation.

"Are you trying to tell me something I'm not aware of?" Sbu is about to share his doubts with his father but quickly decides against it. The King will never hear a word against his beloved wife.

"I just want us to live in harmony. I like Nomtha, in fact I love her so I won't standby and watch her being treated unfairly. I will protect my brother's relationship with all I have. And please dad, don't tell this to your wife." The King nods and smiles. This is a very special moment for the King, Sbu never talks about deep stuff with his father but today he trusted him enough to share his feelings.

"My Rose, are you okay?" Spha is worried for her. She's standing with her hands folded and looking outside.

"Ummmm.....yeah. Just a little bit shaken and confused. How can one enter the palace and dies just like that? Food poisoning? It's all confusing sweetheart." She sighs.

"I know babe but the question is who was supposed to drink that juice? Clearly it was not meant for aunt Priscilla. Was anything revealed to you earlier? Please don't lie to me."

"I saw a dark cloud and people crying but I didn't get the solution to the problem. I still feel like there is more to come. I was warned before and I can feel and smell danger very closely. I really don't know what is going on." Nomtha lies as she knows perfectly well what happened.

"Then what needs to be done? My father is stressed and mom too is grieving, probably heartbroken about what just happened." Oh my dear Prince! Only if you knew that the danger Nomtha is talking about comes in human form, your mother.

"Don't you worry darling no harm will come your way. I will try and find a solution to this. I just pray that it was not the juice that killed her because that will be very bad. We have to protect this Kingdom Spha."

"Yeah. Don't be tensed, okay? Come here." He pulls her to him and hug her tight. "It will be fine My Rose." He kisses her forehead.

Clementine follows the police van, she flashes headlights, the police van stop. She beckons the constable to come to her.

"Listen her Mister, I want the results of that glass before anyone can see them. No one and I mean no one should know the details of that report before I do. Understand?"

"Yes my Queen." He bows his head.

"Excellent. You can go now." He nods and leaves.

Clementine puts her head on the steering wheel and breaks down. Her only sister, her beautiful baby sister who supported her when the world saw her as useless garbage. The world had rejected her, her ex husband used to beat her all the time his palm twitched. Her in laws called her names everyday, she lived as a slave for five years. Later she ran away and went back to her parents but they also chased her out. Back then it was considered an embarrassment to shelter a grown up woman let alone a divorcee. Her sister was still at college, she sneaked her into her hostel room and sheltered her, gave her food, comforted her until she was able to face the world again. Now she's dead, not only dead, she killed her!

"You! Come with me!" Clementine drags Nobuhle to her bedroom, she pushes her inside and closes the door. "What did

I tell you? I gave you clear instructions to give that juice but you chose to kill my sister!" She hits her across the face.

"I'm sorry my Queen. I tried to stop her from drinking it----"
Another slap crosses her face again.

"You killed my own sister! My own sister you illiterate idiot!"
The Queen chokes Nobuhle.

"I'm sorry. Please don't hurt me my Queen. I'm sor----"

"Will your sorry bring my sister back, huh! You killed my baby sister you idiot! You failed to follow simple straightforward instructions----" Someone opens the door, they are both startled. Clementine let's go of Nobuhle's neck and steps back while Nobuhle touches it and sniffles.

"Wow! Wow! Wow! Well done mother-in-law! You killed your own blood! I warned you didn't I? You don't listen mummy-in-law." Nomtha claps her hands.

"What? What do you want? Get out!" Clementine is furious and ashamed at the same time. Nomtha warned her.

"Easy mother-in-law, you don't want to add to your sins. I told you not to try and hurt me. Look at what you've done now, are you happy?" Nomtha taunts her. "And you! When I was your age I was busy with my college assignments but not you

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you are here conspiring with this evil woman to kill innocent people! What is wrong with the two of you?"

"Shut up! You're the reason we are all in this mess, you were supposed to die not her!" Nobuhle hisses with tears on her face.

"Better luck next time. You won't be able to kill me no matter how hard you try, thus why I had warned you two beforehand. Stop stressing innocent people! Now the King and his sons are worried because of your evil thoughts!"

"Stop!" Clementine attempts to slap Nomtha but she grabs her hand and in turn slaps the Queen, Nobuhle's eyes widen in shock.

"Don't you ever raise your hand at me!" Nomtha hisses. "And one more thing, sort this mess out because if your sons find out you two did this they won't spare you. As for you Nobuhle, stop trying so hard to change your destiny. Spha was never meant for you and will never be. Make sure this evil deed of yours doesn't reach the community's ears I won't let you ruin what the Tshabangu ancestors worked hard for." Nomtha slams the door behind her.

"You're going to pay for this you crazy fool! I'm going to send you and your family to jail if not to hell!" Clementine vents her anger.

"Enough!" Nobuhle shouts, Clementine's eyes widen in horror. "Not another word from you Clementine, if you are evil then I'm twice as evil as you are. You will do no such thing, you will make that report disappear if you don't want to say goodbye to this lavish lifestyle!" Holy crap! Nobuhle has had enough of the Queen's insults. What will Clementine do now?

"W-w-hat!" Clementine stammers.

"You heard what I said and I'm not repeating myself!"

Anthony is at the gym doing what he loves most which is being a trainer. Snegugu parks her SUV, gets down, takes her gym bag and locks her car as she goes inside the gym. The gym is packed, mostly with guys, they turn their heads and whistle.

"Oh boy! Look at that ass!" One of the gents says to his friend wiping his chin and admiring Snegugu.

"I would love to see what's beneath those tight gym wear." The other guy says and licks his lips. "Let me try my luck." He smiles to his friend who gives him a thumbs up. The guy approaches Sne and blocks her way.

"Hello beautiful." The guy smiles revealing his gold teeth.

"Hi." Sne replies and tries to go past him but the guy grabs her waist. "What the hell? Don't touch me!" Sne tries to wriggle free.

"Come on baby girl I can make you sweat on my bed, you will no longer need this gym to maintain your figure----" Sne slaps the guy hard.

"What's wrong with you crazy girl? I was just trying to make you feel good, I don't eat leftovers, let alone old people's leftovers!" The guy spit on her, other girls laugh.

"Look at her, playing hard to get when she's already used goods!" One young lady says and others laugh even louder.

"Still waiting for the highest bidder, maybe? You never know with these slay queens." Another lady says wiping her face after a steamy abs workout. A tear escape Sne's eye, she turns around and runs outside.

"Sne! Snegugu!" Anthony calls out to her, she doesn't stop but keep running until she reaches her car, gets inside and cries.

"Sne, open this door for me." Anthony pounds on her driver's side.

"Leave me alone! Go back in there and enjoy your clients taunting me, just go!" Sne cries.

"I'm sorry, okay? You can't blame me for other people's sins. I'm sorry I just want to talk to you please don't shut me down."

He begs her. She finally gives in and unlocks the door. Anthony pulls her out and hugs her tight. "It's okay. Please stop crying." He wipes her tears.

"Thank you. I will have to leave, I look like a mess."

"You are not leaving from here. Sne, you came here to work out so you will do just that. Why do you want to give those people satisfaction? Don't let their words get to you, people will always talk. You just have to keep your focus, you're the only one who knows what you want. Wipe that pretty face of yours let's get back in there and burn some fat." He smiles his reassuring smile. Anthony is an attractive guy, muscular, of medium height but girls always see him as a player just because he's a colored. Most girls believe coloreds are good heart breakers. Anthony takes her back inside, everyone looks at them but no one dares to say a thing. He introduces Sne to his workout sessions starting from the easiest to the hardest.

The mood at the palace is very down and dull. Kayise is still crying, her dad scolded her today because of Nomtha. Clementine still feels like she's dreaming, first she killed her own sister, secondly, Nomtha slapped her in front of Nobuhle,

as if that was not enough bad luck for one day, Nobuhle showed her her other side she never thought existed.

"Aggie, I'm finished." Clementine says as her friend answers the phone.

"Clem? Why are you crying?" The Queen wasn't even aware that she's actually swimming in a pool of tears.

"It's over....." She fails to finish her sentence as a lump rises in her throat, she chokes on her words and pain.

"Friend what's going on? Please say something."

"I killed Priscilla." Agnes's phone falls and cracks the screen. "I killed Priscilla....." The words echo in Agnes's head.

"No. It can't be!" She picks up her phone, car keys and leaves the house in a hurry.

Samke is eager to know what happened to the Queen's sister. She wants to be the one to break the news to the entire community, if not her 'the Umlazi FM' then who? She tries very hard to make Sbu talk but he's not uttering even a single word. He kicks her out of his room. Samke leaves in a huff, she's met by Zodwa running to the bathroom. She (Samke) stands by the bathroom door and listens to what is happening inside. Zodwa is vomiting.

"Hey, what's going on with you? Are you pregnant Zodwa? You have lost weight and you keep visiting the bathroom to puke, what is the matter?" She asks with her eyebrows raised.

"I'm not pregnant. Leave me alone Samke!" Zodwa wipes her face using the tissue paper.

"I'm not leaving until you tell me what is going on? You don't have a boyfriend as far as I know....." Samke's eyes widen when something comes to her mind. "Are you pregnant for Prince Sbu? Did you guys use a condom? Zodwa? How stupid can you be to fall pregnant for the prince when you're just a maid? What did you think? That he will pity you and marry you? You are so stupid!" Clementine is passing by, she hears someone shouting inside and stops. "Does Sbu know that you are pregnant?" Clementine violently pushes and charges towards the two girls.

"What did you just say? Who is pregnant? And for who?" Clementine questions the girl. "Did I hear you correctly? Who is this prince Sbu you two filthy girls are talking about?" Samke wants to say something but she can't possibly betray Sbu.

"Zodwa is lying my Queen I'm sure she just want to become a somebody in life. She is pregnant but its definitely not for our prince." Samke lies.

"Are you trying to defame my son? I want you to pack your bags and leave this palace, don't you ever look back. Do you understand?" Zodwa nods with tears in her eyes.

The Tshabangu family is sitting at the dinner table, there are different kinds of foods in front of them but no one seems to be hungry. Nomtha stands up, serves herself and starts eating.

"Look at her she's eating as if nothing happened. Are you not ashamed to be the only one eating when others are heartbroken and mourning?" Kayise taunts Nomtha.

"Sis. I love you so very much but please don't say a word against My Rose. Why should she mourn for someone she doesn't even know." Spha defends Nomtha.

"Spha, stop insulting my daughter. She's right, we are all supposed to be mourning for my dear sister." Nomtha looks at the Queen through her lashes, Clementine swallows hard and uncomfortable.

There is silence around the table but not for too long.

"Hellooooo family!" Everyone turns their head. Sbu's face lights up, he runs to the lady standing by the dinning room doorway and gives her the longest hug. Spha smiles, even the King is happy but holding in his happiness.

"Welcome home aunty. I really missed you."

"Why is everyone's faces gloomy? Brother, Spha are you both not happy to see me?" Spha stands and hugs her. She goes to the king and kisses his cheek. Clementine looks like she's just returned from a trip to hell. Her face is pale. "Please, Spha give me something to eat then we will talk later about this beauty sitting next to you. For now I just want to eat, eish the aroma..." She opens all the serving dishes.

"Hello Gugulethu. I'm sorry you had to find us this sad, my sister Priscilla just died." Clementine greets her.

"So? Should we also die with her? Please don't spoil my mood." Gugu picks a drumstick and takes a bite.

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Kayise looks at her aunt, she feels her blood boiling. They were never in good terms before and it seems like the feud between the two is far from over. Nomtha looks at Gugulethu through the corner her eye then to Clementine and immediately senses that there is no love lost between the Queen and Gugu.

"Gugu! You have to show respect to the dead or at least sympathize with those who are heartbroken." The King softly says.

"I'm sorry brother but hey, we are all gonna die someday. May her soul rest in peace if not in hell." Clementine pushes her chair and leaves the dining room. The king is about to follow her but Gugu stops him. "Sit down brother. She needs space, let her go and cry herself to sleep. She will be fine tomorrow." Gugu says remembering how heartbroken her brother was when they lost their mother in a mysterious way but Clementine chose to host a party in the palace's garden. She invited her friends, they ate and drink whilst the King and the other family members tried to comfort each other.

"You are so mean! I hate you! All of you!" Kayise cries. Spha rushes to her and comfort her.

"Sis, death comes, it shatters everyone close to the deceased but life has to go on. It's okay to feel the pain but it's not okay

to let the pain stop you from moving forward. It doesn't mean we don't care about aunt Priscilla, we do but please understand that we grieve differently. I'm sorry you feel that way, cry if you wish to because bottling the pain will only cause more harm than good." He wipes her tears and hugs her.

"We love you Sis." The three Tshabangu descendants hug each other.

"Okay enough. Spha come and introduce me to my daughter-in-law." They all laugh.

"Aunt, you're impossible!" Sbu shakes his head. "You've been sitting a few meters away from her all this time but it's now that you want a formal introduction." He smiles.

"Ok, my dear and only aunt meet my favorite, special person, My Rose, the love of my life." He grins and turns to Nomtha.

"Sweetheart, meet my other favorite person, aunt Gugu."

"Nice to finally meet you.....what do I call her now? Since you told me that you found your rose, should I also call her My Rose?"

"No! No way aunt, you can call her whatever you want but not that. Her real name is Nomthandazo Mahlangu." Spha is about to give Nomtha a little peck on her cheek but his aunt pulled him aside.

"You have the whole night to yourselves. Come here, doll. Give aunt a big and warm hug." Nomtha hugs her but she is still not certain about her behavior. Gugu's face is written trouble all over it.

"Pleased to finally meet you." Nomtha pulls out of the hug and smiles. Nobuhle feels neglected as she quietly leaves the dining room and goes to her room.

The maids clean the table, Gugu gives the maids their gifts like always. She never returns home without bringing something for the maids and the guards. She also gifts her family including Nomtha who is surprised about this. Nomtha looks at Spha, he smiles. They all sit in the living room chatting, even the King looks really happy after Gugu's arrival.

Kayise is in her room, she makes a call to someone.

"Kayise the Princess speaking." She says.

"My Princess, how may I help you?" The person on the other side asks.

"There are two girls who were arrested and convicted a few months ago for attacking my sister-in-law, we as the royal family would like to drop the charges. They've suffered enough, just free them."

"Ok my Princess. They will be freed tomorrow morning."

"Thank you. Have a good night." She drops the call and smiles to herself. She switches on her TV and watches Indian movies.

"Babe, come here. Come to daddy let him give you a massage so you can relax. I'm sorry about all the drama My Rose, I hope you won't leave me because of this." He cups her cheeks and gives her a soft kiss on her lips.

"As long as you love me, I will never leave you. Hey, you're not my daddy that word makes it sound like you're my sugar daddy." They both laugh.

"Okay fine. My children will call me that, I like the sound of my full name coming from your lips. I can't wait to hear you scream my name when I.....you know." Nomtha blushes and looks away from him. "Babe, you don't have to feel shy every time I talk about sex, talking doesn't mean I'm going to do the actual thing. I gave you my promise, didn't I?"

"I know it's just that I don't know anything about it. I was always too busy with my books to get time to study sex." Spha picks her up and throws her on his bed.

"I will teach you when the time comes." He helps her remove her shoes.

"How come you know so much about sex?" Nomtha asks.

"Babe, I'm sorry but I've had it before. Long back before I even knew you existed." Nomtha swallows hard and hurt is visible on her face. "My Rose, I'm sorry I didn't mean to hurt your feelings I was just being honest with you. Please forgive me my love."

"It's okay Spha. I didn't expect you to be a virgin at 28 and worse you grew up in America. You don't have to apologize, I still love you." Nomtha assures him.

"Thank you. Now can we go back to the massage thing? I want to take this pressure and stress off your shoulders. Let me give you a real thing today. Come with me." He takes her hand.

"To where?" He picks her up once again, exits his room, he's about to open the room opposite to his when Sbu and Gugu whistle approaching. "Spha, put me down." Nomtha whispers.

"They've already seen us so why hide now."

"Can I also join dear nephew? You all of people know how tiring the journey I just traveled is." Gugu teases Spha, Sbu laughs.

"Aunt Gugu please don't start. The last time I gave you a massage you didn't pay for my services so the answer is no." Spha pushes the key in the keyhole, balancing Nomtha's weight on his knee.

"Is she paying or....."

"Get out of here! Both of you leave!" They laugh as they continue to Gugu's bedroom. Spha finally opens the door, switches on the lights and puts her down.

"Wow! Darling, you have a massage parlor?" Nomtha is really overjoyed. The only place she's ever seen this equipment is on television.

"Yes babe. Actually, I have a certificate in massage therapy. I also own a massage parlor in town." This is news to Nomtha.

"Explains why your hands are so good at this. Wow! I really don't know what to say," She lowers her voice. "This is my first time seeing this equipment so closely." She hides her face but Spha removes her hands and hugs her.

"No need to be embarrassed babe. If only I could give you the whole world My Rose." She tilts her head, their lips touch and they passionately kiss.

"I don't want the world. You are my world, my universe and I just want you. Nothing else matters." She puts her head on his chest.

"I love you Nomtha." Spha kisses her forehead. "Okay. Time to work my magic on your body but you will have to remove that dress of yours."

"What? No!"

"Hey, I didn't say I want to see you naked, take this towel or the gown and put it on. I will go and get something to drink. I will be back before you know it." He smiles.

On his way to the kitchen he's met by Nobuhle. She looks at him and smiles, he ignores her but Nobuhle grabs his hand.

"Why do you hate me this much? Am I not woman enough to you? Tell me my Prince, what is wrong with me?" She asks looking straight into his eyes.

"Let go of my hand!" Spha hisses. "There is nothing wrong with you. I don't know about being woman enough because the only woman I notice in the whole world is Nomtha. Stop trying so hard because you will never succeed, I belong to My Rose." He leaves, she cries and goes to her room.

Spha comes back with red wine. Nomtha has a towel wrapped around her and sitting on the couch. The Prince puts the bottle and champagne glasses on the chest of drawers, opens a top drawer and retrieves a blindfold, a small bottle of massage oil and turns to his rose.

"Come here." He tells her to lie flat on her stomach on the massage table and blindfolds her. "Loosen your towel babe, I want to be able to reach all parts of your back." He takes out a remote and plays some good relaxing soulful music. He removes his T-shirt and throws it on the chair.... Oh God! Those

abs, his chest! He then pours a gentle portion of oil on his hand and warms it by rubbing his hand together. The way his muscles flex! The sight is just a beauty to behold. "Okay, ready?" He asks with his hands already working magic on Nomtha.

"Yes sweetheart..... Oooh! Yes darling..." She mourns. He rolls the towel down and stops admiring her flawless skin. He leans forward and kisses her cheek.

"You look.....beautiful my love."

They are now sitting on the couch drinking their wine. Their eyes meet and they get lost in each other's eyes. Nomtha slowly puts her glass down and moves to his lap without breaking the eye contact. She runs her tongue on her lips, their lips touch and part as their tongues entangle. Spha breaks the kiss.

"Okay?" He cocks his eyebrow.

"Thank you honey. You are the best, I love you so so much my dear Prince." Nomtha runs her fingers on his chest

he closes his eyes savoring the sensation but quickly opens them and stops her.

"Babe, wine and touchy hands are a recipe for disaster. Let's not forget the sensational massage I just gave you," He lowers

his voice and whispers in her ear. "For the first time since I met you I'm the one feeling the heat. Stop teasing me My Rose." He hugs her tight.

"I feel the heat every time you remove your shirt, sweetheart. You will surely kill me if you keep doing this."

Bab' uMahlangu is up early today. He looks worried and disturbed. Sne is still fast asleep after the steamy workout session she had with Anthony yesterday. Zandi is cleaning the kitchen when her husband walks in.

"Darling, I'm worried. I had a bad dream about our Princess I hope everything is fine at the palace." He sighs.

"Maybe we should call her and find out. We both know you won't stop worrying until you hear her voice."

"I tried her phone is off. I even tried to contact Spha but his phone is off too."

"Okay then. Call the landline." It rings several times before anyone can answer.

"It's rude to call other people's houses this early in the morning. Who died?" Gugu answers the phone.

"I'm sorry but I'm trying to reach my daughter. Is she okay?"

"Who is your daughter?"

"Nom-----" Shit! Gugu mutters to herself.

"Eish! I'm really sorry, please forgive my rudeness. Nomtha is fine, she hasn't come downstairs yet but she's okay. Are you her father?"

"Yes thank you. Tell her to call me." He drops the phone feeling angry and annoyed.

Gugu is feeling guilty as she puts down the receiver and smacks her own forehead. She goes upstairs in search of Nomtha but she's not in her room, Gugu smiles to herself and closes the door.

"Hey you two, who gave you the permission to share a bed?" Spha and Nomtha are startled and shocked as they come face to face with an angry Gugu.

"Aunt...I...."

"Shut up Spha! What have you done? Do you want to give them the reason to kick Nomtha out of this palace? I'm disappointed in you." She turns to leave.

"Aunt Gugu, I'm sorry." Nomtha apologizes. "We were just sleeping nothing happened I swear." Gugu turns to look at them smiling.

"You were pretending to be angry?" Spha can not believe that he almost had a heart attack when Gugu is only pretending.

"No I wasn't. Listen, you both have to tread carefully, what if someone else saw you? I don't want to be nursing your heart Spha like what happened 5 years ago. Nomtha, I know you love my nephew you will sometimes both get carried away but please can your feelings not lead you to the same bed especially when you're in this palace. I have no problem with you cuddling and doing whatever you want under those sheets but those people out there, they certainly will have a problem if they find out. Get up and get yourselves cleaned up quickly."

"Thank you aunt." Spha wants to hug her but she pushes her away.

"Spha! I will smack you if you try and hug me. Go bath first then we will hug. Nomtha, your father, my in-law called looking for you. He sounded worried please do call him." She exits the room, they both sigh in relief.

The Queen just received the post mortem results. She's shattered but trying to be strong. How is she going to break the news to her sister's husband and her parents? She drags her

feet back to her bedroom where she throws herself on the bed and scream.

"My darling, what's the matter? Why are you screaming like that?" The King asks as soon as he enters her bedroom. Clementine just looks at him, tears running freely down her cheeks. Clementine never breaks down but her sister's death really moved her. She did not only kill her sister but her unborn baby too.

"Nooooooooo!" She screams as realization hit her hard. The King hugs her and tries to comfort her.

"Don't be so hard on yourself. Grieve but don't break, I know the pain you are feeling right now. Be strong, your sister wouldn't want to see you broken like this. Please, get a grip on yourself." Clementine sobs, her husband strokes her back.

Agnes arrives at the palace. She comes face to face with Gugu for the first time since her (Agnes) and Clementine ousted Gugu from the palace. Gugu was a hindrance to their plans so they had to get rid of her. Agnes decides to leave before chaos erupt.

"Come back here you leech! What did you think? That I will die and you two will do as you please in my father's palace?" Gugu sneers.

"Ummm.....I'm here to see Clementine." Agnes tries to ignore her questions. A hot slap crosses Agnes's face.

"That's for my mother." Another slap crosses the other side of her face. "Thus for my brother." Kayise walks towards the two enemies. Gugu quickly forces Agnes in a hug and whispers. "I'm back and there's gonna be hell to pay." She pulls out of the hug and leaves Agnes standing there, astounded.

"Aunt Aggie, are you alright?" Kayise taps her shoulder.

"Yeah. I'm fine. Where is your mother? She asked me to come and make arrangements for the burial."

Kayise leads Agnes to her mother's room. Agnes is still shocked about what just happened outside but seeing her friend in the state she is in, horrifies her. The two friends hug, Kayise and her father give them the space they need to comfort each other.

"I killed my sister! I killed her....." The Queen weeps. Agnes calms her down. They talk about how things are falling apart. They first had to only worry about Nomtha but now they have two more enemies under the same roof. What's worse is that Gugu knows about the real Queen, Spha's mother.

"I need my powers back Aggie. I can't dance to everyone's tune! Enough of this crying, my sister is dead there's nothing I can do about it. It's time to move forward, time to refocus, we have to

claim that throne no matter what. Are you with me in this, friend?" Clementine turns to her friend who smiles and replies.

"Always Clemza. We belong at the top friend." They smile their evil smiles.

Nomtha is on her way to her parents' when she feels like someone needs her help and the person is closer. She looks outside the window but sees no one, the feeling keeps getting stronger.

"Driver, stop the car." She quickly gets down the car. Just then she sees a man pushing a wheelbarrow. A woman is on the wheelbarrow groaning in pain, the man tries to push faster. Nomtha crosses the road and approaches the couple.

"Good morning. What's the matter?" She asks.

"She's pregnant, her water just broke and I'm rushing to the hospital." The man says wiping sweat on his face. Nomtha signals the driver to bring the car.

"Get her in. I will take you to the hospital."

They arrive at the hospital. Nomtha runs inside shouting "nurse." They bring a stretcher bed and take the woman in.

"Take her to the emergency room." The doctor orders.

The man and Nomtha wait anxiously outside. The operation takes forever. After about 2 hours of waiting the doctor comes out. The man rushes to him but his face falls.

"What happened doctor?"

"We couldn't save the baby, I'm sorry." The doctor apologizes.

The man collapses on the floor and cries. Nomtha tries to comfort him. A few minutes later nurses come out of the operating room pushing a stretcher bed where a distraught young mother is lying hopelessly. Nomtha looks at the heartbroken young couple, a tear escapes her eye as she turns and runs inside the operating room. The baby is lying so peacefully on the bed, Nomtha kisses the baby's forehead, folds her hands and prays.

"Dear God, if I'm really the blessing and a miracle child, please restore the life of this baby. I know you will never disappoint." Nomtha opens her eyes, touches the baby's forehead, the baby cries, Nomtha smiles. "Thank you dear God." She picks the child up, just then the doctor enters the room.

"What? How is it possible?" The doctor is shocked.

"God never fails." Nomtha smiles exiting the room with the child in her arms. The doctor follows her and informs her where

to find the parents. She slowly opens the door, the young couple looks at her confused.

"Here is your beautiful baby. She's so beautiful." The mother hesitantly takes the child. Tears of joy flood both their eyes and they rejoice. Nomtha removes her bangle, puts it on the baby. "I would love and appreciate it if you call her Nontando." The baby chuckles, the parents smile and Nomtha leaves before they even get her name.

Nomtha spots someone who looks familiar on the road and orders the driver to stop the car.

"You look familiar, have we met before?" Nomtha asks Zodwa, she nods.

"Yes. I was the maid at the palace but I was fired." Zodwa cries.

"But why?" Zodwa tells Nomtha everything. She takes her to her parents' house as she doesn't have anywhere else to go.

Bab' uMahlangu is happy to see her daughter, they hug each other and cry.

"It's okay Princess, dad understands everything." He wipes her tears.

"I missed you dad and I'm sorry for switching off my phone. Where is mom?" Her father nods towards the kitchen.

"Mommy!" Nomtha jumps on her and kisses her cheek.

"I missed you sunshine." They all smile.

"Dad, mom, would you please take care of this girl for a few days? Her name is Zodwa and there is something I need to sort out before she can decide what she wants. She's pregnant, I trust you to take good care of her. I will be back." Her parents nod in agreement. "Zodwa, they are my parents they are going to take good care of you. I have a crazy sister, please don't feel bad whenever she acts like her usual self. I will be back."

Nomtha enters the palace looking red with fury. Gugu and Kayise see her climbing the steps and wonder what is wrong with her. She's climbing two steps at a time, I pity whoever will be on the receiving end of her wrath. She pounds on Sbu's bedroom door. Prince Sbu opens, he's half naked, he yawns.

"Sis-----" Nomtha slaps him hard.

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<Sometimes tough love is required so as to show our loved ones the right path. Being angry at them, reprimanding them or even slapping some sense into their heads is necessary. You can't claim to love and care for someone but let that very someone stray from the right path without even trying to show them the difference between right and wrong.>

Sbu is horrified not because of the slap but the person standing in front of him is really not his dear Nomtha. She pushes him back and locks the door.

"Sister-----" He touches his cheek.

"Shut up Sbu! That slap was for you disrespecting the Tshabangu name, what is wrong with you Sbu? Are you out of your mind?" Nomtha is enraged.

"I'm sorry for whatever made you this angry but will you please enlighten me, what have I done?" Sbu is confused.

"What the hell Sbu? What happened to practicing safe sex? Why sleep with one of the palace maids? Why Sbu? That poor girl's life is ruined but here you are sleeping, your life is moving forward like any normal day, what about her?"

"Sister-in-law, I don't know why you are this angry at me? I don't even know which maid you are talking about because I've

slept with almost all of them and I paid them for that!" Another slap hits him hard.

"I don't mind slapping you again until you realize what mess you've created! Zodwa is pregnant Sbu!" She screams at him. Sbu feels like he's dreaming, pregnant? His world collapses around him. He's done so many mistakes in his life but this is something he will never be able to face up to.

"No! No it can't be!" He throws himself on the bed and buries his head in his arms.

"Sbu! Look at me, damn it! What did you think, that your seeds were not going to germinate? I'm really disappointed in you! The King will surely have a heart attack when he hears this." He runs his fingers through his hair.

"I really don't know what to say? I don't even know which of the maids I slept with is Zodwa, what must I do? Tell me, I can't possibly be a father. No!" Our dear Sbu is sweating already.

"Don't infuriate me Sbu! You planted the seed, its time to nurture it. I don't know how you will do it but I won't let you ruin a girl's life while yours continues like nothing happened. Fix this mess before it escalates!" Nomtha turns to leave.

"But I don't even know who Zodwa is? Where do I start? I can't be a father, she will have to terminate the pregnancy or

whatever because I can't, I really can't." The thought of having a child alone suffocates him.

"Yes you can and you will. That girl is carrying the Tshabangu heir, find her and fix this! I don't know who fired her but yeah, she was fired and is not anywhere near the palace. Grow up, be a man and take full responsibility of your actions." Nomtha unlocks the door and slams it behind her. She bumps into Gugu on her way out.

"Nomtha are you alright?" Gugu asks.

"I'm fine." She lies.

"Nomtha? What did my nephew do to you? Tell me please."

"Go and ask him. I have to go to the office, see you later." She runs to the car and orders the driver to take her to the office.

Gugu finds Sbu burying his head in his arms, she taps his shoulder, he slowly sits up.

"No! I always told myself that I was a no nonsense kind of a woman but Nomtha, wow the girl takes the trophy. Why did you do now dear nephew to deserve two slaps in one day?"

Gugu sits next to him but he says nothing. "Talk to me, what have you done?" She touches his red cheeks and shakes her head in disbelief.

"I think my sins are finally catching up with me. Apparently, one of the maids I slept with is pregnant and I don't know how to feel or react to this. Thus not all, I won't even recognize her even if we were to meet somewhere." He takes his lighter and is about to light a cigar but Gugu snatches it away.

"Sbu, do you realize that you're putting all of our reputations in jeopardy here? Why didn't you use a condom? What will you do? What if the girl starts talking? Where is she right now?" His aunt asks thousand questions at once.

"Help me aunt. For the first time in my life my mind is blank, what do I have to do? I can't promise to marry this girl or whatever because I don't love her. I'm also not ready to be a father. Brother will surely kill me for this."

"I know, you only love yourself but I'm starting to suspect that you also love Nomtha. What's going on Sbu, do you want to sleep with her and use her like you did with Florencia?"

"No aunt. I would never do that to her, I really love her and I love her enough to let her be with the person she loves. I will never ever hurt my brother again. I want the two of them to be happy and I promised brother to always protect their relationship." They both sigh and hug each other.

Sne is busy at work when someone knocks on her office door. She looks at the time and gets surprised to see that it's already lunch hour. She tells whoever is knocking to come in. Anthony comes in holding a bouquet of red and white roses. Sne looks up and is shocked to see him.

"Hey. Good afternoon Miss Manager." Anthony teases her.

"Why are you here? And the flowers? Whose birthday or anniversary is it?" Sne closes her laptop.

"These are for you." He hands her the flowers. "Come with me, let's go and eat lunch somewhere quiet and relaxing. Just to take your mind off work for sometime." He smiles shyly.

"Okay. Let's go." They both exit the office.

"Why is there nothing about you on social media?" Anthony asks Sne after finishing their meal.

"I deleted my accounts for personal reasons." Sne replies without looking at him.

"Does those reasons have to do with what those people were saying the other day?" Sne looks at him but keeps quiet. "You can tell me, what was that ruckus about?"

"Is this the reason why you asked me out for lunch? I don't like answering questions Anthony, I enjoy my life perfectly well

when there are no questions asked. I'd appreciate it if you stop poking your nose in my business." She sounds annoyed.

"I didn't mean to start a fight with you. I checked your name on social media because I want to know you better. I feel like you are living in an eggshell, you are not yourself and you are trying so very hard to accept this adopted personality as you. What is going on Sne?" She looks at him, stands up and leaves without saying a thing.

"Snegugu! Sne! You can't keep running away from yourself. One way or the other the real you will catch up with this fake personality of yours."

"I'm not running away. Take me back to work please." She looks away and wipes her tears. Anthony opens the passenger door for her, she gets in and he also gets in. He takes Sne's hand into his.

"Snegugu, before I knew you as Nomtha's sister but after a couple of conversations you and I have had I want to know you, the real Snegugu not Nomtha's elder sister. You can trust me, yes many people think I'm a joker and thee most self centered person but I'm not, I do care sometimes. Talk to me." Sne finally gives in and tells him about her entire past and her experience with social media. "So, you deleted your social media accounts because you were a slay queen once? She nods. "Everyone has a past Sne, we are not supposed to judge people based on their

past but rather we should base our judgments on the present. And you as an individual, you don't have to hide from your past because no matter how ugly it is, it paved way for your present and future. Stop hiding, be you, accept who you are and the world will love you just the way you are."

"But what if being me keeps hurting the people I love?" She finally asks the question she always wished to ask anyone and get the answer to it.

"There is no such thing. You allowed alcohol to use you, you bacame rebellious, distant and jealous of your sister, that's what hurt her not being you. I'm sure Nomtha or your parents won't have a problem if you post a few or even more pictures of yourself on social media. It hurt them before because you allowed yourself to be disillusioned. You don't need a man by your side to be 'cool', you don't need those rich people to satisfy your wants. You're working now, you buy things for yourself, you don't have to keep hiding from the world just because you think people will say you are back to your old ways. Reintroduce yourself to the world girl." He pulls her in a hug.

"Thank you. I don't have friends anymore so I had no one to talk to."

"Can I be your friend?" Sne smiles at him and nods. "First selfie as friends?" Anthony takes his iPhone and clicks several photos of them.

NOMTHA'S POV

I drag my feet through the office. I feel exhausted and drained emotionally. Spha is talking on the phone with his back to the door, he turns, our eyes meet.

"Ummmmm.....can we talk later. I have to attend to someone important." He drops the call as I put my laptop bag on the couch. "Babe? What's wrong?" He steps closer to me.

"Why didn't you tell me that your brother was sleeping with all the maids in the palace?" Honestly, I feel like slapping him too.

"How did you find out?" He looks at me quizzical.

"Spha, it doesn't matter how I found out just answer the damn question!" I snap.

"Okay? I didn't think it was relevant and its not my business to mind."

"Really Spha? Are you all that blind that you don't see anything wrong in Sbu's actions? Do you ever think about those girls,

how they feel when their innocence is taken away from them and they are paid a few thousand dollars to keep their mouths shut? Is this how low you think of the commoners? Okay

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what of your father? What will the community say if they ever find out? Do you want to be called names behind your back? Will you feel good if the people your father is supposed to lead and rule start pointing fingers at him?" Honestly, I'm really angry.

"Babe, I think you are scolding the wrong person here. My brother and I don't get involved in each other's personal matters, we respect each other's private spaces." He says, like I'm talking about a game when I'm actually talking about other people's lives and dignity.

"Respect Spha?" I shake my head in disgust. He doesn't seem to get my point and arguing with him is useless. I turn and leave in a huff.

"Nomtha! Babe!" He calls out.

"I need to be alone please let me go. I need fresh air."

Is it a crime to be less privileged? Why does the elite always take advantage of us commoners and always gets away with it? God, why did you divide your people into classes? Are we not all the same before your eyes? How do I make these people

understand that everything is not always about money? Some things can not be bought!

"Hey, granddaughter." Grandpa appears.

"I'm disappointed in your grandchildren! How could they?"

"I'm also highly disappointed in you. I told you not to lose your temper, control your emotions, this is not an easy journey to partake and you won't go far if you keep losing your temper and using your emotions to think not your brains. You are wise Nomtha so act like it. You left both Sbu and Spha confused, remember they were raised by Clementine and it will be not an easy job to help them see what they are doing is wrong. Be strong my girl, the road is just getting bumpy."

"I'm tired grandpa. I want to go back to being me, the old me."

"That's not possible. You will have to soldier on, the two brothers are the least of your problems. It's you against the prevailing evil in this kingdom and the reason why you exist is because you are the only one who will win this war. Innocent people died, the evil ones want to take over the throne but I trust you to save my kingdom. The two brothers will be just fine, don't be too hard on them its not their fault. Go on my child, one day you will be victorious." He disappears.

"My Rose." Spha says from behind, I turn and smile at him.

"Yes my dear Prince. I'm sorry for lashing out on you like that. I've had a very taxing day." He sits next to me.

"I understand. I'm sorry too, I should have done better as a brother." I put my head on his shoulder. "I brought you these, I know they always make you smile." He gives me chocolates.

"Thank you darling."

"Why were you so angry?" He asks stroking my back.

"One of the girls Sbu slept with is pregnant."

"What? Are you sure?" I nod. "This is not good at all. How did you find out?"

"I saw the girl, she was fired from the palace, her uncle and aunt also chased her out of their house so she has nowhere else to go. I confronted Sbu, I was really angry and I did something I'm not proud of."

"What did you do? Babe, he didn't hurt you did he?" He asks concerned and cups my cheeks searching for answers in my eyes.

"No but I think I did hurt him. I slapped him Spha, I even said some hurtful things to him." I sigh. Honestly, after the conversation with grandpa I really feel guilty of my actions.

"He's lucky you slapped him I would've killed him. Dad will surely die of shame because of this. What do we do now, My Rose?" He sighs.

"Nothing. Sbu will be the one to do everything. We won't wait for too long before he comes around and starts to reason like a grown man that he is but for that we'll have to give him space to think."

"I hope you are right. Where is the girl now?"

"Somewhere safe."

ONE WEEK LATER.

NARRATED.

Clementine and Agnes are back from the burial of Priscilla. Clementine is back to being herself, she even slapped Nobuhle twice during the week. The King was also at the receiving end of her hand when they had an argument but she's still keeping as much distance as she can between her and Gugu.

Sbu is unusually quiet. After the confrontation with his brother he just locked himself in his room and never came out till today. Nomtha hasn't come back to the palace since she confronted Sbu, she said she needed some space and time to think away from the palace.

"Good morning Sis No." Zodwa greets her with a cup of her favorite tea.

"Hey, how are you and the baby?" Nomtha snaps out of her thoughts.

"I guess we're both fine. I mean I don't feel any pain or something so I guess we are good. I brought you tea." She hands the cup.

"Thank you. You don't have to do this for me you know, I want you to relax and be happy your baby needs all of that from you."

"Thank you. You're so kind and your parents are good people. Sometimes I wish I had met my parents maybe my life would have been much different. I yearn for love Sis----" She fails to finish her statement as tears and hurt take over. Nomtha puts her cup down and pulls her for a hug.

"Stop crying please. God knows why He took away your parents everything will work out and you will find love. I already love

you as a younger sister. Stop with the crying, okay?" Zodwa nods, Nomtha wipes her tears.

"Thank you. Let me go and prepare breakfast for everyone." She attempts to leave but Nomtha pulls her back.

"No. You will do no such thing, you are not our domestic worker please stop behaving like one. Listen, you know what the good thing our parents taught us is? We help each other, no one is superior to the other only God is supreme. I'm telling you this because I don't want you feel inferior to us, we are no different from you. I know my sister can be rude sometimes but please don't take it to heart. Sit down, I will make breakfast. What does our baby want to eat today?" Zodwa laughs.

"Actually, I'm craving for sour porridge." She says in a low voice.

"Okay. Porridge it is." Nomtha leaves.

"Good morning mom. Where are you going all dressed up?"

"Morning sunshine. We have a business meeting with a potential investor." Zandi smiles.

"I'm proud of you and dad. At first I thought this business of yours was only a childhood dream but now I see you are passionate about it. Great job." Nomtha compliments.

"Morning Princess. I just received a call from your grandmother she wants more money. I don't know if this woman thinks that

money grows on trees or what? I sent her \$500 dollars two weeks ago and now?" Bab' uMahlangu sighs, exasperated.

"Dad, I told you before and I will say this again. I don't think grandmother is the one who keeps asking for money but your sister. I like my aunt but I'm fully aware of her cunning skills please don't send any money, I will go and meet grandma in person. If she really needs the money I will give it to her."

"Okay. Zandi darling let's go or we'll be late."

"Mommy, can you please bring cooked okra from your restaurant, please. It's for my pregnant little sister." Nomtha begs.

"Ok Sunshine. Bye."

Kayise is in the car with Ana and Aisha.

"Hey boss lady." They say in unison.

"Did you get your money?" Kayise asks they nod. "Okay. I rented an apartment for you two, you need to lie low for sometime, I will call you when I need you. Take this phone, it's only for when I want to contact you. My brother Sbu is very clever and if he finds out that you guys are out of prison he will do everything in his power to find you. He won't hesitate to

shoot you in the heads if that ever happens so please be careful."

"Ok boss lady. What about clothes and food?" Ana asks.

"Everything is there in the apartment. Just stay indoors and don't open for anyone without my authorization. We are done here, you may leave." The two ex convicts get down the car and leave.

Sne, Zodwa and Nomtha are watching a movie when someone knocks on the main door. Sne jumps to her feet and peeps through the keyhole.

"It's Sbu." She whispers. Zodwa starts to panic but Nomtha tells her to calm down.

"Go to your room I don't want him to see you." Zodwa nods and leaves. Sne opens the door.

"Hey buddy!" The two hug each other smiling.

"Hey partner, I missed you." Sbu picks her up and spins her around while she giggles like a child. "Okay. Can we chat later I have important things to discuss with sister-in-law." Sne nods and leaves. "Sister-in-law, are you angry with me that you don't even want to come back to the palace?"

"What do you want Sbu?"

"I'm sorry. I agree I'm stupid, I shouldn't have done all the things I did. I'm really sorry." He apologizes.

"You're apologizing to the wrong person Sbu. I'm not the one you wronged, and you apologizing does it mean that you want to take responsibility for your actions?"

"I tried to think, I really tried. Where do I start? I don't think I will be able to love her, let alone become a father but I'm willing to try and be a father to my child if you help me find her and advise me on how to break the news to my father."

"Good because I was ready to strangle you to death. Come here." Nomtha hugs him. "I'm sorry for slapping you the other day." He pulls out of the hug feeling uneasy. Touching her hand only, sends electricity all over his body.

"Its okay. I deserved it and more. My brother almost killed me with my own gun can you imagine." They both laugh. Nomtha's phone rings, its Spha.

"My dear Prince."

"Look outside the window." Nomtha opens the curtains and sees his car parking outside.

"Come in my parents are not at home." She drops the call and informs Sbu that his brother is here.

"Now what's next? I've never been in love or had a relationship with a woman so please guide me." Sbu runs a hand through his hair.

"What do you want to do?" Spha opens the door and walks in. Nomtha jumps on him and kisses his cheek. "Hey darling. I missed you and these strong hands of yours."

"I missed you too babe. Why is he here?" He asks still carrying her.

"To see me. Is there any problem in that?" The two brothers' eyes meet.

"No. It's okay." He sits down taking her on his laps.

"Ok Sbu I'm waiting for your answer don't mind him let's continue our conversation."

"I want to meet her, to see her because forgive me but I don't even remember her face."

"Fine you will meet her but please don't hurt her. If anything happens to her you and I will have a problem. I'm not scared of guns Sbu, better behave."

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Sbu looks at Nomtha then to Spha who looks away. Its visible that the two brothers haven't resolved their issues after their fight.

"Am I missing something?" Nomtha looks straight into Spha's eyes. "Okay. Go ahead and apologize to each other." She orders.

"He has to apologize." Spha says curtly.

"No! He did something wrong, you hit him so you both owe each other an apology. Do it or I'm chasing you both out of here."

"I'm sorry brother." Spha apologizes first.

"I'm sorry too brother. I will try and be a good person, I'm ready to face my demons."

"It won't be easy as abcd, you know right? Brother, you need help with your addiction you can't keep buying sex when you have someone carrying your baby already. I still believe that there is a good man behind that cute of face of yours, look in the mirror, find that man stop being controlled by things you can control. Most of all, stop watching pornograph because that's where your problem started. Make me proud, I still believe in you little brother."

SBU'S POV.

It is the times like these that make me realize how much my brother really loves me. Nomtha also wants the best for me and this kingdom, Florencia never cared about any of us except brother but Nomtha is different. She cares about the whole world I wish mom can take her time and look at her closely, then she will realize that my brother will never find a better partner than her.

"I believe in you too. I will never forget what you did for my sister and my family. If you could see the wrong that my sister was doing, you can surely see yourself through that same mirror. And Sbu, the journey won't be easy not everyone will support you. Be strong, don't get hurt or hurt someone in the process, always balance your priorities. Welcome to manhood and all the best." They both hug me. For the first time in my life I can't stop the tears, I let them fall.

"It's okay to be emotional. I know what you think but don't worry I your brother will always be your shoulder to cry on." Brother wipes my tears and smiles.

"Thank you." Thus all I can say to the two of them. Nomtha informs me that she's going to bring Zodwa, my heart starts

pounding, I'm sweating and feeling uneasy. How do I even begin to talk to her? Brother touches my shoulder and tells me to relax but I can't relax. My life is about to take a drastic turn, I don't know whether it will be the right turn or the wrong one. I hear footsteps, it's obvious sister-in-law is bringing her. I put my hands in between my legs, I've never been so anxious in my life. Nomtha comes in first followed by this black beauty of a lady. She looks anxious too, the bump is not showing yet but she's glowing. I try by all means to remember the day I had sex with her until I finally remember her face when she left my room. She was heartbroken after I had promised her to be my wife only to get what I wanted, I later threw a few \$100 dollar notes at her and told her to buy new lingerie.

"Ummm.....Sbu, here she is. You can talk to her, Spha and I will be in my bedroom." Nomtha brings me back to where I am, where one of my sins is staring me straight and deep into my eyes. Brother leaps to his feet, they both give me a thumbs up sign and leave. The silence between me and this lady is audible, it's the loudest silence I've ever heard in my entire life. I don't know if that makes any sense.

"Hi." I finally master the courage to break the ice. She looks at me with no emotion registered on her face at all. She's not saying anything, what do I do? Maybe I should try to apologize first. "I don't do this more often but I'm sorry. I'm sorry for the

way I treated you. I won't ask you to forgive me but please hear me out."

"Are you here to show me that I'm worthless once again my Prince?" She asks almost knocking me down with her question. Be brave Sbu, I tell myself. I look at her and she is in tears.

"I'm sorry for everything. I don't know what to do to erase the pain you're feeling right now but I willing to try. I don't want my child to grow up without a father while I'm still breathing. If you permit, may I please be part of my child?" She looks at me but still says nothing. "Okay. I get it you're angry at me, you're disgusted by me and my actions please give me a chance to try and right my wrongs." I beg her. It's so unlike me to beg but what choice do I have?

"How do I know you have changed, that you won't hate me and my child? I'm scared of you my Prince." Finally, she confesses her fears. It's not what I expected but at least now I know how she feels.

"Are you scared because of what I did to you or something else?"

"Both. You lured me to your bed by your sweet talks, you took the only precious thing I had left in my life, you later made me feel like trash, like I was a nobody. I agree I'm a commoner but I'm a person, a person with feelings too. Thus not all, maybe

you don't know this but everyone else in this community knows that you're a gangster hiding behind your title. What if you shoot and kill me so as to get rid of me and my baby?"

"I won't, I promise no I swear on my great grandfather's heroic life, I won't hurt you and the baby physically. Can I be honest with you?" She nods. "Okay please don't feel hurt because this brutal truth is really ugly. I've never had a love relationship with a woman before nor do I intend to. I deeply love someone else although I can't love that person openly or will I ever be able to. I don't see myself betraying my love for her with anyone else. Secondly, I'm a sex addict. I don't know if there's a rehab for this addiction or not. I guess that explains why I'm me." I've revealed so much information to her, I hope she won't judge me harshly.

"Okay. So what do you want from me? Why are you even here?"

"I want to be a father to my child, I want to give you back the dignity you lost because of me. We can both come to an agreement here. I'm willing to pay for my sins by making you my wife if that's okay with you."

The crown Prince and his Rose are playing a chess game sitting on the couch. Nomtha won the first two games and is about to win this one too.

"Babe, who taught you to play chess?"

"My dad. He taught me that chess is not only a game but the moves can be used in real life. Whenever my dad wants to make an important decision, he plays chess and derives all the answers to his questions from the game."

"Wow! Thus cool. Come here babe." He says with open arms, Nomtha jumps on him making him smile. "I like the fact that you're portable, I can carry you whenever I feel like." He kisses her neck.

"Stop. Stop tickling me!" She laughs and tries to run away from him but trips. Spha catches her when she's about to touch the ground. They get lost in each other's eyes.

"Stop running or else you will fall." Spha takes her into his arms and lies on the couch taking Nomtha on top of him. "Babe, I was thinking."

"About what?"

"Why are the ancestors not saying anything about our relationship, why are they quiet? This silence from them worries me." He sighs.

"You don't have to my dear Prince. They will talk when the timing is right let's not rush them."

"Maybe you are right. Sometimes I think of eloping with you and go far away from this kingdom where we will live our lives freely without the society judging our lifestyle. I never knew how hard it is to be a Prince until I fell in love with you."

"Everything will be fine sweetheart don't be disheartened, I will wait no matter how long it will take for the ancestors to speak. I love you Spha and I'm not going anywhere without you." She kisses his forehead.

"I love you too My Rose."

He plays with her hair until she falls asleep still on top of him. Prince Spha looks at her and smiles watching her sleeping beautifully. He stretches his right hand making sure not to wake her up, pulls a fleece throw and covers their bodies.

"He doesn't love me Sis No." Zodwa cries. I don't know if it's the hormones or she is really hurt by the fact that Prince Sbu loves someone else.

"Given the circumstances you two created this baby, did you expect him to love you? Do you love him?" Nomtha queries.

"I've never been in love before so I don't know if I do love him or not. What pains me the most is that he openly told me that he loves another woman."

"Zodwa, love is unquestionably. Once you start questioning whether you love who or not, then there is no love at all. I agree you both don't love each other but you also both love your unborn child. This child is what will bring you together, I know Sbu loves this child as much as you do. It's up to you to make him fall for you, you're a woman use your capabilities."

"He also told me about his addiction." She adds.

"That must show you how much he's willing to try to make this thing work for both of you. Not all married people are high school sweethearts, some of them got married only as a business transaction, some

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their marriages were arranged, but now they love each other because they decided to learn to love. You also can do this."

Nomtha smiles assuring Zodwa.

"You know what? I don't wish to be pregnant look at how this girl cries all the time." Sne says as she enters the living room carrying takeaway bags and her laptop bag. She puts the bags on the table, the aroma of French fries and ribs hits Zodwa's

nostrils, she inhales and salivates at the same time. The two sisters laugh at her.

"Sis Sne, may I please have some?" She asks.

"No. Today you are not getting anything if you want something to eat go and prepare pap and vegetables."

"But---"

"But nothing." Sne says, acting rudely but in actual fact she's pulling Zodwa's leg. The hormones take over as Zodwa starts sobbing. "Oh no! Please you can have whatever you want. I was joking with you but now you are crying. Eish you are such a bore." Zodwa quickly grabs the bag, runs to the kitchen to warm the food. She returns a few minutes later with her plate almost empty.

"What's up? Why are you always carrying your laptop these days?" Nomtha asks her sister.

"Nothing." She lies.

"Sis, don't lie to me. What's going on?"

"Okay I'm working on something I've always wanted to do since childhood." She switches on her laptop and shows Nomtha her clothing designs. Wow! Just wow. Sne's got talent.

"Wow! Sis, this is.....amazingly beautiful!" Nomtha jumps on her sister hugging her tight. "I'm proud of you, I'm glad you have reconnected with who you are."

It's dinner time at the royal palace. Kayise looks unsettled, she keeps checking her phone over and over again. Gugu looks at her with suspecting eyes then to Sbu who is not eating but playing with his folk and looking lost.

"Out with it Sbu what's bothering you?" Clementine asks.

"Nothing mom. I'm just not hungry." He lies.

"Why are you lying to me I'm your mother and I know if you are worried or not. Tell me, what's the matter?"

"Just leave me the hell alone!" He snaps.

"Sbusiso Tshabangu!" Clementine can not believe he just did that.

"This is what happens when you teach children to be disrespectful towards others but expect them to be courteous when it comes to you. Well done dear nephew!" Gugu claps her hands infuriating the Queen.

"Dad, brother, can we talk after dinner?" Sbu asks. The King looks at him, realizes his son is in need of his help.

"Okay son." The King agrees.

Sbu tells his father about the maid he impregnated. The King is furious but Spha manages to calm him down. Sbu finally tells his father everything about his behavior which he never thought was a problem until Nomtha showed him the right path. The tough Prince finally breaks down in front of his father, Spha can not bear to see his brother in the state he's in. Spha hugs his brother and they cry together. Seeing this the King too cries. He's asking himself if the bond they share is strong enough to stand the test of time? What will happen when they ever find out that they don't share a same mother?

"It's okay son. I'm glad you want to claim full responsibility but we have a problem here." The King says wiping his tears, his two sons look at him puzzled. "You can't get married before your brother the crown Prince. Our ancestors are still silent about Spha's situation so I don't know what we can do to solve this."

"I will wait for my brother to get married first. What I want is for you to allow me to take care of the mother of my child and my unborn baby. We can hide this matter from everyone." Sbu suggests.

"Where is she right now?" The King asks.

"At the Mahlangu's. Sister-in-law's parents are taking good care of her. Maybe you can go there, convince them to keep her until this matter is resolved. What do you think father?"

"I will see what can I do but what about your mother? It won't be easy to convince her."

"Don't worry about mom I will personally deal with her. I myself will break the news to everyone." Sbu says making his brother and father proud of the man he's becoming.

ONE WEEK LATER.

The Queen lost it as we all had imagined but Sbu managed to persuade her or should we say he blackmailed her into agreeing to it. The kingdom's seer visited the palace and he brought good news with him. Prince Spha and Nomtha's alliance was approved by the ancestors but Nobuhle is to remain at the palace until they (ancestors) say something about her. Nobuhle was livid when the seer broke the news but Gugu quickly put her in her place. Kayise pretended to be fine with the new developments.

Today is the big day, the two brothers are getting engaged. The palace is decorated, everything is looking great. The catering company is busy preparing traditional foods, the maidens of the Umlazi kingdom are singing and dancing. Everyone looks happy

but not the Queen. She's standing by the window in her room still wearing her morning gown. She pours herself a half full glass of single malt whisky and absentmindedly takes a sip. Her phone rings.

"Talk to me are the guys ready?" She asks as soon as she answers the phone.

"Yeah we're waiting for your signal, we are all good here." Agnes says.

"Good. Make sure you shoot to kill, this must not come back to haunt us. Don't make a mistake of shooting my sons just shoot those two gold digging, stinking commoners."

"Sure Clemza. But are you sure about killing your grandchild?"

"I don't give a flying F about that child. My one and only dear son will not spend his life with that lowlife for the sake of the child. He'll be heartbroken yes, but he will be fine sooner than later. I think the ceremony is about to start let me put on my Queen's regalia and face before they start suspecting anything." The two friends smile ending their call.

"Princess, are you sure about this? I'm scared my baby I won't lie." Bab' uMahlangu says to his precious daughter.

"I will be fine dad. God will see me through all the troubles I may encounter. I have to do this dad or this kingdom will be doomed."

"If you say so. Okay let me leave you girls so you can get ready." He kisses her forehead and exits the room.

Nomtha looks wow! Zodwa is also looking beautiful and still glowing in their Ndebele traditional attires. Today the two brothers are also dressed according to their status. Prince Spha has his crown on, he's also holding a spear while Sbu is also holding a spear but his is smaller. Queen Clementine is also wearing her regalia, Gugu and Kayise have similar outfits as they are the Princesses of this kingdom.

The royal poet is chanting the Tshabangu totems as the King followed by his sons, then the Queen and the two Princesses make their way to the venue. Elderly and married women are ululating, men are whistling while the maidens and all the bachelors stand in a line welcoming them. After the royal family is settled, Chief Mseleku addresses all the people present. He then hands over the mic to the King.

"My people." Everyone shouts, claps, whistles and ululate expressing their joy. "I greet you all. I'm glad you all honored my invitation in such a short notice. It is with great pleasure to formally announce to all of you that today is the day which every father looks forward to. Both my sons, your Princes have

found their life partners and they are getting engaged today." Once again everyone cheers although other maidens are doing this with heavy hearts. "In no time, you will get to meet the two chosen maidens, my daughter-in-laws. Thank you, enjoy." The King gives back the mic to chief Mseleku who tells everyone to feel free and eat and drink whatever they feel like. He goes further to warn them not to eat what they don't know as this might cause upset stomachs. They all laugh.

The band plays a song as Nomtha, Zodwa and Nobuhle make their way to the venue accompanied by the chief maiden. Spha looks at Nomtha, his heartbeat stops for a minute, she is looking breathtakingly beautiful.

"Bro, you can close your mouth now." Sbu teases. Nomtha and Zodwa are instructed to sit next to their partners while Nobuhle is told she can join the crown or sit behind the royal family. She opts for the first choice but her father beckons her to come to him. She sits next to her father trying by all means to hold her tears in.

"Don't worry my child they can get engaged but they will never get married." Chief Sokhele whispers. "Put on a smile." She tries but fails miserably as tears stream down her cheeks. Her mother hugs her trying to comfort her.

"People of Umlazi kingdom it's that time we all have been waiting for. Our crown Prince will go first and introduces his

betrothed." Announces the MC. Spha clears his throat, he stands up and the poet chants again until Spha is standing in front of everyone looking all kinds of handsome in his traditional attire.

"Thank you dad. People from this beautiful kingdom, I'm not used to standing in front of so many people but for this special person I can do anything. Without her my life was dull, I was only breathing until she came and taught me how to live. Allow me to introduce to you, My special yellow Rose, the maiden who stole my heart the first time I met her in my office Nomthandazo Mahlangu." He smiles looking at her, other maidens swallow hard and bitterly as they watch their desired Prince professing all his love to Nomtha. The chief maiden takes Nomtha to where the crown Prince is standing. Prince Spha quickly kneels, surprising everyone. It's considered an abomination to kneel in front of a woman in the Ndebele culture but he doesn't care about the society, the rules and the norms.

"Nomthandazo Blessing 'My Rose' Mahlangu will you make me the happiest man and marry me?" Nomtha knew she was getting engaged but this, she was never ready for it. Nobuhle sobs, maidens mumble, Queen Clementine scowls, Kayise looks disgusted, only the Mahlangu family and the other royal family members are happy.

"Yes my dear Prince, I will marry you." She softly says, smiling her affectionate smile. Spha puts the diamond ring on her finger, stands up and kisses her forehead before pulling her for a hug.

"I love you Nomtha." Nobuhle storms out of the venue, crying and running away. Her mother follows her. Nomtha sadly looks at Spha. "No. Don't do that I know you want everyone to be happy but you can't give everyone what they want. Smile." Chief Sokhele has had enough of this humiliation.

"Melusi!" Everyone's heads turn, shocked. "After everything I did for you and your family--" Other chiefs try to calm chief Sokhele down but he's not backing down. "I hid your darkest truths from everyone and this is how you repay me? By hurting my only daughter! Let's see if you will take this, does your son know that you and your wife threw his mother in the river and left her for crocodiles to feast on? Does he know that this evil Queen is not his mother-----"

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"What? What are you talking about chief Sokhele? Dad, is this true? She's not my mother?" Spha charges towards his father. He grabs the King by the collar. "Who is my mother?" He is fuming.

"Yes dad, who is the mother to my brother? Is this man saying the truth?" Sbu too questions.

"So--"

"Don't you dare call me that! Stay away from this, I'm not talking to you but my father!" Nomtha is still frozen on the spot, she doesn't know what to do now. People are busy clicking photos and videos. Gugu tries to stop Spha but Sbu holds her back.

"No aunt. Don't stop him he needs to find out the truth. Please don't." Gugu sighs and sits down. Kayise is scared, she's never seen her dear brother this angry.

"Dad, I won't ask you twice, talk!" He chokes him, the guards try to separate the two but Sbu pulls out his gun and shoots in the air. Nomtha rushes to Zodwa and hides her face, she doesn't want her to see the other side of Sbu. She asks the chief maiden to take her back inside the house.

"Sbu don't shoot. You're fueling the fire with this gun of yours please stop!" Nomtha hisses. She realizes it's time she steps in

and save what's left of the royal family's reputation. She rushes to the King who's making gagging sounds as he fails to breathe and gasps for air.

"Spha! Stop!" She shouts but Spha isn't budging. "I will not tell you to stop twice. You're embarrassing the King, people are busy clicking photos, I understand you're angry but this is not how things are done. Let him go, you can all go inside and talk about this. Please." The crown Prince finally lets go of the King's neck.

People are mumbling, some are already posting the pictures on social media. Bab' uMahlangu and Zandi are tensed but Nomtha assures them that it will all be alright. The guards are ordered to contain the crowd, Queen Clementine calls her troops and tells them to abort the mission.

"Hey, how are you feeling?" Nomtha asks Zodwa as she enters her room.

"I'm scared. I've never seen the two brothers so angry, I'm really scared." Zodwa cries. Nomtha pours a glassful of water and makes her drink it.

"I need you to calm down, everything will be fine. I know the Princes are angry, they will calm down as time goes by. Just stay here in your room, okay?" Zodwa nods, Nomtha leaves.

"Tell me the whole truth now or I swear on this throne someone will die today!" Spha snatches the gun from his brother and points it to his father. Clementine panics seeing this side of Spha.

"Son please, I can explain."

"You better start doing so." Sbu stands next to his brother with folded arms waiting for their explanation.

"Okay please put the gun down." Spha obliges. "Yes it's true, Clementine is not your mother." Spha feels a sharp pain deep in his heart, it's as if someone just stabbed him but he holds his tears in. "Your mother, my first wife, Queen Nozizwe is your mother. We were happily married until I decided to marry another woman, Clementine. She was shattered, heartbroken and felt as if my decision meant she was no woman enough to satisfy all my manly needs. She found solace in the arms of my younger brother, the two fell in love and I lost my first love to my brother. People started talking, I didn't want to believe that the two people whom I loved the most could betray me in such a painful way until my wife here Clementine, proved to me that the hearsays were actually the truth by showing me photos I would rather not talk about. I was hurt, I informed the council about all of the happenings, they concluded that both my first wife and my only brother were to be thrown in the river and

left to die as punishment." The King wipes a tear. Spha collapses on the floor and cries while Sbu comforts him.

"Thus not true. This evil wife of yours framed Queen Nozizwe, she wanted to be the only Queen so bad that she couldn't stand Nozizwe's presence! When will you stop believing those fake pictures, brother? Are you that blind that you can not even see the truth that's in front of you?" Gugu is fuming.

"Stop it Gugu, you know very well that it's the truth. She cheated and she deserved to die for betraying the King!" Clementine smirks as she slowly starts showing her true colors. Nomtha has heard enough of this Queen Nozizwe story which she very well knows it's a fabricated story. She comes in the living room giving Clementine a deadly stare that sends chills down the Queen's spine.

"You killed my mother! You didn't even think about me when you approved of that decision, why father? Why?" Spha breaks down as his world comes crumbling down. Nomtha's heart breaks for him.

"Sweetheart, I'm sorry." She hugs him tight and he sobs.

"Why are you sorry? Ever since you came into our lives everything has been falling apart! I thought you loved my brother, I thought you were a good person until I realized you only brought bad luck into our family." Kayise says.

"Kayise! Don't you dare insult sister-in-law, this is not her fault but your parents'!" Sbu hisses.

"If your sister-in-law is really a 'miss-goody-two-shoes' why did she not tell Spha that I was not his mother? She knew about this but she decided to keep quiet." Clementine decides to turn Nomtha's world upside down.

"What?" Spha pulls out of the hug. "You knew about this? How could you hide something so important from me? I trusted you Nomtha, I thought you will always have my back but you betrayed my trust!" The pain gets worse as Spha finds out that Nomtha knew about his mother.

"I can explain, Sph--"

"I don't want to hear it. I expected better from you but you're just like them! Leave me alone and I don't ever want to see you again!" Spha leaves in a huff, Clementine smiles, mission accomplished. The King buries his head in his arms and cries. Sbu and Gugu follow Spha outside but he's already driving out of the compound.

"I told you to stay away from him look at what you've done now. Now, you can leave me in peace." The Queen whispers to Nomtha.

"This is not over Clementine. I will not lose to you, I will rather die. I will be back and you better enjoy all this while it lasts

because when I finally rock your world, then you will realize who you are messing with." Nomtha turns and leaves.

She meets Gugu and Sbu outside who inform her that Spha just left in his car and they are worried about him.

"He needs space and time to process the news. He will come around." With that said she bids them farewell and leave.

SPHA'S POV.

For twenty five years, I lived a lie.....everything was just a lie! How can my father be so cruel? He cheated first, why was he not punished? He never really loved her because if he did, he wouldn't have left her to die in that river. How did she look like? Beautiful, slim or what?

"Mommy!" I scream as I can't keep holding the pain in, my fist lands on the windscreen of my car followed by a bottle of beer which further destroys the windscreen. I open the boot, I realize I have only one beer left. I take the bottle, open it and gulp it down as I get in my car and drive off. I don't know where I'm going but I hope and pray this road leads to a place of no return. I have nothing to live for, it will be better if I die and be with my mother.

I hear a police siren, the car flashes indicating that I should pull over. I do just that. The two men in police uniform approach my car, I wonder what they want from me.

"Good evening Sir. You are driving at the speed above the and your car has blood all over it. What happened here?" The policeman asks.

"I don't know what you're talking about. Leave me alone and let me continue with my journey. Just fuck off!" I shout and attempt to start the car but one of the men grabs my car keys. I violently open the door sending the two men crashing on the ground. "Give me the keys." The man refuses, I punch him hard. The other man trips me and I fall and hit hard on the tarred road. They cuff me, drag me to their car and push me inside.

"You're going to rot in prison for assaulting police officers." The man mutters.

"Prison will be better than this hell I'm living in." I say as I start to feel drowsy. The last time I had beer was five years ago. I never thought my life would take me back to that place. A place with darkness so thick that you can cut it using a knife. A place of demons, where only the most devilish demons survive. A place where feelings don't exist but numbness does. A place where people survive only because their hearts are still pumping blood.....

"Hey you get down!" The police officer orders. They both push me inside the police station. I see their lips moving but I can't hear a thing. Three other police officers join them, they are told to lock me up. But before that, they all take turns to beat me up, I'm still cuffed, I can't defend myself. I welcome their punches and kicks hoping they could take away the pain I'm feeling deep inside. One of the man kicks me on the chest, I fall hard on the floor before I can catch a breath he stomps his foot on my stomach making me cough. They repeatedly kick me on the ribs until I drift away from the land of the living and I'm steps closer to meet my ancestors.

NOMTHA'S POV.

Spha was really angry but why did he talk to me like that? I know I made a mistake by keeping the secret about his mom to myself, he should have given me a chance to explain. Don't I deserve a chance to state my reasons? My phone rings, I wipe my tears, clear my throat and take the call.

"Nomthandazo hello."

"Sister-in-law, I've searched all over the Kingdom but I can't find him. What if something bad happens to him? He left here very angry and I'm afraid he will relapse."

"What do you mean relapse?"

"After the accident, he became an alcohol and drug addict. He acted normal in front of us until one day when he had a seizure. It was hard for him to be himself once again

I'm really scared."

"Okay. Let me try to find him." He ends the call.

Spha? A drug addict? This is serious, I try his phone but it's still switched off. Where are you, Spha? Say something, give me a clue. Please Spha, say something, I need to connect with you. I feel a sharp pain in my chest, I gasp for air as I find it hard to breathe. I'm sweating, I'm losing my breath, I'm still wondering what just happened to me when grandpa appears.

"Listen carefully, he's communicating with you." He says.

"B-b-----" I fail to say something. I can't speak and I'm panting. My lungs are about to give up when grandpa touches my forehead, I feel a shock of electricity all over my body. I'm not familiar with the feeling, it's so intense.

"Get up." He commands in a deep voice. "I won't always be around when you need me. Listen carefully to the voices in

your head, allow yourself to connect spiritually with other people. You can do this. Now go and save him." With that said he disappears. I rush to the bathroom, wash my face which is covered in sweat. I run back to my bedroom put on a pair of jeans, sneakers, a vest and a jacket on top.

"Where are you going?" Mom asks.

"Mom, please borrow me your car I have to rush somewhere." She looks at me puzzled. "Maa, I can drive myself thus why I have a license please where are the keys?" Still she doesn't say a thing. Mom I'm not telling you where I'm going, I'm sorry. I glance at the key holder, grab the first key my hand touches and run outside.

"Sunshine! Nomtha!" Mom calls.

"I will be back before you know it but don't wait up, love you mom." I get in the driver's seat. I hate driving but what choice do I have. I insert the ignition key, the engine roars to life and I drive off.

I'm driving at 240km/h. I know this is against the law, I'm praying and hoping that I don't get stopped by the officers.

"Sister-in-law?" He answers immediately.

"I haven't found him yet but I'm hopeful. Keep your phone with you I might need your help."

"Where are you right now?"

"On my way to the police station."

"Okay. Sure." He drops the call. Knowing him I'm sure he's already driving to the same place I'm headed. I park the car leaving the engine on and run inside.

"Good evening Sir. I'm here to see Sphamandla Tshabangu." I don't know if he's really here but it doesn't hurt to try, right? The man goes through his records and shakes his head. No. Spha is definitely here, I can feel him. I look around, everyone is busy with their work so I take the chance to run to the holding cells. I check all of them, I can't find him but I still feel him. A scarred faced man, grabs my hand, I shudder. I feel every angry emotion in me rising.

"Hello beautiful." He says revealing his brown teeth. How do I keep my temper in check when I'm being tempted like this. I jerk his hand off me, look straight into his eyes.

"Don't test me, idiot!" Some of his inmates laugh but some look scared to even make a sound. I turn to my right side and see my dear Spha lying on the floor almost lifeless and handcuffed. I scream at the officers to unlock the burglar. Two men in

uniform come running to me, they look at each other wondering how I came in.

"Hey, you are breaking the law--"

"Don't you dare tell me about breaking the law! And this, what do you call it? You beat up a defenseless man, leave him to die and have the guts to talk about the law! Do you even know what that term means? Open this damn thing!" I shout.

"We're not in the position to do that." The officer says. I grab him by his collar.

"I don't care if you are in the position to do what or what not! I want you to open this thing before I turn this station upside down and believe me, you all won't like it." The other man tries to hit me with his stick but I also grab him by the collar. "Don't mess with me officers! This is simple, open this damn thing, let me save his life or there's gonna be a hell to pay for all the men in uniform here." I smile at them.

"Who are you? What are you doing? Officer, arrest her!" A man whose uniform looks different from the others, decorated by all sorts of badges orders.

"No! No! No! Station commander or whatever the hell you call yourself no one is arresting anyone. You will unlock this damn thing the easy way or we can do it the hard way if you like. The choice is yours." He looks at me in disbelief. He steps closer to

me, he's about to punch me but I throw his colleagues in his way sending both three men crashing on the floor. I step closer, they all look like they have just seen a ghost. "You see my dear officers, I'm not a violent person but I tend to react in situations like this one." Sbu comes in panting.

"Sister-in-law? Bother?"

"Your brother is lying there cuffed and beaten up, these fools are refusing to unlock---"

"And then? Why are they all lying on the ground?" Sbu squats next to the station commander. "Hey buddy. That man in there is my brother and the crown Prince of this kingdom." All the three officers are horrified by the news. "Let him go and we will forget this ever happened."

Clementine is talking on the phone when she hears sobs from the King's chambers.

"This old fool is crying. I don't know if he's crying for his son or his dear wife? Sometimes I feel like strangling him, I don't even know I managed to have two children with this idiot."

"Because you want to rule the kingdom thus why you have children with him. I think its time we send him to his dear wife."

"Not yet. He has to sign that will and agreement first. It's not him I'm worried about but my son Sbu and that girl. Can you believe that she had a nerve to tell me that this is not over?"

"You should have let us shoot her at once. I don't trust that girl, too. Anyway, has the crown Prince been found?" The two evil friends burst into laughter.

"I'd love to see them try. I'm sure he's dead by now, I gave those officers clear instructions and the barman too."

"You're the boss. Hats off to you Clemza."

"Let's talk later my dear daughter is coming."

Kayise looks at her mother with questioning eyes. Like Sbu, she also doubts her mother in most cases.

"Mom, did you kill Spha's mother?" Kayise asks. Clementine acts surprised and hurt that her daughter thinks that of her. "I asked you a question mother." She raises her eyebrow.

"Kayise, why do you think that I can do something like that? Gugu is lying, I did not frame that woman. She was having an affair with your father's younger brother." She says.

"I hope for your sake, you're telling the truth because if Sbu ever finds out the truth, he won't hesitate to kill you. He can kill for his brother, always remember that mom." Kayise leaves her mother with many questions. She asks herself why her children

are against her all of a sudden. Abruptly, she walks into her walk-in closet, pulls the curtain revealing a full length mirror. She removes her dress leaving only her panties and bra on. An old scary man wearing a black red gown, appears on the mirror, she bows her head.

"Great one." Clementine greets him.

"What's the matter my child that you have decided to offer your body to this old man?"

"My children are starting to doubt me, please help me."

"Bring forth your hands my child." She does, a small container tied with black and red strings lands on her right hand while a double edged sword lands on her left hand. "Find a new born baby, slit its throat using the sword, lick the blood from the sword until it is clean then open the bottle call your children's names and say anything you want them to do for you."

"May you live long great one. Your daughter is grateful." The scary man disappears, Clementine smiles.

At one of the Tshabangu hotels Sbu and Nomtha are watching the doctor as she checks on Spha.

"He's fine just minor injuries and the alcohol. Does he normally drink?" The doctor asks.

"No. He stopped drinking alcohol five years ago."

"That explains why his system couldn't handle the amount of alcohol he consumed. When he wakes up, give him a lot of water and expect him to vomit a lot. Don't give him anything to stop it."

"Okay doctor but how long will it take for him to be fine?"

"Our body systems react differently, at least 48 hours. I will take your leave, take care of him." She exits the room. Sbu sits on the edge of the bed.

"This is what I was worried about."

"He will be fine. Don't worry." Nomtha assures him.

"Sister-in-law, why were those officers lying flat on the floor when I arrived?" Nomtha knew this question was gonna come.

"The floor was kinda wet so they tripped and fell." She bluntly lies to him.

Outside the hotel, the doctor is talking to a man whose face is hidden under a hoodie.

"He's completely out of it but the problem now is he is not alone. His brother and the girl are with him."

"Don't worry about that. Did you give him the injection?" The man asks.

"Yes I did. It will take at least 60 hours for him to wake up. Where is my money?" Asks the doctor.

"Check your phone." The man types something on his phone, the doctor's phone vibrates as a notification pops up on the screen making the lady smile.

INSERT 23

<PAIN. It is inevitable, we can try to dodge it all we can but we will never be able to run away from it. Pain will always be part of us, part of our journeys to our final destinations.>

I don't know who's hurting the most between the two brothers. Prince Sbu looks at his brother who is sweating and shivering. Tears stream down his cheeks.

"But why sister-in-law? Why is life so unfair? Doesn't my brother deserve to be happy? First, Florencia died, it took ages for him to recover now that he's found his new happiness this happens." Sbu sniffles wiping his tears.

"It will be fine Sbu. I need you to go back to the palace, Zodwa and the baby need you." Nomtha can feel it, something is wrong with Zodwa. She's crying.

"How can I live my brother in this state?"

"I'm here I will take care of him. I will keep you updated."

"If you say so. Please don't hesitate to call me." Sbu hugs her and leaves.

"Sbu!" Nomtha calls. "Please don't tell the King about this we have to protect what's left of the royal family reputation." He nods and exits the room.

Zandi is restless. Nomtha left in a hurry but said nothing about where she was going. Bab' uMahlangu and Sne are worried too.

"I don't know why this childish girl always does this to us. Her phone is off, can you believe it dad?" Sne says throwing her phone on the couch after trying to call Nomtha several times.

"I'm worried my child. I don't know what goes on in that head of hers but something tells me to trust her. I hope I won't regret ever trusting my intuition." Her father says as the landline rings. Sne jumps to her feet and picks the receiver.

"Mahlangu residence, hello."

"Sne, it's me. Listen, I found Spha and I need your help. Don't shout, act normal, okay?"

"Okay."

"I need all the information on how to flush out drugs out of the body system." Sne breathes heavily. "Calm down Sis, breathe. No one should know about this and I trust you to keep this secret. I will be switching on my phone send a message and do it fast. Tell mom and dad that I will be sleeping at the hotel. I need to think straight. Goodnight I love you." Nomtha ends the call.

"Who was that?" Zandi asks. She takes her time to calm herself down.

"That was your daughter. She's fine. She said she'll be sleeping at the hotel." She informs her parents who in turn heave a sigh of relief. She quickly types all the info and taps send.

Sbu finds Zodwa sitting alone outside and crying.

"Hey, what's wrong? Why are you crying?" He kneels before her wiping her tears. "What is the matter?" He asks again, she sobs.

"I'm hungry."

"What do you mean you're hungry? I don't understand." He puts his finger under chin tilting her head so they are face to face. "What happened, why haven't you eaten something? You can tell me anything."

"Kayise and the Queen kicked me out of the house and I haven't eaten anything."

Sbu storms into the house fuming. His eyes blazing with rage.

"Clementine! Kayise!" He screams attracting everyone's attention. They all rush to where he is except for the King who is too heartbroken to care about what is happening around him.

"Brother, why are you shouting?" Sbu grabs her by the neck, her eyes pop out as she's choking.

"I love you so very much dear sister but I won't tolerate your attitude towards the mother of my child. That woman is carrying my baby meaning I will do everything to protect my family. Do you understand?" She slightly nods. "Good. Let this be the last time you trouble her." Sbu let's go of her neck, she coughs continuously.

"How dare you Sbu? Do you want to kill my one and only girl?" Clementine is angry.

"Not only her but you too. Mother, I can do anything to protect the people I love and care about even if it means fighting my own mother."

"Are you really gonna choose that lowlife over your own mother----" Sbu is about to slap her but Zodwa stops him.

"Let's get out of here before I do something I won't be proud of." He takes Zodwa's hand and turns to leave. Its visible beneath Sbu's jacket that he's carrying a gun. Clementine swallows hard realizing this.

"Get in." Sbu orders holding the passenger door for her. She gets in and sits but she's scared. Sbu gets in the driver's seat and drives off.

"Please don't be scared of me. I won't harm you and the baby, it's just that I can't stand by and watch my loved ones being I'll treated." He says fixing his gaze on the road.

"I get scared when I see someone losing his temper. My uncle is a very violent man and I haven't gotten over all the beating he did to me."

"I won't ever lay a hand on you, I promise. I'm taking you to a safe place I don't want you and the baby to be stressed."

The Queen is pacing up and down in her room. Things are falling apart and he's losing control over everything. She thought Nomtha's misery was going to bring her peace and joy but no, Sbu won't let her have it easy. She opens a packet of cigars, takes one and lights it. Her mind wanders. Her only son, the son she carried for nine months, a son she endured labour pains for, will always choose someone else over her. How was that possible? It was time she followed the great one's instructions.

"I hate to say this but I told you." Gugu smiles at Clementine who right now wishes for the ground to open up and swallow her. Her son just humiliated her in front of her enemies.

"What do you want? Do you want to kick me while I'm still down? Just do it after all that's the only chance you will ever get." She puffs. Gugu cuts an apple using a kitchen knife.

"It must be hard being the Queen! You are now a chain smoker....oh poor you. There's something I don't get. Why are you the only one who knows about Queen Nozizwe's affair? My mother knew something different, she was supposed to testify on that day but you killed her, right? Because you knew that you were lying to everyone! Why are you so heartless Clementine?"

"I don't know what you are talking about." She attempts to leave but Gugu pulls her back, pins her on the wall and holds a knife to her neck.

"Maybe this will refresh your memory. Why. Did. You. Kill. My. Mother?" The Queen is panting. She tries to scream. "Scream and I will slit your throat open!" Gugu hisses.

"Drop the knife!" Kayise shouts pointing a gun at Gugu. "Drop it or I will shoot." Gugu obliges.

"This is not over Clementine. You have overstayed your welcome in this palace and I will see to it that you get thrown out with nothing. I'm watching you." She acts like she's living the room but swiftly turns, grabs Kayise's neck and hold the knife on her throat. "You think you're a big girl, right? Let's see

if you even know how to use that thing. Shoot her! Point that gun to your evil mother and shoot her." Kayise points the gun with shaky hands. Clementine can feel blood draining from her face. "Shoot or I will kill you! 1.2...."

"Stop! Just stop! What is wrong with all of you? Gugu I didn't expect this from you, do you really want to kill your own family only because you still believe that someone killed our mother in cold blood? Please stop this madness, my son is out there and God knows how he is but all you care for is your stupid revenge!" Rages the King.

A woman is crawling on the road and groaning in agony. She's bleeding heavily and is getting weaker and weaker every passing second. She tries to ask for help but people keep ignoring her. She sits by the road and cries.

"Dear God, I don't know whose sins I'm paying for to deserve all this pain. My whole life I've been crying, suffering but no one came to my rescue. My husband thinks I'm a curse since I'm not able to carry my pregnancies to full term, am I really a curse?"
The woman wails.

Nomtha's heart bleeds for the woman. She heard her prayer, it was not meant for her but she overheard. A tear escapes her eye, she kneels next to the lady.

"All is well. Don't lose hope you're closer to your destination. Keep moving, better days are about to come."

"Who are you? What do you know about my situation? You're just one of those of people who were born with silver spoons in their mouths. You know nothing about the pain I've been through." The woman weeps. Nomtha ignores her statements and touches her stomach, the woman looks on.

"Go home. Your child is just fine. Go, your husband is waiting for you. Smile, you deserve it." The woman checks if she is still bleeding, the bleeding has stopped so are the abdominal pains. She smiles, looks up to thank Nomtha but she's nowhere, she left. She stands up and runs back to her husband.

"Ma'am, someone came here looking Spha." The receptionist informs Nomtha.

"Shit! When was that?"

"About twenty minutes...." Nomtha is already punching the button on the elevator.

In Spha's room, Nobuhle has undressed an unconscious Spha. She removes her own dress leaving only her g-string on. She looks at his body.....her body burns with anticipation by only looking at his broad shoulders, his six pack, his strong arms, everything about Prince Spha can turn any woman on. She sips the champagne, sits on top of him and circles his belly button by her tongue.

"Finally. You and I can enjoy my Prince. Since childhood, I've always dreamed of being in your strong arms, to put my head on your chest, to do anything I want with this yummy body of yours. I want you and I to enjoy this like it's our last day on earth, behave okay?" She's about to kiss him when the door springs open. Before she can blink twice Nomtha grabs her by her hair and throws her on the floor. Nobuhle jumps to her feet

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tries to run for her life but Nomtha is faster than her. A hot slap crosses her face, she screams.

"Shhhhhh.....we are just getting started here. You and I have the whole night to solve this matter once and for all. What were you doing? Were you really going to take advantage of a man who is unconscious?" She slaps her again and again. Nobuhle feels like her whole body is on fire.

"Please don't kill me. Let me go and I will never trouble you and the Prince ever again." Nobuhle begs.

"I will definitely let you go. To meet your forefathers, of course." Hearing this, Nobuhle pees on herself. "What the hell?" Nomtha feels like strangling her but quickly remembers the old man's words. "Clean your mess and get the hell of out here before I lose my temper."

Nobuhle reaches her home panting, she pounds on the door.

"Mom, dad! Open up! Mom! Father!" The door is unlocked, she storms inside sweating and gasping for air. Chief Sokhele leaves the door open, she runs back and closes it.

"And then? Aren't you supposed to be enjoying with the Prince? Why are you here Nobuhle, I paid so much money for you to waste this opportunity like this."

"Dad just stop. That girl....that girl will definitely kill all of us. Let's get out here, let's go dad. I don't want to die because of love."

It's morning and Spha hasn't moved, Nomtha is starting to get worried about him. He's still sweating but the shivering has subsided.

"Spha, my dear Prince, please wake up. Wake up my love." Still he doesn't move. "You're a fighter Spha, you can't give up just like that. I need you, your father needs you and this kingdom too. Wake up, I will try and make everything right." He coughs and vomits at the same time. Nomtha makes him sit up so he doesn't choke. She runs into the bathroom and brings a refuse bag.

"What----" He tries to say something but fails as he keeps vomiting over and over again.

"Come with me to the bathroom." Nomtha helps him to the bathroom, he sits on the toilet seat but says nothing. Nomtha fills the bathtub with warm water, puts in the water a reasonable amount of Epsom salt. "Get in." Spha blankly looks at him. "Get in the tub you will feel better." He obliges. Nomtha flashes a smile at him and exits the bathroom. She calls housekeeping, requests for the cleaning utensils, the cleaner wants to do the cleaning but Nomtha tells her its fine. She cleans the room, changes the bedding and everything looks perfect.

Spha comes out of the bathroom with a towel wrapped around him. He looks at her, tears stream down his face as he remembers all that happened yesterday. Nomtha hugs him tight.

"I'm sorry My Rose, I didn't mean to say all those things to you. Please forgive me."

"It's okay my dear Prince I've forgiven you already."

"But why my mother though? I've been living a lie, I loved that woman as a a mother when they both knew exactly that they killed my mother! I hate them! All of them!" He grabs the centerpiece and it smashes on the wall, the table follows, all the vases, he punches the wall, he's now bleeding. Nomtha is in tears.

"Spha stop! Your mother is not dead!" She blurts out the truth. Spha pauses and turns to her.

"What did you say?" He asks in a low voice.

"Calm down okay?" She hugs him tightly realizing what she just said. "I said that so you could calm down. Yes, I knew that Clementine is not your mother. I'm sorry for not telling you the truth. I had my own reasons, please don't ask what the reasons are. You do trust me, right? I will tell you the whole truth after breakfast." Spha is hot tempered but the touch of his beloved calms him down.

"Yeah I do trust you. I'm just hurt, I don't know if I will ever survive this shock but with you on my side I'm hopeful."

"Get dressed. You have to eat in order to feel better." She calls room service, orders food and waits for Spha.

"Why do I have to drink cranberry juice? I don't like it. Babe, are we on a special diet or something? This is not our usual breakfast." Spha expresses his displeasure.

"I like it so we will have it." He sits down and eats in silence. He's trying very hard to remember what happened after he left the palace but everything is blank.

"What happened to me? Why do I have injuries all over my body?" He finally masters the courage to ask.

"Because you were angry Spha and God knows how many punches you threw. I told you not to drink when you are angry but what did you do? Did you really think the pain was gonna go away after having a couple of beers?" She scolds him. "Spha, I had to do some unethical things because of you. Sbu cried like a baby because of you. You are angry I get it but I'd rather have you broken and crying on my shoulder than to have you behind the bars. You were arrested Spha and God knows where you got all bloody and all."

"You don't get it, do you? I just found out that the woman who gave birth to me is dead. Not only that, I will never be able to see where she was buried, I will never get to connect with my mother. It's easy for you to say because you have always known your real parents." His last statement penetrates Nomtha's

chest as she feels a sharp pain in her heart. Once again our dear Prince is in tears.

"Spha, look at me. Sweetheart, I need you to be strong for me. Be strong for your mother, she won't have anything to live for -- --"

"What are you saying? She's dead already." Nomtha shakes her head.

"Your mother is alive. She didn't die in that river because she's innocent, she never cheated." Spha is shell shocked.

"Babe, are you sure about this?"

"Yes. The first instruction I got from grandpa was to go and save the real Queen who happens to be your mother. I will save her Spha, I don't know when that will be but I promise to bring her back to you." Spha hugs her tight.

"Let's tell everyone about this." He's ecstatic.

"Don't act like a fool Spha. I just told you that your mother is innocent, don't you see something wrong in all this? It means she was framed. Someone is behind this just like someone is behind you getting drunk and drugged."

"What do you mean?"

"You were drugged Spha. Not only once but twice. The barman sold you spiked drinks, the doctor also drugged you. You were

arrested, beaten up and left unconscious. This will be hard to process but your fake mother is behind all of this although she's not the one who paid the doctor to drug you. There is more, Clementine set my father's house on fire when she realized I knew all of her secrets."

"What? She did all of that and I suspected nothing! Sbu said something that day but I dismissed it. I should have known!" Spha paces up and down feeling his temper rising.

"She's evil Spha. She doesn't care about anything all she wants is to sit on that throne. Your father is also under a spell, he's not in his right state of mind."

"I'm going to kill that woman!" He turns to leave and confront Clementine but Nomtha stops her.

"You will do no such thing. We have to let her think that she's winning this war. I want you to bring out your best actor self, and please do kill that role for me. Can you do that?"

"No I can't. You're telling me that my mother is out there alive and kicking, why don't we go and get her and end this drama? I can't pretend babe."

"Please sweetheart, do this for me. I'm still waiting for grandpa to direct me to the Queen. I have no idea where she is or where to even start looking for her. We have so many enemies Spha, we can't afford to act irrational. That woman is capable of

anything Spha. I don't want to find myself or anyone in a pool of blood, I have to bring peace in this kingdom not bloodshed. Also, I don't want your feelings towards your siblings to change. They are innocent souls who happen to be the offspring of the devil."

"Okay. I have nothing against my siblings they also didn't know the truth. How am I supposed to play this acting role?" He sighs.

"Do you trust your brother or your friend?" He nods. "We will need them for this. I'm not sure about Kayise but I feel like Sbu can pull this one off. We won't tell him the whole truth, for now." Someone knocks at the door. "That must be him. Remember, act normal. Come in." Sbu comes in and smiles seeing his brother.

INSERT 24

Zandi and Sne are preparing breakfast. Grandmother graced them with her presence this early in the morning I hope all is well. Bab' uMahlangu is still fast asleep as he worked till late yesterday. They are expanding their business and also planning to invest in SMEs. Who knew that things were going to turn out this way for the UMahlangu family? Their house burning down was a blessing in disguise, they cried in the night but God turned their sorrows into joy in the morning.

"Grandma, what do you want to eat?" Sne asks her.

"I would like something unusual, something American or English." Grandma replies making Zandi and Sne to burst into laughter.

"What did you say grandma? You want English breakfast?" Sne continues to laugh. "Sorry to laugh granny its just that I never thought I'd one day hear you say this. Who taught you these things?" Snegugu teases.

"I can still use this stick of mine to shut that mouth of yours. My darling granddaughter taught me, she's not selfish like you. Ever since you started working you did not even one day think about me, not even a penny from you." Granny complains.

"Grandma, what will you with all the money my father sends to you on daily basis? Stop being greedy grandma, be grateful."

"Sne stop troubling your grandmother. She's an elder show some respect to her." MaNkonjeni reprimands her daughter.

"Sorry grandma but I was saying the truth. English/American breakfast coming up." Sne laughs once again. Bab' uMahlangu comes in wearing his morning gown.

"Zandi darling, bring me coffee please." He yawns. "Ah ah, Maa what are you doing here this early in the morning? Is everything alright back home." He asks, surprised to see his mother who came unannounced.

"Hello to you too my son. Is your business more important than your mother? You used to call me everyday but now you don't do that anymore. Do I also have to make an appointment to talk to my own son?" Grandma cries.

"Mother please stop exaggerating I called you two days back, you asked for money again. I sent you the amount you asked for. What more do you want from me mother?" Her son is getting annoyed. She's been demanding a lot lately.

"You didn't give me a penny from the lobola money the royal family paid for Nomthandazo. Since when are you this stingy? Huh?"

"Mother, Princess is my daughter and that money is mine. I will spend that money anyhow I deem fit. Since you brought my stinginess up, since when are you this greedy Maa? You used to

be grateful when I used to only afford a few things but now you want me to buy the whole world for you."

"I want money too. My daughter can not be working 7 to 5 whilst her brother earns a lot of money per hour. I raised you so you could raise your siblings."

"Not to be rude grandma but I think that daughter of yours is a spoiled brat. I mean me, mom, dad and Nomtha all go to work everyday but we are not complaining now we have to fend for a grown up woman? Hayi kahleni-bo ningazodlala ngathi! (No man, stop taking advantage of other people). Maybe you shouldn't have let her drop out of school, we went to school, it wasn't easy or funny but we pulled through." Sne says serving her grandmother and father breakfast. Zandi is quiet, she doesn't want to be blamed tomorrow. You know how in-laws relationships can be.

"I'm not hungry." Grandma pushes the plate away.

"Fine. Suit yourself. Nomtha is not here to keep begging you to fill your own stomach and I'm not doing that."

Sne looks outside the window and sees MaNcube outside. She's taking big strides towards their house.

"Oh no! This day can never get worse than this. The world's famous gossip is here. I wonder what news she has for us today." Bab' uMahlangu smiles, amused by Sne's comment.

"Good morning sister-in-law. Brother!" He runs to him and hugs him tight. Spha winces in pain. "Oops! Sorry forgive me brother I got carried away and forgot your injuries"

"Its okay. How are you? I'm sorry for making you cry dude, I totally lost it and I know you were worried about me. Thanks for caring, bro." Tears roll down their cheeks. Spha shakes his head wiping Sbu's tears. "Its okay please stop crying. I'm here now and I'm still breathing." Sbu jumps on him and hugs him once again.

"I love you brother. Despite all the bad things my mother and our father did I still love you like before if not more. Our bond is stronger than this, bro." Nomtha smiles looking at them.

"Brothers for life!" They fist bump smiling at each other.

Nomtha asks where Zodwa is and how the atmosphere was at the palace. Sbu tells them how he found Zodwa crying outside the gate and hungry. Nomtha clenches her jaw, in her mind she's already feeding Clementine's flesh to the vultures. Spha's mind is reeling too. There is silence between the three until Nomtha addresses Sbu.

"Sbu, there is something I have to tell you." Sbu looks up alerted. "Don't panic or start punching the walls I've had to

clean this room twice today. Its about your mother, its deep and I hope you will take this info as the honest man that you are." Nomtha tells him about his mother's involvement in the fire accident which he confesses that he also had his own doubts. He further informs them that he knows about the poison that killed Priscilla.

"What? She killed her own sister?" Spha is astounded.

"Yes but not intentionally. The poison was meant for sister-in-law----"

"And you didn't tell me this because?" Spha fixes his intense gaze at him.

"I'm sorry brother I didn't want to worry you. I confronted her but she denied everything."

"Okay. There is no time for not of you to keep questioning each other." Nomtha steps in. She further tells Sbu some of his mother's wrong doing but omits the Queen Nozizwe part. She also doesn't tell the two brothers what Nobuhle tried to do.

"Why don't we just shoot this woman and save ourselves while we still can?" Sbu fumes.

"No. No one is shooting anyone, no violence Sbu. I need you two to act like this was a film directed by the best. I mean pull off the Will Smith, Idris Elba, Schwarzenegger or Chuck Norris face and do this for me. You will go back to that palace,

apologize to your father, I don't need to remind you why you both have to do this. Before the lousy tabloids start printing false stories, we will have a press conference. I won't be there, this is something you two have to do with the King. The people of this community need to be assured of the stability of this kingdom and seeing you three together will clear their doubts." Nomtha says.

"What about the photos? The ones people clicked? Also, what about Gugu? She will definitely cut someone into pieces and burn that palace if she ever finds out. I thought I was dangerous until I came across the angry Gugu, that aunt of ours is more than crazy." Spha stresses.

"I took care of the photos. They were all deleted so the royal council doesn't have the proof to summon the King or give you guys a warning. You won't say a word to aunt Gugu. She's too hot tempered and like I said before I'm trying to minimize the number of deaths this mission can lead to. Are we all on the same page?" They look at each other then to her and nod.

"Good. I'm going to see my family I will be back in a few hours. Sweetheart, you need to rest and I want to find this water filled jug empty. Sbu, thanks for understanding." She hugs Sbu then Spha who doesn't let her go before stealing a quick kiss.

"How does she do it? I mean she's calm about everything and manages to calm everyone down." Sbu asks his brother after Nomtha has left.

"She's special man, God sent. I don't know what good deeds I did in the past to deserve her but I'm grateful to God and my ancestors for allowing me to be with her. Imagine if she was not here and we got such shocking information about someone, the woman we call mother?"

"That someone could be dancing with his/her forefathers as we speak." They both laugh.

"You know there's something I don't fully understand about her. I found the police officers lying flat on the floor, they were all looking horrified. When I asked she told me the floor was wet so they slipped. She is also not scared of guns. Is sister-in-law violent?" Sbu queries.

"Not really. She has powers Sbu and those protect her all the time. Maybe the officers provoked her." Spha says looking at his brother to see his reaction about this.

"You mean supernatural powers?" Spha nods, Sbu's eyes pop out in shock. "Holy cow! Now, I understand some things and what dad said about her. Well

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I should start taking her warnings serious." The two brothers laugh.

"Good morning Miss Manager." Anthony greets Sne.

"Hi. Are you not supposed to be at work?"

"I'm off today so I thought of coming to see you." She smiles summoning the elevator.

"Okay. What's up? What do you have in mind? Tell me something I wanna hear."

"Can't you wait for us to get to your office, first? Dont be such a turn off. It's too early to be talking about deep stuff and business. I want tea first."

"I'm not a coffeemaker Anthony. You told me that you love the tea prepared by your sweet dear mother, what happened today?"

"My dearest father is back from his trip that means mom was busy. Do you get what I'm saying or should I go deeper." Sne slightly smacks him.

"Ouch! That hurts." They both laugh as he pulls out the chair for her. "You may sit Miss Manager." Sne calls room service before taking a seat.

"I don't take orders from you idiot. Next time don't come here with demands. Have you seen your friend?"

"Nah. I spoke to him over the phone a few minutes ago. Why?"

"Nothing just asking. He's keeping my sister busy, I hate to admit but I miss that crazy sister of mine. I don't like being the only child in the house."

"Maybe you should also find yourself a Prince Edward or you want a 'knight in shining amour'?"

"Tell me if you find a shop where I can buy my Prince William, okay?" She laughs but Anthony looks at her trying to read her mind.

Breakfast is served. They eat their food while discussing Sne's business idea to start her clothing line.

The Queen is busy chatting with her lawyer. The two are drawing the King's will and the contract which they plan to make the King sign without reading it first. The will has a clause which states "If something happens to me and the council sees me unfit to rule my wife Clementine Tshabangu should take

over the throne until our ancestors ordain my son Sphamandla Tshabangu as the King.....". They are both convinced this will work until they see Nomtha parking her scooter just a few metres away from where they are sitting.

"Oh no! Hide those papers quickly. Here comes the demon!" Clementine says through gritted teeth. Nomtha removes her helmet, carefully puts it on the bike and walks towards them.

"Good morning mother-in-law, sir. I'm here to see the King if you permit." She humbly says.

"Why are you being so formal today? Who died and humbled you?" Clementine is surprised.

"I'm always humble its just that I'm allergic to BS that's why I react the way I do." Nomtha calmly says flashing a smile at the Queen who in turn blinks rapidly. Nomtha's eyes have that sparkle that always blind the Queen when their eyes meet.

"Okay. He's inside." Clementine decides not to fight with her lest she awakens the beast in her and get humiliated in front of her lawyer. Nomtha thanks her and leaves.

Kayise is sitting in the living room with her feet on the table when Nomtha comes in. Kayise sees her and scowls. Kayise's hatred for Nomtha seems to be increasing each day the two meet.

"Hi Kayise. I'm looking for the King." She looks at her, says nothing but clicks her tongue instead.

"Hey doll." Gugu comes down the stairs.

"Aunt Gugu how are you?"

"I'm not fine I miss my boys. How's Spha?"

"He's fine, heartbroken yes but, I'm sure he will pull through." Nomtha assures her.

"Thank you for being there for him. You're really a blessing in his life. I heard you are looking for my brother, he's sitting on his throne and only God knows what he's thinking. He's been quiet and didn't have anything to eat since yesterday."

"Thanks aunt. See you later, ciao."

King Melusi is sitting on his throne looking dejected. His skin is pale as if there is no blood flowing in his veins anymore. His eyes red from crying, the only reason he doesn't have tears rolling down his cheeks right now is because he has no more tears left in him. The thought of losing his first son knocks out life from his body. Spha is not only his son but the only thing/person his dear wife left behind for him. He never stopped loving Queen Nozizwe, he was compelled to make that decision in order to lead by example.

"Your Majesty." Nomtha says startling him and bringing him back to where he is. He sighs and wipes his face before saying anything.

"May you live long my daughter." His voice is hoarse. Nomtha stands up and waits for him to grant her permission to sit.

"Have a seat. I know you are disappointed in me as your father-in-law and the King. Please for----" The King folds his hands but Nomtha quickly stops him.

"Please don't apologize. I'm not in the position or status to deserve your apology. I'm not here to question The King or demand explanations but I'm here to apologize if in my attempt to calm everyone down I crossed the line. I apologize, Your Majesty." The King can not stop his tears. He's never come across someone so well cultured and respectful as Nomtha.

"Your Majesty, a King is not supposed to shed tears in front of anyone you never know who your friend is or enemy is. It's okay to shed tears but only behind closed doors." The King smiles with tears on his face as Nomtha's words remind him of his grandfather. A great philosopher he had the opportunity to dine with.

"Spoken like a wise lady that you are. Thank you for reminding that. If I may ask, how are my sons? They are both angry at me and they have since refused to talk to me." The King is ashamed to be asking about his sons' wellbeing from someone else.

"They are fine. I'm sure they will calm down before you know it. It's hard but we can not change the past, can we?" The King shakes his head. "Your Majesty, I'm informed that you haven't had something to eat since yesterday. Why are you venting your frustrations on food? It's not good for your healthy and your sons need you alive." The King smiles. One moment Nomtha reminds him of his grandfather, the other minute she reminds him of Queen Nozizwe. "I will take your leave Your Majesty. Thank you for your time."

"Go well my child."

Chief Sokhele and his wife are scolding Nobuhle for being a coward. Nobuhle tries to explain to them that Nomtha is not a human being. She further tries to explain how she felt when she slapped her but they both don't get the point. There is a knock at the door, they all look at each. Nobuhle remembers that she called her friend over, she runs to open the door but freezes when she comes face to face with the person who almost killed her not so long ago. She can't breathe, she feels air leaving her lungs as her knees buckle down. She's about to collapse on the floor but Nomtha catches her. She carries her to the couch where she makes her lie down. Chief Sokhele and his wife watch this in astonishment.

"You killed my daughter! Why are you even here?" Chief Sokhele tries to act tough but his voice betrays him as it comes out shaky.

"If I wanted her to die I would have thrown her out of the window yesterday but I didn't because her death won't bring me anything. I'm here to talk to you Chief Sokhele, sit down." She pulls a chair and sits. Chief Sokhele's wife senses danger, she runs to the kitchen, takes a knife and tiptoes back to the living room.

"How may we help you?" Chief Sokhele tries to distract Nomtha. His wife is about to stab Nomtha when she raises her hand, Nobuhle's mother doesn't know what hits her as she find herself lying flat on the floor. Chief Sokhele watches in horror.

"I don't play dirty games Mr Sokhele I'm sure you know that by now. Tell your wife to stop what she's trying before something bad happens to her." Mr Sokhele opens his mouth to talk but fails miserably. He's asking himself how did she know what his wife was about to do when she didn't even look behind her.

"Mrs Sokhele stop what you're doing. Come and sit next to your husband I want to talk to the two of you." Mrs Sokhele shamefully picks herself up and sits next to her husband. "I know you paid that doctor to drug Spha. I also know why you did it. One can not love your daughter if you keep forcing things. I hate cowards Mr Sokhele, a real man doesn't attack

from behind. And that stunt you pulled at the function, I'm not happy at all about all of that. You're going to publicly apologize to the King for breaking his trust. You knew about all of that because the King trusted you enough to share his secrets and burdens with you. What you did was wrong and you're going to rectify that mistake of yours." Nomtha blankly looks at him.

"What! No!"

"I won't beg you to do this Mr Sokhele. You have twenty four hours to record a video of your apology and send it to the royal council."

"I won't do that!"

"Try me and you will curse the very same day you came to this earth. Before you mistake this as a threat or blackmail, I don't do all those things my dear chief. Like I said before, I don't play dirty games." Nomtha walks to where Nobuhle is lying. Chief Sokhele's heart skips a beat as his mind races trying to figure out what she's gonna do to his daughter. Nomtha puts her hand on her forehead, she wakes up. "I'm not a bad girl Nobuhle, you don't have to be scared of me. I did that to you because you deserved it. Don't sell yourself that too low, you're a beautiful young girl and you can still rewrite your story. Start afresh, forget all your crazy fantasies, think straight before you completely lose it chasing the person who doesn't love you. Go

back to school, you can do this. Marrying the Prince is not an achievement but empowering yourself with knowledge is."

"Ar- are- you not gonna kill me?" Nobuhle stutters.

"No. I'm not a killer Nobuhle and I don't ever wish to become one. I'm a lady who fell in love with the Prince and will do anything to protect her Prince and the relationship. Think about what I said." Nobuhle nods and thanks her for not hurting her. Nomtha reminds Chief Sokhele about the twenty four hours before leaving.

"Who is this girl?" Chief Sokhele still can not comprehend what just happened.

"Dad, I think you should listen to her. She may have been friendly but her eyes said something different." Nobuhle tries to convince her father.

Bab' uMahlangu's mother is searching everywhere in the kitchen. She thought refusing food was gonna get her what she needed but her son ignored her tantrums. Bab' uMahlangu comes in the house using the back door.

"So now you want to eat?" He stifles a laugh.

"Leave me alone. I'm not your mother anymore. You love your wife and children more than me the woman who raised you to be the man that you are today." She opens the fridge but finds nothing to eat except fruits and fresh milk. She hid everything, she knew her tantrums were not going to last.

"Mother, money has nothing to do with love. I can still give you all the money but hate you. Please don't make everything about money." He tries to reason with her.

"Your sister told me that you make millions in that restaurant." Granny mumbles.

"Grandma, I think you and your daughter watch too many Indian series and you are slowly turning into villains." Nomtha walks in smiling. "What are you even looking for?" She furrows her brows looking at her busy grandma.

"Hello to you too. I'm hungry." Nomtha laughs at her.

"Sit down I will bring you food. Why do you even refuse to eat when you know perfectly well that you will not last an hour without your stomach grumbling?" Grandma pushes her and leaves the kitchen. Nomtha's phone vibrates.

Spha: **Babe, where are you? I slept more than four hours hoping you'd wake me up.**

Nomtha: **Sweetheart, you're not the only who needs my attention. Have you eaten anything?***

Spha: **No. I won't eat until you come back.(sad face emoji)**

Nomtha: **You can't do that. I still have to deal with my grandma who's behaving like a child the same way you are doing. You have to eat. I will be there in less than an hour.**

Spha: **I love you.**

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SIX MONTHS LATER.

The royal family trended for a couple of months, it was not easy to reassure the community that everything was still under control. The Princes did their best at the press conference no one suspected anything and Nomtha was a happy soul. The King later apologized to his sons, confessed that he never stopped his first love. They were both shocked by this, how can one claim to love someone when that very same person approved of the decision made by the royal chiefs when he also had the power to stop that madness? Prince Spha almost lost it but quickly remembered Nomtha's words. Chief Sokhele publicly apologized and also secretly apologized to the King for breaking his trust. Clementine was not happy about this. He needed them fighting against each other not together. She knew that their reconciliation was going to be a hindrance to her devious plans.

Gugu and Kayise had a heated argument which led to Kayise fighting for her life in hospital. Everything turned very ugly when Kayise made a nasty comment about her aunt being single.

"Why did you even come back? You should be in your marital home, having children or whatever shit married people do but here you are trying to control everyone around you. You want all of us to be sad and lonely like you!" Kayise had blurted out. Her statement did not only hurt Gugu but it triggered sad memories she tried so hard to move past them. She looked at Kayise, lips trembling with anger. Sbu and Spha wished to have powers to erase what Kayise had said. They were there, they watched Gugu cry herself day and night, it wasn't easy for her or for them. The King and Clementine froze, they both knew Gugu was not going to let this one slide like she always does when it comes to her family. Spha decided to act but it was too late, Kayise had managed to take Gugu to the darkest world. Spha said something, it was as if he just fueled the fire in her, she clenched her jaws, her eyes burned with unbearable pain, hurt and fury. Before everyone could try and do anything Gugu hit the dining table with her fist.

"Noooooo!" She sent all the serving dishes and ceramic plates crashing on the floor. To say she was red with fury would be an understatement. Judging by the look on her face you'd swear she was about to swallow someone alive. The memory of her husband and a two day old baby lying in a pool of blood was vivid in her mind. How those cruel three men had raped her just two days after giving birth through c-section. Her husband watched helplessly as they took advantage of her. He tried stop

them but that costed him his life, one bullet in the head and he died painfully.

"Where is the safe?" Barked one of the thugs. "Talk bitch!" A slap crossed her face but she remained mute. "This will make you talk!" He had pulled out a knife, it cut through her baby's chest, the baby didn't make any sound and just then she knew that she had lost the two people she genuinely loved and cared for. She couldn't bear the pain as she felt part of her dying with them. She tried to say something but failed as the man pressed her stomach. She lost touch with the real world, that day she died a thousand times.

"What did you say? Kayise, talk!" Kayise was horrified, she knew Gugu was not a softie but the person she was looking at that day was not a human being at all. Gugu's eyes had flames of hurt and anger. "I'm listening?" She said calmly.

"Im- I'm- sorry....." They all didn't realize what actually happened until they saw Kayise lying in a pool of blood. Gugu had stabbed her.

"Kayise! What have you done Gugu?" Clementine almost slapped her but she grabbed her arm and twisted it.

"Say something about my not being married and you will surely die. I'm telling this to all of you, all of you!" She pushed Clementine who fell hard on the floor.

"Aunt, please leave. Go outside or wherever, you and I will talk later for now we have to save Kayise's life. Please." Spha begged her.....

"Aunt Gugu." Kayise says in a low tone.

"What do you want? This time you won't survive--"

"I'm sorry. I didn't know. Please forgive my ignorance, I'm really really sorry about everything I've put you through." Kayise genuinely apologizes.

"Well, I'm not sorry for almost sending to an early grave. You're just a kid Kayise, stay in your lane, okay?" Gugu pinches her cheek.

"Ouch! That hurts." They both laugh. "Can I sit?" Gugu nods. "I think I like you. No, I love you. You are a strong woman I really admire your courage." Kayise smiles shyly.

"You shouldn't be proud of me but your brothers. They are the ones who dragged me out of that dark world, I would be dead by now if it wasn't for them. They know the meaning of family, the real meaning of standing by each other no matter what. They're the true meaning of what my grandfather fought for, unity, love, respect and peace. Thus how a true Tshabangu behaves."

<A blessing delayed is not a blessing denied. The recent turn of events in Snegugu's life are the perfect example of this saying. God let us wait for our orders not because we're less special or of no importance but because ours is a very special order.>

"Are you sure about this? I mean you're about to be the married to the crown Prince what will people say when they see you walking the runaway?" Sne asks her sister.

"Sis, I'm still your little sister. Marrying the Prince or not I will always be me. I don't want to change because I'm about to be part of the royal family."

"I guess she's right. Sis Sne, you don't know how suffocating it is to try and be someone else. I tried and failed miserably. Sbu laughed at me and told me I shouldn't even try because it makes one look ridiculous." Zodwa says rubbing her bump as they all laugh.

"Look at this pregnant one, why are you even standing? Sit down please, I want to enjoy my success without any disturbance. If you start having labour pains right now, I will kill you for ruining my launch." Sne teases Zodwa.

"Listen to her, her madness runs deeper than you can imagine." Nomtha warns Zodwa. "Sis, why do you have to launch today and get married in three days? Honestly, this doesn't make sense to me. Do you want to be a sleepy bride?"

"Not really. After the wedding I want to focus all my energy to my marriage. I don't want to be busy with stuff." She sticks her tongue out like she always does.

"Only if you let your team handle the media because this will only attract media and your wedding will now become a public affair. What did your in-laws say about that? Anthony's father looks like a private person to me."

"They are the ones who made the wedding public by announcing it publicly. They are business people, so this will surely give them the spotlight they are so ever hungry for. I have no problem with journalists. After all I'm photogenic and I love it." They all laugh.

"Talking about being photogenic watch and see how this glowing face and beautiful body of mine make huge profits for your company," Nomtha sarcastically says. "How much am I getting after this launch? You never paid me before that's not fair Sis." She pouts disturbing the make up artist.

"I'm not surprised because grandmother can not be the only greedy person in this family. I'm sure you took after her, what

will you do with all the millions you have in your account? Wait for another crazy Spha's admirer to show up, give you and Spha hard times then you my little sister as a good Samaritan that you are, take the girl to one of the most prestigious and expensive university in the whole world?"

"I want my money into my account or I'm not doing this. Spha can not be missing me while I'm busy only so you can be the next richest young entrepreneur in the world. Speaking of that, what time is it in United States of America? I promised to video call Nobuhle, she sent me an email telling me how hard it is to fit in." She reaches for her tablet.

"Sis No, are you serious about the money?" Zodwa still have a lot to understand when it comes to these two.

"Like a dead man." Sne laughs at her while Zodwa looks at her trying to gauge her reaction.

"And she always say I'm the crazy one." The sisters argue until someone knocks. "Who is this now? I hate disturbances when I'm busy like this. Better be not any of those three men because I won't let them in here." Sbu opens the door and comes in uninvited. "We are more than busy right now please leave." Sne shows him the door.

"Just a few seconds. Come on buddy, I just want to give this to my baby and this to sister-in-law then I will leave." He smiles at

her. He knows his charming smile can get him anything he wants at any given time.

"You have five seconds." Sne says folding her arms. Nomtha and Zodwa stifle their smiles.

"Ummm....sister-in-law brother sent these," he hands her chocolates and sugar free gums. "Baby, here is your pizza and everything else you asked for." He gives Zodwa a paper bag full of edible stuff.

"Thank you. I was starving already." Zodwa opens the pizza box, picks a piece and takes a bite. "Mmmmh.....yummy. Thank you so much my Stallone." She says in between chews.

"Your five seconds are done, leave before I throw you out." Sbu steals a quick kiss and leaves smiling. Just after Sbu leaves, there is a light knock on the door. "Oh no! Who is it now?" Sne opens the door. Its the delivery man who asks her if she's Snegugu, she nods and signs the note. The man gives her flowers and a neatly wrapped box. Sne grins by looking at the parcel only. She knows who sent it. Anthony and Sne started off as gym partners, then friends, later they became business partners and now they are madly in love with each other. Anthony loves her with all her flaws

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he says flaws are what makes us human. They dated for three months before he proposed to her. You won't believe this but yeah, he proposed to her in front of her parents. It was her birthday, her parents surprised her with a huge celebratory party. Anthony asked Nomtha if it would be appropriate to do it, Nomtha gave him a green light. He sang her favorite song 'I'm Your Angel' by Celine Dion and R. Kelly. It was then that we all learned that Anthony chose a wrong profession. The guy has an angelic voice, he sings like those top artists we always see on TV. He knelt before her and asked the big question "Sne, my crazy partner in everything, will you marry me?" She cried before screaming "Yes! Yes!" Her parents were the happiest of them all.

"Let's see the note. I don't care about all the things he sent I just want to see what's written in there." Nomtha tries to snatch the card but Sne playfully slaps her hand.

"I'm still your elder sister you idiot. Anyway, there's nothing written in there." She lies blushing.

"Judging by the way you're blushing, I guess it's one of his naughty messages he always send."

"I guess you're right." Zodwa joins in after finishing the whole large box of pizza.

"Old fool, you seem to be forgetting who I am. I want these papers signed by now! I've been patient enough with you. Sign these damn papers Melusi or I will kill you!" Clementine barks.

"Why do you want to rule my people? My grandfather put his life on the line for this kingdom why should I hand it over to you in a silver platter? Huh?" A hot slap crosses the King's cheek.

"You will sign or your dear sons will bear the full brunt of my anger!" She hisses.

"No I won't. You can kill me if you want to." Clementine realizes that the potion she used to tame the King must have expired. The King used to listen to her but not anymore. Sometimes she questions her powers.

"Okay then don't sign them. Don't blame me for what will happen to your sons!" She leaves in a huff. The King sighs. He hasn't gotten time to read the papers hence the delay. He's been suspicious of her lately.

Clementine goes to her room and locks the door. She kneels besides the bed, retrieves a pot made of mud. It is sealed by a red cloth tied by a black string on it's rim. She unties the string, the pot is as if on fire as the steamy smoke comes out of it. She blows inside the pot, her room turns dark immediately as she chants the scary old man's names. This time its not him who

appears but a even more scary creature with Priscilla's face does.

"I want you to go and whisper to the King, tell him to trust me blindly, blow his brains away, he shouldn't be able to think on his own. I want him to be a useless King who obeys my word, go! Go!" Priscilla's ghost or whatever creature that may be, makes a turn and leaves, Clementine laughs. She returns the pot where she keeps it all the time and goes to the bathroom as she's now sweaty.

"Boss, when are we killing that bitch." Ana asks Kayise who's sitting on the edge of the sofa smoking marijuana. She puffs, exhales and takes a swig of her vodka. "Is everything okay, boss?"

"Yeah. I'm trying to think can you keep quiet for just one second?" Kayise hisses.

"She looks stressed and out of ideas maybe we should do this alone." Aisha whispers.

"And what happens when we get caught? We need her to get us out of jail." Ana tells her.

"Then be ready to wait forever while that witch is busy trending everyday." Aisha shows her frustration.

"I saw on newspaper that the bitch's sister is getting married in three days time. Let's take this opportunity to strike and hit that useless family where it hurts the most. I hate that girl! She took everything that mattered to me, my brothers! Because of her, my brothers slapped me, they no longer have time for me. If I can't have my brothers then she won't have them!" Kayise takes another swig of her vodka. She picks a dart, throws it and it hits the center of the dartboard. "Phew..... Rest in peace Nomthandazo Mahlangu." She smirks.

"But boss, that girl will give us a hard time we can't just show up, guns loaded, pull the trigger and hear screams and cries the next moment. She's a hard but to crack from what people are saying." Aisha voices her doubts.

"Let's see if her fake powers can survive the bullets." Once again she puffs.

"I still think we should not only kill her but the whole family. Let's finish what someone already started when their house burnt down to ashes." Adds Ana.

The venue is packed. Everyone wants to be the first to grab Sne's exclusive collection. Some want to see with their own eyes if Sne, the slay queen have really transformed herself into a designer. Anthony's mom is proud of her daughter-in-law, his father is busy shaking hands with the top businessmen and introducing them to his only son who will take over the business when he finally retires. Aunt Gugu is sitting with her two favorite people, her nephews.

"Boys, what are you hiding from me and everyone else? Don't lie to me." Aunt Gugu questions the Princes.

"Nothing. Why do you say so?" Spha asks, Hus face giving nothing away.

"I'm not a fool Spha. You coming back to the palace, apologizing to your father and the public, behaving as if you've forgiven Clementine. I have eyes and ears, I see how you tense every time she calls any of you son, how quick you try and run away from any conversation that has Clementine in it." She raises her eyebrow.

"You're imagining things MaTsha. We have businesses to run remember. We can't stay at home and listen to whatever you all have to say." Sbu tells her.

"Don't ask for my help if you find yourselves in trouble." She sighs. "When is the function starting?"

"I expected it to have begun by now. I'm missing My Rose so much I can't keep waiting for her to get over with this launch and have her to myself. It's hard to share her with everyone else around us I can not start to imagine what will happen if we have kids." Spha picks a bottle of purified water and takes a sip.

"Someone is really in love. Unfortunately, we also need her so you can't have her only to yourself. Sister-in-law is just....a darling, I think that's why everyone loves and trusts her." Says Sbu attempting to drink beer but quickly remembers the promise he made to Zodwa and his baby.

"You can have a vasectomy and not have children if you don't want children." Gugu suggests.

"No way! I'm the crown Prince and I can not afford not to have children. I love kids I'm just worried she will forget about me and focus her attention to our children." He thoughtfully looks away.

"Stop being a drama queen, bro. Sister-in-law will always love you."

"Hey babe, I really missed you." Spha gives Nomtha a soft peck on the lips.

"I missed you too darling. I don't know why I even agreed to that madness. That was one of the most weirdest and craziest things I will ever do in this lifetime." She lies on the couch with her high heels still on. "The damn shoes are really killing me right now." Spha sits on the couch taking her feet on his laps and helps her remove the shoes.

"You did a great job. I think I shot more pictures than all the journalists combined. You were looking super cute and I'm glad you opted for a natural look makeup. I hate colorful makeup, it makes one look like a clown." He smiles.

"Thank you for supporting me hun. I really appreciate your love and support. Come here." Spha quickly crawls on top of her. Nomtha pulls him closer and French kisses him. "I love you darling."

"I can't wait to marry you, see you in your wedding dress and be the one to take it off later on." He smiles naughtily.

"You're crazy."

"No I'm not. Apparently, it's every man's dream to do that. I can only imagine how fulfilling it is. I don't understand why the ancestors always keep quiet when I need them to say something. This waiting is killing me, we were told we can't get

married until my mom is found but now they are silent about her whereabouts. This is just so....unfair." Spha's phone rings. He checks the caller ID but ignores the call. A few seconds later Nomtha's phone rings.

"Sbu, what's up?" She picks the call.

"Zodwa is in pain I don't know what to do." Sbu is panting.

"Calm down. Take her to the hospital, we will be there in a few minutes."

"Okay. Will she be alright?" He sounds scared.

"Yes. Every woman goes through that in order to bring a life in this world. Hurry." Nomtha drops the call and informs Spha.

"My brother must be panicking right now, let's leave right away." Spha leaps to his feet.

"I need comfy shoes. I will die if I try to wear these once again." Spha gets her the shoes and they leave. Nomtha is still wearing the dress from her sister's exclusive collection.

Once in the car Nomtha calls her mother and informs her. She also calls Sne but no one is answering. There's traffic jam, its around 4 in the afternoon and everyone is trying to rush home. Drivers keep honking in frustration.

At the hospital the doctors are telling Zodwa to push as the baby is coming.

"Ma'am, I will need you to give me one more push. Pushhh!"

"Aaaaaah..... I can't, I feel weak."

"You can do this baby. You're stronger than this my love." Sbu encourages her wiping sweat off her face.

"Aaaaaaaah....."

"There we go." The doctor smiles as the baby finally comes out. He cuts the umbilical cord and gives the baby to Sbu who grins happily.

"It's a boy. My boy." He proudly says looking at his son with tears in his eyes.

"Ma'am, push again please. There's still one more baby to come."

"What? Doctor are you sure?" Sbu can not believe his ears. The scan said she was carrying only one child and this?

"Yes. I thought you knew she was carrying twins. With the advanced technology we have now it's easier to know these things."

"Aaaaaah....." Zodwa screams as the baby forces her to push with too much force. A sound of a baby cry is heard as the

other twin cries. Before the doctor can cut the cord, Zodwa faints. The nurse takes the first baby from Sbu as the doctor hands him the other twin.

"My boys! I'm a father to two boys!" He says shedding tears of joy. He steps closer to Zodwa and kisses her forehead. "Thank you for the wonderful gifts, you just turned me to a proud father of two boys. I will forever be grateful, thank you so so much." Two nurses come in and take the babies out of the delivery room. Sbu is also asked to excuse the doctors as they deal with the placenta.

"Spha, the babies. Something is wrong Spha. Sbu's babies." Nomtha speaks in riddles. She's sweating and looks scared.

"What happened? Why are you scared?" Spha asks as he parks the car at the hospital parking lot. Nomtha quickly gets down and runs inside.

"Sbu! Where are the babies? Where did they take them?" Sbu looks at her surprised.

"How did you know they are twin-----"

"Just tell me where they took the babies." Sbu points to a room at the far end. "No no no! This can not be happening." She runs towards the room, pushes the door but there's no one inside.

"Babe, what's going on?" Spha asks panting.

"I'm late Spha. The babies are gone....."

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"What? Sister-in-law, what are you saying?"

"Babe, what's going on?"

"Sbu, I know this is hard. I know how much you love your babies please be strong for me, for Zodwa and for your babies. Sweetheart, make sure my sister doesn't cancel the wedding. Everything must go on as planned and tell her I love her so much."

"Babe?"

"I love you Spha. Sbu, be strong." With that said she disappears to God knows where leaving the two brothers hurt and confused. Sbu collapses on the floor and let's his tears fall as his world comes crumbling down around him. Everything seems bleak, both the past, present and the future. His mind wanders, he knows he's done so much bad things in the past but did he really deserve such a painful punishment? What was he going to tell the mother of his sons? How does one explains something he doesn't even understand.

"Brother, do I really deserve this? I know I've done so much shit in the past but this---" He fails to finish his sentence as he feels a lump rising in his throat and blocking his voice box. Spha hugs him but says nothing. He's also shocked and seeing his brother like this really breaks his heart.

"I don't know what to say brother but I have a feeling that Nomtha will bring them back. Let's have faith in her. Our ancestors will not let any harm come to your sons, they will be fine." He says more to himself than to his brother.

"Faith brother? What will I tell Zodwa? How do I even start to explain this?" He cries. "What if sister-in-law is wrong? Let's ask the doctors where my sons are." He quickly stands up and leaves the room.

"Doctor, your fellow colleagues took my sons, where are my sons? I want to see them right now." Sbu says looking straight into his eyes.

"The babies were taken for check up. Let me call the doctor who is responsible for that." He dials the number, the person on the other side answers immediately.

"What is this Mr? I got a call to come and assess the newborn babies but I've been waiting here."

"What? What are you saying?"

"What I'm saying is I haven't seen the babies yet. There is no one in this room. Tell your coworkers to be competent some of us have busy schedules to keep waiting." He drops the call.

"And? Where are my sons, doctor?" Sbu barks.

"Im- I'm- I don't know." Sbu grabs him by the collar. He pushes him backwards and pins him on the wall.

"Where. Are. My. Sons?" The doctor is choking, Sbu keeps pressing his hand on his neck.

"Brother stop! I don't think he knows where my nephews are. In fact, I don't think anyone in this hospital knows where they are. Let's go." Spha drags his brother out of the doctor's office. The doctor quickly dials the emergency contact and reports assault.

Zodwa is awake. Sbu looks at her and fakes a smile. Spha rubs the back of his neck feeling uncomfortable.

"My Stallone, where are our sons?" She asks with a broad smile on her face. Sbu's heart breaks into tiny pieces. He literally runs to her and hugs her tight, tears rolling down his cheeks. "Hey, why are you crying?" She pushes him out of the hug.

"Please promise you will be strong, promise me you won't cry or hate me." Sbu looks at her with tears on his face.

"What's going on? Where are my sons Sbu?"

"The truth is I don't know where they are. Sister-in-law spoke in riddles like always and left all of us confused. Our babies are not here, I'm sorry." Zodwa faints.

Nomtha kneels down in middle of the river and calls out to her ancestors.

"(In her Ndebele language) Nina boMahlangu Bomagodonga boNtshangase ngiyانبىزا zinyanya zami ngithi ngikhokheleni kuloluhambo. Ngiyazi aniyikungishiya ngedwa ngilithembile bokhokho nabomkhulu." Suddenly clouds start to gather, a cool breeze hit her bare skin as she keeps calling her ancestors with tears rolling down her cheeks and arms spread. "Khulumani nami boNtshangase ngilalele.... Zoneni ingane ezingakaliboni nelanga?" A thunderous sound followed by a flash of lightning then raindrops surprises everyone in the kingdom. The elders shake their heads, this always happen when great powers are at war.

"Protect us our dear ancestors." An old man cries out. Everyone is still shocked by the sudden rainfall when a big black owl sits on the throne and makes a sound.

"What is going on in my kingdom?" The King kneels before his throne. "Grandfather, what wrong have I done to deserve all this? Tell me my mistakes and I will correct them. Punish me but not my children and my people." The King is shocked. He knows something is about to go horribly wrong like he had predicted when the picture frame fell. He bows his head and pray for protection.

"Yimina ingane yenu khulumani boMahlangu konakelephi? Khulumani nami boNzuza abahle." Nomtha cries her heart out. There is a sudden flash of lightning as Nomtha disappears into the still waters of Umlazi river. Bab' uMahlangu feels a sudden sharp pain in his chest and he cries out.

"Daddy, what's wrong?" He's out of breath and gasping for air.

"Darling what's the matter? Are you feeling sick? Sne bring water please!" Sne runs into the the kitchen, comes out immediately with a glass of water. They try to give him the water but he chokes on it and almost dies.

"Mama what is going on? Please save my father!" Sne is scared.

A traditional seer knocks at the Mahlangu's. Zandi let's him in but is not ready to hear what he's about to say. Sne has never believed anything that has to do with ancestors.

"Bab' uMahlangu is fine. His daughter is trying to tell him something important." The seer smiles at them.

"I don't understand. Which daughter are you talking about?" Sne is confused.

"Please don't tell me they have taken her?" Zandi balances herself using a chair as she suddenly feel weak. The thought of losing her precious daughter knocks life out of her.

"They didn't take her but she's embarking on a dangerous journey. She will need all of you to be strong. You can't lose faith or grow weary because your tears will be her downfall."

"I don't think I understand. Where is my sister going? I'm getting married in three days couldn't the stupid journey wait for my big day?" Snegugu is hurt by the news.

"Watch your tongue young woman lest our ancestors strike you dead right now! You don't take these things lightly only because you know nothing about our traditions and beliefs." The seer reprimands Sne. He takes out a small container of snuff from his pocket. He opens it and makes Bab' uMahlangu exhale it. Bab' uMahlangu coughs as he wakes up.

"My daughter--"

"I expect you of all people to be strong. Your daughter will be fine only if you remain strong for her. She will need all of your strengths as she embarks on this journey. The ancestors have spoken please respect their wishes." The seer walks backwards until he reaches the main door and leaves.

Bab' uMahlangu knows it will be tough for Nomtha but he has to be strong, for her and for his family.

"Father, how can Nomtha do this to me? I'm not getting married until she comes back!" Sne storms out of the room,

Zandi and her husband look at each other. They are both at a loss of words.

Spha parks his car at the palace. Sbu looks at his brother and tears fall afresh. The pain is just unbearable for him. Police officers knock at the royal gate, the guards let them in. The Princes get down the car, they are hoping for good news.

"Have you found my sons?" Sbu runs towards the three officers.

"Officer, arrest him." Orders the Sergeant. "Sbusiso Tshabangu you are under arrest for physically assaulting a doctor." They cuff him, he looks at his brother defeated.

"Officers, I think there's been a mistake here. My brother just lost his newly born sons, he didn't assault the doctor but demanded answers about the whereabouts of his sons. Is it a crime to worry and lose it when you find out that your less than two hours old babies are missing in such a big hospital with all kinds of security?" Spha challenges the law.

"You are used to getting away with everything only because you're royalty but not this time. Officers, take him away!" He orders. Sbu looks at his brother with tears in his eyes.

"Brother, I will be fine. Take care of the mother of my children and don't stop looking for my sons. I love you." Sbu says his goodbyes. They sound like last words of someone who's giving up the fight.

"I will get you out of that place. I'm right behind you, I will have to inform the family first." Spha reassures his younger brother. The guards and the maidens watch in horror as Prince Sbu is dragged to the back of the police van.

"Why are they taking my son away? What did he do?" Clementine asks Spha with a shaky voice. He looks at her, says nothing but walks past her.

"Brothe----" Kayise tries to talk to him but he pushes her away. Gugu can not believe her eyes, she rubs them and looks again but Spha has disappeared. She follows him to where the King is seated, on his throne.

"Tell me son, I know you did not bring any good news for me." The King looks at his son with sorrowful eyes.

"Father

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the good news is your daughter-in-law gave birth to twins." Everyone briefly smiles. "The boys are missing father, I don't know what happened but Nomtha told us something was wrong and the twins were gone. We searched the entire

hospital but we couldn't find them." Aunt Gugu sighs, steps closer to her brother and hugs her.

"Dear nephew, do you suspect anyone? Where is Sbu?" Spha looks down as tears threaten to fall.

"No. I don't have any suspect but I will find out. Sbu has been arrested for physical assault-----"

"What?" Kayise, Gugu and the King are shocked by the news.

"Yes Father. He demanded answers from the doctor, grabbed him by the collar but he did not hit him. I'm sorry for letting you down father." Spha shamefully looks down.

"No need to be ashamed. You may not understand right now but I know this is beyond your physical and mental powers. Go and save your brother." Spha thanks his father and leaves. Aunt Gugu follows him.

Clementine is already talking on the phone giving her friend the latest news.

"I don't know who did this but I really should thank him/her."

"Seems like luck and your Gods are still on your side. Who knew things were going to unfold on their own like this?" Agnes sips her juice.

"But I feel sorry for my son who has been arrested. My poor baby must be really sad. You know I always thought the Royal ancestors were strong and unbeatable but I guess I was wrong. How can they let their very own suffer like this?" Clementine lights her cigar and starts to smoke.

"Their ancestors are really fast asleep. That's if they exist anyway." The two friends burst into a loud laughter. "Clemza, do you think someone with dark powers took the babies? Witches believe that twins work best as the sacrifice."

"I don't know and I don't care. That filthy girl will leave my son alone now that the only thing that brought them together is gone. I can now find a sophisticated and classy wife for my son."

"I think it's too early to celebrate. Where is that witch?" Agnes asks.

"With the other lowlife girl at the hospital I guess."

"Let's hope so. I don't trust that girl and every time she comes back into your life she always come with full force and strength. Make use of this opportunity to get what we have always wanted. Let them cry, play your cards to your chest and they won't know what hit them when they finally get over their grief." Agnes advises her friend.

"You're right friend. It's time to get to the top." Clementine smirks and drops the call.

"Your Majesty, there is fire on the mountain." The great seer says greeting the King.

"I know. What I need right now is a solution. Are my ancestors angry with me? What should be done to appease them?" The King rains questions on him.

"Nothing can be done as the damage has already been done. What has to happen will do so on it's own and only time will tell if everything will be back to normal or not. Your elders have spoken." The seer turns and leaves.

"Sne, my child, you know that your sister is the daughter of the ancestors, right?" Bab' uMahlangu says to an angry Sne. "I don't know why she left suddenly but I'm sure it's important. Nomtha loves you more than anything please don't be angry."

"If she really loves me, she should have waited for my wedding at least! What kind of a sister leaves her only sister alone three days before her big day?" Sne fumes.

"I understand your anger my child but what would you have done if the lives of two innocent newly born were in danger?" Zandi asks coming in Sne's room.

"Speak clearly mama, what are you saying?"

"Zodwa gave birth to twins, the boys went missing before Nomtha and the Prince could reach the hospital. Prince Spha doesn't know what really happened. He said Nomtha was sweating and she's the one who told them that the twins were missing."

"Maybe this is a misunderstanding mom. How can newly born babies vanish into thin air just like that? Where did Nomtha go? Where will she find them if not the police?" Sne is confused.

"No one knows where she went but we all have to pray, hope and have faith that she will bring them back alive. I can not imagine what that innocent girl must be going through right now." Zandi sighs.

"What do I do? Should I postpone the wedding until she returns? I need her to be there mom, she's the only person who understands me and will always hold my hand whenever I'm in doubt." Sne sighs realizing the depth of the matter.

"We are here, we are your parents. Just because we didn't hold your hand before when you fell doesn't mean we don't understand you, we do. We will hold your hand on your big day

and together we will make your sister proud. Remember what she said when your grandfather died that day when you were both supposed to sit for your final exams?"

"Grandfather has run his race it's our turn to take the baton and win this race for him and for all of us." She faintly smiles remembering that day.

"Mr officer, please I'm begging you in the name of my great grandfather to release my brother. He did nothing wrong, we all get frustrated at some point in time." Spha begs the Sergeant.

"He broke the law, he will face the full wrath of it." Sergeant says, Gugu grabs him by the collar.

"We have been here for more than an hour begging and worshipping you. Release my niece or you want us to do this the wrong way?" Gugu says through gritted teeth. Other officers point guns at her, she laughs. "You are all so pathetic! Do you really think I'm scared of these small pistols? I've seen worse." She grabs his neck and presses harder. Spha pulls a chair and sits with his legs crossed.

"Talk to your relative or we will shoot." One of the officers say.

"Go ahead Mister." Spha smiles tapping her fingers on the desk.

"Let him go or we'll shoot---" The officer doesn't know what hit him when he finds himself lying flat on the floor, Spha standing on top of him, pointing a gun.

"Have you ever heard of someone who got away with murder? Not only that, have you seen a criminal who has a cute face like mine, who outsmarted the FBI not once, not twice but five times? I'm sure you know what they say about family, right?" The officer nods. "Good. Now can we all talk about my brother and his missing sons?" They all nod including the commander in Chief.

"We'll release him on bail." Says the commander.

"You don't understand, do you? My brother is only 25 years old, he cannot have a criminal record." Spha smiles wiping a gun. His smile sends chills down their spines. "You see we are from the royal family, not only that. I'm the crown Prince of this Kingdom, she's the Princess, my brother is the Prince, you know what that means, right?"

"Yes Sir." The commander in chief swallows hard. "Officers, release the Prince. I apologize on behalf of all of my colleagues. The man who reported the crime did not inform us of his status."

"Fine. Tear that docket, after that I want to open a case of my missing nephews." He tears the docket and takes the statement for missing newly born babies. Sbu comes out rubbing his wrists and boiling with fury.

"Let me tell you this now so we won't have a problem when we meet at the crossroads. I won't sit idle and wait for you to bring back my sons, I am a Tshabangu, I fight fire with fire, I can swim through the deep still waters of any river for my family. The point is, I'm going to find my sons with or without you. If we meet somewhere and you try to get in my way I will have no choice but to eliminate you and your colleagues." Sbu gives them a daring stare.

"That's the spirit dear nephew. Let's go turn that hospital outside down." Gugu says, hugs the boys and winks to the sergeant before exiting.

INSERT 27

THREE DAYS LATER.

Spha is woken up by a bad dream. He's panting, sweating and his throat is dry. He reaches for a glass of water, the images of his dream vividly flash in his mind. He quickly gets down the bed and runs to the throne.

"Great grandfather, I know you promised to protect My Rose, please don't let anything bad happen to her. I won't be able to live without her, bring her back to me alive and unharmed. I trust you to protect her and my nephews." He wipes his sweat. His father is shocked to find him kneeling before the throne.

"Is everything okay son?" He asks, alerted.

"I had a bad dream. I saw Nomtha fighting with the crocodiles, the fight was intense and the water became blood."

"She's a strong and a special girl, a chosen one. I'm sure she will be victorious." The King comforts his son.

"But why are you awake at this this time father?"

"I also had a bad dream. My father was really angry at me, my mother stood next to him, looked at me and shed tears. I'm scared son, I don't know what is it that I did wrong. Why are they all angry with me? Did I perhaps do something wrong?"

The King asks his son. Spha almost tells him that he did the wrong thing letting those people throw his mother into the river but quickly remembers Nomtha's words.

"No father. Please don't stress yourself, our ancestors will make everything right. We are all worried I guess that's why we're having these dreams. I'm also scared father, the thought of Nomtha not coming back kills me each and every second. What if---"

"She wouldn't want you to feel like that. Be strong and keep faith, she will be back. Our traditional seers are trying to connect with her but I doubt they will be able to do that."

"I also don't think they will be able to. There's only one person who can connect with her, her father."

"Maybe we should ask him to do that for us. I can't help but feel...threatened." The King suggests.

"Not today. Today his daughter is getting married and Nomtha wouldn't want us to disturb her sister's big day. She gave me clear orders to make sure that the wedding goes on smoothly."

"Okay son. Don't let us down, all the best."

Still swimming in the river Nomtha gets stuck on the rock.

"Damn this dress." She mutters. She tries to free herself but just then she senses company. She sees a beautiful girl with long curly hair. She's beautiful, looks like an angel but has negative strength, Nomtha can feel all this. The beautiful angel smiles at her, Nomtha starts to hear voices "run, run, run!" but how is she going to run when her dress is stuck. The beautiful girl comes closer to her tries to touch her face but Nomtha pushes her hand away. The angel slaps her hard, she feels dizzy. "Run! Run!" The voices keep getting louder and echoing in her head. The beautiful angel rolls her eyes, her eyes ignite fire, once again she tries to grab Nomtha's hand but Nomtha raises her hand pushing the beautiful angel a few meters away. Nomtha looks at the beautiful girl and realizes she's not human but a mermaid. She blinks rapidly, a few seconds later Nomtha is surrounded by many of these beautiful girls. She tries to fight them but they are stronger together, they finally grab her and swim away with her until they meet with a crocodile. The mermaids let Nomtha go as the crocodile quickly approaches, mouth wide open and ready to bite. Nomtha closes her eyes, the crocodile pushes her aside and an intense fight with the mermaids breaks out. "Run! Go! You're one step closer to the shore, run!" Nomtha looks at the two species still fighting, she thanks the crocodile, wishes it luck and swims away.

"I won't get married mom. Until Nomtha comes back and helps me wear this dress, I won't, I won't get married!" Sne cries.

"My baby, have you taken your time to think of what your sister must be going through right now? She's fighting for the innocent lives, how do you think she will feel when she comes back and realizes we all stopped living in her absence?"

MaNkonjeni tries to reason with her daughter but Sne isn't budging. Spha, Sbu, and Zodwa knocks on her bedroom door and come in.

"Hey buddy! I hate to see you crying." Sbu wipes her tears. "It's your wedding day, smile."

"It's your fault. I told you not to ruin my day but what did you do? You went ahead and gave birth, not only that you took my sister away from me. What do you want, huh? Is it not enough that we took in as one of us?" Sne lashes out at Zodwa. Tears start rolling down Zodwa's cheeks.

"Snegugu! Stop being selfish, just stop! Do you remember when you went out drinking, Nomtha didn't think twice before coming to your rescue. Why do you always care about yourself only? Have you tried to put yourself into Zodwa and Sbu's shoes to understand what they might be feeling right now? You have never carried a child nine months, endure labour pains,

hold your son for a few seconds and that's it! You don't know how it feels to lose someone you love dearly. My brother and Zodwa are here to support you but you're putting the blame on them, who do we blame for the disappearance of my nephews then? Be reasonable, not everything is always about you. You will get married today that's it!" Spha is annoyed by Sne's behavior.

"Calm down brother. Buddy, I understand your frustrations but what you said to my baby was uncalled for. I expected better from you. Apologize to her and we will go further with this discussion." Sbu decides to be a peace broker.

"I'm sorry. It's just that---"

"No. That's not how it's done. You make a mistake, you apologize. Don't justify your actions because your apology will then be meaningless. Okay, we are here to support you. I know we don't even come closer to equaling sister-in-law but I think our presence here will make a difference. Sister-in-law is fighting for my sons, I will also make sure that you get married even if I have to drag you down that aisle. Wipe your tears, be a strong girl, Nomtha is always with you, visible or invisible." Sbu hugs his buddy.

"Okay, now that this is settled I'm going to help my friend dress up. Remember, be strong, I also miss my babe but I know she needs our strength not tears and uncertainty." Spha pats Sne's back and exits the room.

"It's time to start getting dressed or you will be late like all the brides in history." Zandi says, Sne faintly smiles.

People are happy despite everything. Bab' uMahlangu is trying his best not to break down. He can feel what danger lies ahead of his daughter. Even the hazy sunshine is testifying to this. Sne's grandmother is the happiest of them all as Anthony gave her a large amount of money. Soft music is playing in the background, maidens are dressed beautifully. The bachelors too, everyone is dressed to kill. The wedding colors are navy blue, blush and rose gold. We all know how the bride loves glitz and glamour.

"Dude, you need to get dressed or you will be late for your own wedding. Do you want to be the first groom to be late for his own wedding?" Spha brings Anthony back to reality.

"I'm scared, dawg. She sent me a message telling me she's not getting married until her sister comes back. What if she leaves me on the altar?" Anthony confesses his fears.

"She won't. I just spoke to her about that. It's hard for all of us to play happy when we know perfectly well that My Rose is still out there fighting for all of us. I understand how Sne feels but then, postponing a wedding when everything is set and done always bring bad luck. Let's get you dressed, go out there, smile

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exchange your vows and kiss your bride. I will be standing right next to you all the time." Spha reassures him.

"When did you become this strong and positive?" Anthony asks, eyebrows raised.

"When I met a special selfless girl who is always ready to fight for others, to see everyone else smiling even if it means giving them her own smile. One day you will understand, man." He pats his friend's shoulder. The bridegrooms are ready in their navy blue suits, so are the bridesmaids in their rose gold dresses.

"Ntshangase, the rain Queen of blessings." An old lady bows her head standing in front of Nomtha.

"No no no! Please don't do that. You're an elder to me, you don't have to worship me." Nomtha helps her to stand up.

"It's our culture and tradition to respect our Queens. You're not just a girl with strong wits to fight for justice. Allow me to receive your blessings, please." The old lady begs.

"Fine. I will bless you but don't feel the need to worship me. May all your wishes come true." Nomtha puts her hand on the

old woman's head. "What are you doing in this forest all alone? Are you not afraid of the wild animals?" Nomtha asks her.

"I guess the animals are afraid of me not the other way around. Follow me, if you may, I have a message for you." The old lady turns walks deeper into the forest. They walk for about an hour before reaching a secluded place. There is a hut built in this place, it looks old and by the look of it, it can fall anytime.

"You stay here?" Nomtha asks.

"Yes. Come in." Inside the hut its smoky and smelly. There are several mud bowls with herbs in them, a number of containers with colorful water, on the other side there are blankets neatly packed by the corner. "You can't rest here. You have to change your clothes and continue walking. Be quick or you'll find them dead. Here, take these clothes and dress like a rain Queen of blessings that you are." Nomtha takes the clothes and puts them on. The old lady hands her a necklace. "Keep it safe, it will always guide you. I would have given you a knife, a spear or any sharp object but I know you don't need all those. Be careful, this forest is evil. Not everything you see out there is real. Always remember why you are out here. Safe journey My Queen." She bows her head.

"Thank you. I will always remember what you did for me." Nomtha says smiling. She turns and exits the hut.

"Are you ready to say I do?" Sne looks at her as tears roll afresh. "Please stop crying. Sis Nomtha wants you to be happy. Please be happy for her. Remember what the elders said, our tears will only weaken her. Be strong, it will all be fine." Zodwa comforts her.

"How are you coping without your sons? I'm sorry for my bitchy attitude earlier." Sne faintly smiles.

"No need to apologize, I understand how you feel. I don't know if I'm coping at all but with Sbu always comforting me and the faith I have in Sis No, I will keep smiling. Sis No always says that God never fails and I'm sure He won't fail us." Zodwa smiles hiding her tears.

"I hope and pray that they all return in one piece. My sister is my life, my everything." The two hug.

Anthony walks down the aisle with his father who's grinning like he's the one getting married all over again. Photographers keep clicking photos. The groom anxiously waits for his bride. Ed Sheraan's perfect plays on the background.

"Ready?" Bab' uMahlangu asks his daughter, she nods. "Smile. Your dear sister will love to see your smile on all your wedding pictures." He clutches his daughter's hand as they walk on the white carpet.

ANTHONY'S P.O.V

I always knew that she is beautiful like an angel but today she looks perfect in white. Seeing her walk down the isle brought tears to my eyes, I never thought I would one day fall in love, let alone get married. Her elegant custom made gown perfectly fits her. Now I understand why the elders say a groom can not see the bride's dress before the wedding. This is really worthy waiting for. Bab' uMahlangu steps closer, hugs me and hand over his daughter to me.

"My daughters are my wealth. No money can ever amount to them, take care of my baby and always make her happy." He pats my shoulder and leaves wiping his tears.

The pastor addresses us, I'm not really into these scripture things. I focus my attention on this beautiful lady who is about to be my wife. She looks awesome, I can't wait to remove this veil, look deep into her big round eyes and finally kiss my wife.

"Anthony Collins, do you take Snegugu Primrose UMahlangu to be your lawfully wedded wife, to love and to cherish all the times?" The pastor asks, I smile.

"I do."

"Snegugu Primrose UMahlangu, do you take Anthony Peterson Jr. Collins to be your lawfully wedded husband, to respect and submit yourself to him all the times?"

"I do." The Pastor orders me to remove her veil, say our vows as we put on our rings. I lift up the veil, Sne is a mess, she's crying. I retrieve a handkerchief from my trousers back pocket and wipe her face. I pull her to me and strokes her back.

"I'm sorry." These are the only words I manage to say as I feel a painful lump rising in my throat. I can not begin to imagine what she must be going through right now. She finally calms down and faintly smiles.

"You may kiss the bride." I look deep into her teary eyes, lean closer as our lips meet and our tongues entangle. People cheer, ululate, whistle as we deepen the kiss. I pull put of the kiss still wanting more but I decide to save that for later.

After the photoshoot, it's time to change our outfits. Sne can't wait to put on her custom made Ndebele outfit with a Western touch.

"Hey man, congratulations." Spha hugs me tight. I know this is hard for him.

"Thanks man. Today you proved to me that you will always have my back and you're not just a friend but a brother too." All of a sudden I'm feeling emotionally.

Clementine and her friend are having brunch in one of the top restaurants.

"Clemza, what's the plan?" Agnes asks chewing on her omelette.

"That foolish king will sign the papers, either the easy way or the hard way."

"What about his sons? You know they won't sit back and let you take over the throne."

"That's where you come in. In case we do this the hard way, we will need a number of boys to kidnap both my dear sons and that crazy aunt of theirs. No one should be hurt, just keep them somewhere far away from the proceedings. I will be the King when they finally return."

"Your sons are gangsters, friend. This is the truth we both don't want to accept. Prince Spha might be the quiet one but I think

he is the most dangerous. Did you see what he did to his father the other day? Imagine what could have happened if that witch was not around, I don't think kidnapping them is a good idea as that will be like declaring an open war."

"I don't care Aggie. War or not, I will sit on that throne. We need to act fast. I don't know what's going on but I feel like they are working on something secretly. Their calmness about everything unsettles me. I mean Sbu's sons are missing but as we speak right now, they are busy celebrating at the wedding. Something is fishy."

"I heard some of the elders saying that what happened three days back was a sign from the ancestors. I mean the sudden thunderstorms, earthquake and all those things. Don't you think everyone knows something we don't."

"Maybe you're right. We will have to find out what it is that they are all hiding."

In the jungle. A lion roars, its sound echoes on the trees. Nomtha looks around and runs. The old lady told her about dangerous animals in this jungle. She sees elephants crossing the path, she waits for them. A sudden pang on her chest brings her down on her knees. She closes her eyes and listens.

"Sne!" She screams startling the elephants. They all look alerted as they change their direction and walk towards her. Her heart pounds but she keeps still. "I will have to somehow communicate with my people, my sister is in danger." She whispers to herself. The elephants surround her, she almost screams but that will be inviting trouble for herself. She stays put until the elephants decide to leave her alone. She silently prays thanking God and her ancestors.

"Spha, sweetheart, my sister is in danger please don't let anything bad happen to her. Go and save her and Zodwa." She whispers hoping and praying that Spha will get the message before it's too late.

Zandi comes out the room panting and scared. She is running towards her husband who is chatting with Mr Collins when she bumps into the crown Prince.

"Ma'am, is everything okay?" Spha holds her so she doesn't fall. She looks terrified. "What's the matter Maa?"

"It's Sne. She's not in her room." She finally manages to say.

"What do you mean?"

"I saw three people in balaclavas taking my daughter and Zodwa away."

"What?" Sbu joins them. "Did I hear correctly?"

"Let's go and find out. Maa, keep calm we will solve this."

Prince Spha and Prince Sbu rush to the room where Sne was. Sbu violently pushes the door, the room is empty and it looks like there was some kind of fighting as the room looks messy. Prince Spha realizes he has failed his Rose, she warned him, she told him to make sure everything goes smoothly.

"I've failed her brother. She will never forgive me for this."

"There's no need to be crying right now brother. We have to fight, fight for sister-in-law as she's doing for all of us. Let's go and find the mother of my sons and my friend. Whoever did this will surely curse the day they were born--"

"What's going on? Spha, Sbu?" Anthony storms in the room.

"Zodwa and your wife have been kidnapped."

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Clementine is having a meeting with Chief Sokhele, Chief Mseleku and the other chiefs except for Chief Mthunzi. They're discussing the way forward of the Kingdom as strange things keep happening.

"I think we should wait for the ancestors to communicate with us then we will decide what to do." Mseleku suggests.

"Our people are scared, they need to be assured that everything is fine. First, the royal family twins went missing, now their mother and that other girl are missing. Don't you see that something is wrong and we have to act fast." Says Mr Sokhele.

"Gentleman, we can't continue like this. This kingdom needs a strong King, someone who will get to the bottom of all this. Don't you think we should appoint someone to be a regent since the King have refused to talk to any of us?" Clementine suggests.

"I guess your are right My Queen." One of the Chiefs agrees with the Queen. Chief Sokhele shakes his head.

"We can't possibly do that. No one is supposed to sit on that throne when the King is still alive, that's abomination. Our ancestors will surely wipe out the entire kingdom if that

happens. We can not disrespect our traditions like that."
Argues Chief Sokhele.

"Mr Sokhele, the entire kingdom is already in turmoil. Can't you see that's a sign from above?" Questions Clementine.

"What do you think we should do My Queen? Do you have anyone in mind who can step in and stir this ship to the right direction?" Clementine smiles. She's been waiting for this question for a very long time now.

"According to tradition, my son Spha is the one who should step in but tradition doesn't allow him to do that since he's not marrier yet. I was thinking maybe I should step in, hold down the fort until my husband is ready to take back his throne and his duties."

"Darling, I can't lose all my daughters. Why is God punishing me like this?" Zandi wails.

"Please stop crying. Our daughters will come back, God will never let let them vanish just like that. I feel like someone is trying to sabotage my family. I hope its not that evil Queen because if that's the case, I will definitely kill her." Bab' uMahlangu consoles her.

"Why would she kidnap Sne? She hates Nomtha not Sne. What if its one of Anthony's crazy exes who took my daughter?" Zandi says remembering what she usually see in the movies.

"I doubt that. If it was one of his exes, they would have taken Sne alone not Zodwa." Bab' uMahlangu feels that his daughter is trying to tell him something. "Wipe your tears, we have a crowd to control. My baby will be back and this wedding will continue as planned." He reassures her.

"They already know that the bride is missing, it was announced in the news that Sne and Zodwa are missing. I don't know what to keep telling those people out there." Zandi sighs.

"Stay here. I will handle that."

Spha, Gugu, Sbu and Anthony follow the suspicious car. Someone gave them information about the certain car.

"I swear to God and everything that's dear to me, if I find them with those people someone is going to die." Prince Spha says sternly looking to the black SUV in front of them.

"I think they've seen us, they are speeding up." Anthony says with a shaky voice wondering why would someone kidnap his wife on their weeding day.

"Dear nephew, let's do what we're best known for. It's now or never." Gugu instructs.

"I agree with her. I have two guns, I know my dear aunt have one, what about you brother?" Sbu turns to his brother.

"I don't carry a gun around. I always use the enemy's weapon." He briefly looks to Sbu then to Gugu, giving them a sign. He changes gears, puts his feet on the accelerator and speeds off overtaking three vehicles in one go.

"I'm scared. Please don't shoot, what if those people are dangerous or innocent?" Anthony is shaking.

"Dangerous is our middle name and please stop annoying me by being a softie, be a man Anthony. Your wife needs a man not another woman." Gugu scolds him. Once again Spha speeds on the road, the black SUV driver tries to keep the distance but before she can blink twice, Prince Spha is parking in front of her car. Sbu looks around, its a quiet place away from people. He gives Gugu and Spha a sign and they jump out of the car leaving the engine on. Anthony stays behind, he's never been fond of violence, especially guns. The SUV driver freezes as he watches them approaching.

"Guys, we have to save ourselves or we are dead." She tells her friends.

"But they're---" Prince Spha knocks on the windscreen. Kayise can feel air leaving her lungs only by looking straight into the eyes of his brother. She's no stranger to what he's capable of. Gugu shoots the passenger door and opens it.

"Get down! Now!" Ana reaches for her gun but Gugu is faster than her as she already has her gun on her head. They all get down the car, hands raised but still wearing their balaclavas.

"I'm going to ask you this only once. Where are they?" Spha grabs Kayise by her neck, she chokes as he presses harder. Kayise pulls her own gun but Spha disarms her in an instant. "I asked you a damn question!" Spha barks, Kayise pees on herself.

"You all better start talking or I will shoot!" Gugu is about to pull the trigger when they hear a banging sound coming from the boot. "Open the boot!" Ana walks to the back of the car and opens it. Zodwa and Sne make mumbling sounds trying to free themselves. Gugu and Sbu pull the trigger, the tarred road turns blood in a flash. Sbu unties them, they both hug him tight crying. Anthony runs to join them.

"I'm so sorry for failing to protect you. I'm sorry my love," Sbu kisses Zodwa's forehead. "Buddy, please forgive me." He also kisses the hysterical Sne. Sne pulls out of the hug and runs to Anthony's open arms.

"I'm so sorry my love. Please forgive me." He hugs her, they are both in tears.

"Before I kill you, I want to see your face." Spha steps closer to Kayise.

"Why waste time, remember we still have a wedding to attend and the bride is here with us." Gugu is about to pull the trigger but Spha stands in between of her and the girl(Kayise) with a hidden face.

"Stop! Something tells me not to kill this girl, I feel somehow connected to her." Spha turns to her. "Kayise?" Kayise bursts into tears.

"What? Who?" Sbu can not believe his ears. He charges towards the girl, violently unmask her. Spha is dumbfounded, so is Sne and Zodwa but not Sbu and Gugu. Kayise tries to say something but her brother Spha slaps her hard she almost falls.

"You know what? You and I will have a serious conversation after I accomplish my mission. Sbu, take her to that place. Sbu will use the black SUV. Aunt Gugu and the rest of you we are going back to finish what we started." If a stare could kill, Kayise would be dead by now. "Don't do anything to her, I will personally deal with her." Prince Spha gets into the car and drives back to the wedding venue as Sbu speeds off to the secret place.

Dark forests! Have you ever heard of any place that is always dark despite the time. Be it noon, morning, evening or night, this forest is always dark, darker than the night itself. Nomtha walks past the playing rabbits as she continues with her journey. She suddenly feels the presence of a strong dark power, she rolls her eyes and listens closely. She hears baby cries and smiles to herself. She walks towards the only light that is visible in this darkness. As she walks closer, the sounds get louder. She's stopped dead in her tracks when she sees old people with grey hairs singing and walking around the fire, naked. There are two babies sitting besides the fire, a cat and an even older lady who keeps force feeding the babies raw meat.

"Eat! Or you will die of hunger." She shoves a big piece of reddish raw meat into one of the kids' mouth. The kid tries to chew but chokes instead. The older lady picks up a cup with pinkish liquid inside and forces the baby to drink. She does the same with the other kid, Nomtha's heart break into pieces. Her heart wants to stop them but her mind reminds her that not everything she encounters in this forest is real. The baby refuses to drink, the old lady takes a rod and whips the baby

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the baby cries in agony.

"Stooooop!" Nomtha screams, all of them stop whatever they are doing and look at her. They all charge towards her, she walks backwards. "Who are you? Why are abusing those babies?" She asks in a low tone.

"Abuse?" They look at each other and laugh out loud. "Who are you? Why are you questioning our ways?" One of the old men tries to grab her hand but she raises her hand and strike all of them.

"Give me those babies and I will leave you alone? They are just kids for crying out loud!" She shouts at them. The two kids look at her, their eyes full of sorrow and pain.

"Leave this place. Go, this is not your fight. Leave those people alone before you invite unnecessary trouble for yourself. Please leave." A voice echoes in her head. She looks at the kids, her heart breaks for them but she has a battle to fight for her people. She turns, the old people try to catch her but she vanishes into the darkness.

Nomtha walks until she feels tired. An old lady appears, offers her water but she declines and continues with her journey.

"Sne, Zodwa, I need a favor from you guys. Please don't tell the elders that Kayise was involved in the kidnapping. I know you hate me and my family by now for ruining your day, please understand that I had no idea that she could stoop so low. I like to believe that she never meant to hurt you two but Nomtha. Everyone knows how much Nomtha loves you Sne and they will always try to hurt her through you. I know my apology will never be accepted but I'm really sorry." Prince Spha pleads with them.

"I have nothing against you brother-in-law but that sister of yours will definitely hear from me. I'm going to teach her a lesson she will never forget." Sne looks away folding her arms.

"I understand your anger. Please let me deal with this, concentrate on your marriage I will surely teach that sister of mine a lesson she will always remember for her entire existence." Spha vows to them.

"I have a question, why would Kayise hate Nomtha so much? To an extent of trying to harm her sister?" Zodwa is still confused.

"I know my sister and I will find out why she did that."

"Fine but don't let her ever show her face in my presence. I don't want to imagine what will happen when I see her. Now leave, I want to change this dress and rest." Sne is really angry.

"Thank you." Spha hugs for the very first time since they met.

"You're going to explain to me what exactly got into your head. Tell me everything, I mean all the details of your shenanigans. Start talking." Spha pulls a chair and sits looking straight into his sister's eyes. To say he beat her to a pulp will be an understatement, he almost killed her. Thanks to Gugu and Sbu who tried their best to put out the fire which was out of control in Spha's heart.

"I'm sorry broth----"

"No! Hell no! Don't fuckin' apologize to me! Tell me everything you did to hurt Nomtha!" He hisses, Sbu and Gugu look on.

"I hired Ana and Aisha to attack her. I was aware that you both love her and I was slowly losing the both----" Spha kicks her on the chest and she falls hard on the floor as she blacks out.

"Brother, you will kill her. Trust me, I'm fuming too but I don't want the blood of my own sister on my hands. Please stop." Sbu talks sense to his brother. Gugu takes Kayise's phone and sends Clementine a message.

Mommy, I'm flying to Zanzibar with my friends just to take my mind off things. I haven't been myself since I lost my brothers to those two witches. I'm sorry for telling you this over the phone. I will call as soon as we land. Love you. She presses send.

"And then? Wassup?" Sbu questions her aunt.

"Taking care of business. No one will be looking for her for a couple of days, I think we should leave her here until she comes to her senses. If we take her with us, I swear on my mother I will definitely squeeze the useless life out of her." Gugu turns and goes to the car.

"Let's go brother. Please calm down, remember what sister-in-law said before leaving." Sbu hugs him tight before locking the door and leaving Kayise lying on the floor.

Nomtha is surrounded by two strange men. They are both holding babies, neatly wrapped in matching blankets. The two men have knives in their hands, she fears for the small babies. "I promised Sbu to bring back his sons and I will do just that." She says inwardly.

"Who are you? What did my people do to you for you to punish them in this painful way?" Nomtha questions them, they laugh.

"You have the guts! Your kingdom is built with our people's blood and you have the nerve to question us? These two royal sons will pay the debt your great grandfathers failed to pay." The other man says.

"They are innocent. Their parents doesn't even know you so why punish innocent people?"

"Because their ancestors wronged us. Ntabakayikhonjwa killed our mothers, sisters, brothers, aunts, and everyone we held dear. Why? Only because he was power hungry!" Barks the other man.

"That's not true. We all know you were the reason there was a war in the first place. You abused your power by exploiting women only because you considered them toys only made to satisfy man's needs! You were wrong, if it wasn't for a woman you were never going to exist in the first place. Did you forget that your mother, aunts and sisters were also women? How do you think those women you assaulted felt? Did you ever think about your children while doing that? Would you have liked it if another man did that to one of your daughters?" Nomtha rains questions on him.

"I did what was best for my kingdom! They liked it, why do you have a problem with that?" The man fires back.

"You're dead already and it's a shame you will never understand. Please, spare the life of these babies they are innocent."

"No! They have to die, the Tshabangu family have to feel what my family felt when they killed my relatives!"

"You are a coward! You left Ntabakayikhonjwa where you came from to try and take advantage of his people! Go back to your

grave, the dead have no share in the land of the living. Put the babies down or I will curse your entire generations to come!" Nomtha challenges him.

"No! Who are you to challenge me? I'm the greatest warrior that ever existed in the entire history!" The man who oppressed his people shouts.

"And I'm the rain Queen, I won't let my people shed tears because of you! I dare you to try!" The two men look at each other and smile. They are about to stab Sbu's sons when Nomtha raises both her hands and strike them with lightning. There's a thunderous sound as they fall down. Back at the Umlazi kingdom, there's a sudden earthquake. Something that last happened when King Melusi was still a young boy.

"My forefathers are trying to say something." He says firmly holding to his chair.

"Shut up Melusi! Earthquakes happen everyday in other countries and you keep saying your forefathers this, your forefathers that..... Just shut the hell up!" Clementine screams at him and immediately sits still.

Nomtha touches the twins but the two men wake up and attempts to strike her. This time she sends them back to their graves.

"It is well boys. Your parents are innocent and I refuse to let you pay a non existing debt. Your great great grandfather fought for your freedom. Let's go home and meet your parents." She picks the other twin, ties him on her back and carries the other in her arms.

Nomtha is woken up by someone shaking her body. She's startled.

"The twins? Who are you?" The man looks familiar but she doesn't remember where she once saw him. "Who are you?" She asks, this time with a calmer voice as she realizes that the twins are sleeping peacefully next to her.

"My name is Nqobimpi Magagula. I found you and these two babies lying in the forest and I brought you to my house. You have been asleep for more than ten hours. My wife thought we should wake you up." Says a man who looks like he's in his early thirties.

"Thank you---" She's about to introduce herself when a chubby baby girl crawls into the room. She looks cute with her tiny teeth. Nomtha looks at her wrists and her mouth goes agape. "Nontando?!" She screams with joy, the bubbly girl also smiles at her.

"How do you know? Who are you young lady?" Nqobi is shocked. Nomtha picks Nontando up and kisses her cheek, she giggles.

"I'm Nomthandazo Mahlangu, a young lady who was the first to hold your daughter in her arms and named her Nontando." Nqobi can not believe that she's the very same girl who brought his only daughter back to life but left without telling them her name.

"You are....you gave my daughter a new life. Sweetheart, come and see this!" He calls out to his wife. Nontando's mother can not believe that Nontando is smiling to a stranger.

"What's going on? What did she give to her that she's smiling like this?" She asks.

"She's the same lady who gave her a second chance to live. The woman at the hospital---"

"Really?" Nontando's mother emotionally hugs Nomtha. "I'm really glad to finally meet you. You don't to know how many times I went back to that spot where you picked us hoping to see you again. Thank you."

"Don't thank me but God. I did nothing, He did. I'm glad to finally meet you Ntando. I never thought we were going to meet again." Ntando smiles and playfully pulls her messy hair.

"Ouch!" Ntando giggles. Nqobi and his wife can not explain their happiness.

"But why were you in that forest with newborn babies? It's a dangerous jungle."

"Life brought me to that jungle. It's a long story, I had to save these twins. Their parents are waiting for me at home. Thank you for everything, I will have to go."

"No you can't just leave like that. Take a bath, bath the twins and eat something before leaving. My husband and my niece will accompany you back to your kingdom." Nomtha refuses telling them how important it is for her to get back soon but they beg her until she finally gives in.

"I don't know how to bath newborn babies, will you help me with that?" Nomtha shyly asks.

"Don't worry my sister will help you with that. We are not rich like the people in your kingdom, we don't have fancy bathrooms or bathing soaps, please do manage these."

Nontando's mother shows Nomtha greenbar soap and an almost torn towel. "If you permit, may I please take the twins with me so they can bath while you also take your bath?"

Nomtha nods with a smile. "Okay. I will send my niece with hot water and all you will need to bath. Just shout if you need anything else." Nqobi exits first followed by his wife.

"Hi. I'm Nombulelo." A lady who could be of same age as Nomtha greets her.

"Hi. I'm Nomthandazo." She smiles. Nombu also smiles revealing her dimples. Nomtha blinks rapidly as she sees someone special and dear to her in this girl. She looks away, tears threatening to fall as she misses Prince Spha.

"Hey are you okay?" Nomtha sniffles.

"Yeah just my sinuses." She lies.

"I'm uneducated so I don't know what you mean by that." Nombulelo innocently says.

"Oh sorry."

After taking a bath Nomtha changes into one of the provided dresses. She feels fresh, her stomach grumbles reminding her of when she last had something to eat. She remembers the twins, she runs outside the hut calling out to Nombulelo.

"The twins, where are they? They haven't had anything to eat since they came to this earth." Nombu points to a hut on the far side. Nomtha runs there, she finds a middle aged woman feeding the other twin while Nontando's mother feeds the other.

"I understood what you said so I figured they might be hungry. We are not giving them anything solid it's goat's milk. My grandmother told me it's good for babies." Nomtha's attention is on this other lady. She looks familiar, she's seen her before.

"Good morning Maa." Nomtha greets the woman but she says nothing in return.

"She can't hear you. She's deaf and dumb." Nontando's mother informs her.

"Who is she? I've seen her before." Nomtha asks.

"I doubt that." Says Beatrice, Nontando's mom. Nomtha turns to the woman.

"Queen Nozizwe, Maa can you hear me?"

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"Maa can you hear me? My Queen?" The twin almost falls from the woman's arms, she's terrified and her body is shaking. Nomtha kneels besides her and takes the baby from her. "Baba kaNontando will you please hold the baby for me?" Nqobi hesitantly takes the twin.

"Nomtha I think you are mistaken this woman can not be your Queen. I've been living with her since I was a boy, when my parents were still alive and before she gave birth to Nombulelo." He says.

"Your father found her lying unconscious on the river bank, right? He tried to speak to her but suddenly she couldn't hear anything nor speak."

"How do you know? Who are you?" They are all shaken and shell shocked.

"She will tell you who I am." Nomtha puts her hand on Queen Nozizwe's forehead, she calms down. "It's me. The girl you always dream of, the one who is supposed to come to your rescue and take you back home where you belong. My Queen your husband needs you, your son yearns for your love, your people are in need of a real mother." Tears roll down Nomtha's cheeks. "You won't understand the pain your son felt when he found out about you. He found out a few months ago, he lost it

and almost lost his life in all of it. Please forgive them and come with me." Queen Nozizwe cries. She can hear Nomtha perfectly well.

"You finally came." After so many years Queen Nozizwe can finally speak. She caresses Nomtha cheeks as tears stream down her face. "You look more beautiful in person than in my dreams." Queen Nozizwe smiles with tears on her face.

"Maa, you can speak? Why were you quiet all these years when I needed answers from you? I asked you so many questions but you kept quiet and just stared at me and now all of a sudden you can hear everything and can talk?" Nombulelo fumes.

"Nombu, I understand your anger but can we give her a chance to explain all this. I'm also shocked like you are." Nqobi tries to calm her down.

"You asked me who I was? Well, I'm not just Nomtha but a special child and also the crown Prince's fiancé. The crown Prince who is the first born of Queen Nozizwe. She did not keep quiet on her will but her ancestors did that to her. She saw things she was not supposed to see in that river when her people left her for the crocodiles to feast on. She's not just a woman your father found by the river bank but a Queen. She was wronged, that very same person who framed her is still killing innocent people. I was given this task by the King's

grandfather, to find the real Queen and bring her back home." Nombulelo exits in a huff.

"This is all too confusing. First you saved my daughter's life, secondly, I find you lying unconscious in the jungle with these babies now this?" Nqobi sighs.

"I understand your confusion. Some things we will understand them as time goes on, some we will never understand. If you think I'm lying about all of this, how did I recognize your daughter? Not only that, she recognized me too." Nomtha assures them that she's not a fraud.

"Who are these boys? How is my son? Does he even know how his mother looks like?" She emotionally asks.

"Maa, the twins don't have names as they are just a few days old like you saw. Their mother hasn't had the chance to hold them since birth, they were stolen from the hospital and they are the royal twins, Prince Sbu's sons. My dear Spha doesn't know how you look like, he is waiting impatiently to finally see you. He's a handsome and a very charming gentleman, you will love him my Queen." Nomtha smiles. "I didn't see Nombulelo in my dreams but judging by her looks and what I felt when I saw her, I would like to believe that she's Prince Spha's biological sister."

"Yes she is. I was pregnant when-----" Queen Nozizwe narrates the whole story to them. By the time she finishes, they are all in tears.

"Hey, may I sit?" Nombu nods. "I understand your pain and anger but I think you are directing your anger to the wrong person. Your mother did nothing wrong, she was wronged."

"I get that and that's not why I'm angry. I'm angry because I had to live my entire life as a slave when I'm actually a princess. I never had the privilege to learn to call someone father, I'm uneducated but my siblings went to top schools and I'm sure they won't even like an illiterate girl as their sister." She sobs.

"Prince Spha and Prince Sbu are angels, they would never do that to their own blood. If they both can fight the odds by falling in love with commoners do you think they would hate their own because she's illiterate? You share the same blood, you look exactly like your brother and I promise you that they will all love you. Princess Kayise is a lovely girl but she takes time to warm up to anyone, I just hope it will be different with you. Please stop crying and forgive your mother, okay?"

Nomtha hugs her tight.

TWO WEEKS LATER.

There is a function going on at the Royal palace. The Chiefs, all the traditional seers are present but not everyone is happy about it.

"Brother, I know you all have forgiven me for what I did to Nomtha I hope and pray she will forgive me too. Allow me to kill this woman I call my mother." Kayise blurts out shocking her brothers and her aunt. "Don't look at me like that. This woman is the cause of all our problems and now she wants to become a king when our father lies on that bed almost lifeless!" She is enraged.

"I'm with you on this one my dear niece." Gugu supports Kayise.

"No. We are not killing anyone. I have a feeling that this is the end to her evil ways. Our ancestors won't allow a Malawian woman to sit on that throne, never!" Spha paces up and down in the room.

"Are you suggesting that we sit around and wait for God to come to our rescue?" Sbu asks.

"Not God but the very same person who was born to restore peace and serenity in this kingdom. She will come and she will bring good news with her." Spha confidently says.

"Are you sure sister-in-law will come in time?" He nods.

"Okay then let's pray and hope that will be the case." Gugu sighs in exasperation.

"Sne please don't do this to me. I arrived yesterday but you're still angry at me. I'm sorry for not attending your wedding, I had to save the twins' lives. Please forgive me my dear sister." Nomtha apologizes to her for the millionth time.

"I don't want to talk to you!" Sne screams fighting the urge to hug her sister.

"Yet you came here running? Stop acting, you're horrible at it." They both laugh and embrace each other. The emotional flood gates are widely opened as the two sister sob in each other's arms. Zandi and Bab' uMahlangu sneak in the room and join the hug making their children giggle with tears in their eyes.

"We missed our group hug." Bab' uMahlangu smiles.

"Nomtha has to pay for all the pain and the tears we shed when she just disappeared on us like that." Sne suggests folding her arms.

"How much do I have to pay?" Nomtha raises an eyebrow.

"Million dollars for each of us."

"You must be kidding, right? Where will I get all the money to pay all those who shed tears for me? Do you know how fulfilling to know that people really love you to an extent of canceling their own weddings because you are not around?" Nomtha jokes, Sne hits her with a pillow.

"Princess, the Queen and her daughter are still sleeping, please wake them up. Breakfast is ready and you have a big day ahead of you." Bab' uMahlangu says.

"Okay dad. And the twins, how did they sleep?"

"Peacefully." Zandi smiles.

World War 3 has just started at the palace. Clementine and Agnes brought a thousand of armed thugs to protect her and to ensure that no one stops the crowning ceremony. Gugu and her crew also have their own plans, they won't let her get away

with this. The people of the Umlazi kingdom came in numbers to witness this event.

"People of Umlazi kingdom, we are gathered here to witness the crowning of our first female King." Says chief Mseleku. The crowd cheers, that's what Clementine paid them for. "Now, our chief seer will do the honor of crowning-----"

"Over my dead body!" Spha is red with fury. "I will rather die than witness this madness. My father is still alive, I am alive and so is my brother! Who is she to take over the throne?"

"Spha!" Clementine hisses.

"Don't Spha me! I won't let you take everything away from my family and these people!" Clementine's thugs point their guns at Spha's direction. "If you want this to happen, tell them to shoot. Just do it!" The thugs are about to pull the triggers when there's a sudden thunderous sound followed by a flash of lightning which send all of them crashing on the ground. Chief Sokhele smiles, so does Prince Spha and his crew. Clementine and Agnes are already shaking.

"Just crown me! What are you waiting for?" Clementine tries to act smart.

"Do it and this time I will strike you dead!" Nomtha barks as she gracefully walks towards Clementine. Everyone's heads turn to her direction as their mouths goes wide open. Nomtha is

looking wow! She's stunning in her long purple dress. Spha meets her halfway, picks her up and spins her around.

"Welcome back My Rose. I knew you wouldn't disappoint." Prince Spha kisses her all over the face. Gugu, Sbu and Zodwa also join them and hug her tight.

"My sons---"

"All of that later. Now, go and bring the King outside. I want him to witness this." The brothers look at each other. "Go, he's fine I promise." They both run inside the house where they find their father searching for his crown.

"Father!" They say in unison.

"Why are you here? You were supposed to die in that forest!" Clementine hisses through gritted teeth.

"It's over Clementine. I told you I will be back and here I am, stronger than before." Nomtha smirks. The King is shocked to learn that Clementine was about to be crowned the king of this kingdom. "Look." Nomtha turns her head towards the King, Clementine looks like she's just seen a ghost. The chiefs mumble to themselves, seeing all this.

"Your Majesty." Nomtha greets the King. Instead of blessing her like he always does

he pulls her for a hug.

"My daughter." The Princes become emotional seeing this.

"I have something to say and to show all of you." Nomtha addresses the King and the crowd. "Not everything is at it looks. Clementine and I have never liked each other because we did not agree on many things. Most of you know that she's not Prince Spha's mother. Prince Sbu and Princess Kayise you will forgive me for saying this, the woman you call mother is evil. She's the devil incarnate. Clementine framed Queen Nozizwe, she lied to all of you."

"I knew it! I knew that Queen Nozizwe would never do such a thing." Gugu says.

"You are the one who is lying. If she was innocent why didn't she survive?" Clementine asks, mockingly. Nomtha raises her hand signaling someone. O. M. G! The real Queen comes out of the car followed by Princess Nombulelo. Everyone blinks rapidly as the two slowly walks towards Nomtha. Clementine's face now looks like that of a dead person. Agnes tries to run but Nomtha stops her dead in her tracks. The King can not believe his eyes.

"People of Umlazi kingdom, she is the real Queen. She never died in that river and she's Princess Nombulelo." Spha feels dizzy, he almost faints but his brother holds him and make him sit on the chair. "Sweetheart, I promised to bring her back. I did not only do that, I found your sister too. Maa, meet your son

Prince Sphamandla Tshabangu. Princess Nombu, meet your brother." Everyone is in tears. Queen Nozizwe hugs her son as they both burst into tears of joy. Nombulelo can not believe that this man who looks exactly like her is her brother. "Now, I want you to meet all the royal family members. Nombu, meet your father, the King." His Majesty can not stop the tears as Nombulelo runs into his open arms.

"Father!" She cries. Nomtha introduces all the family members

"Maa, Nombulelo, he's Prince Sbu and this is Zodwa. They are the twins' parents." Nomtha smiles at the couple, she knows how bad they want to meet their sons. "Prince Sbu, I made a promise to you before I left and I fulfilled that promise. Look over there." She points to the car where Sne and Zandi are standing holding his sons.

"My sons?" Nomtha nods. Sbu and Zodwa both run to meet their sons. Nothing brings joy to Nomtha more than seeing happy people.

While they are all floating in happiness. Clementine pulls a gun and points it to Prince Spha.

"You will crown me or he dies!" She shouts, everyone is shocked but not Nomtha.

"Go ahead and pull that trigger let's see who will kill who." Nomtha dares her.

"You will not harm my son Clementine! Don't you see that your time is over!" Queen Nozizwe shouts at her, she pulls the trigger. Nomtha pushes Queen Nozizwe away as the bullet hit Nomtha's chest.

"Sunshine!" Zandi screams.

"My Rose!" Spha kneels besides her, Nomtha opens her eyes and smiles.

"I'm fine my dear Prince. A single bullet can not kill me."
Clementine pulls the trigger again, everyone screams. Nomtha leaps to her feet and slap her across the face. "I told you to stop this nonsense! You will not harm anyone for as long as I live. Are you not satisfied with the number of people you have killed already? You killed the King's mother, you killed your own sister, you killed three innocent children for ritual purposes! How many people do you want to kill before you repent?"
Nomtha slaps her again.

"You killed my mother? Why Clementine, why?" The King grabs her neck.

"Your Majesty, you're not a murderer. Please don't stoop to her level, let her live and one day her sins will finally catch up with her." Nomtha stops the King from killing Clementine.

The community is enraged. Everyone wants a piece of Clementine after all her secrets have been brought to light. They are chanting "let's burn her alive! Let her die!" Kayise is scared that her sins might also catch up with her since Nomtha is back. Nomtha asks Zodwa and Sbu to take the twins inside as they are too young to witness all these things.

"Princess Nombulelo, please go with them. This angry mob might be uncontrollable and I don't want you getting hurt." Nomtha smiles at her, Nombu looks at Nomtha in awe. How does she do it? Is the question she inwardly asks.

"Babe, I don't want you to get hurt please leave from here. These people are angry and I don't think they will listen to us." Spha tries to reason with his Rose.

"No Sweetheart. I'm not going anywhere, I started this so let me finish it." Spha sighs and nods. "People of Umlazi I understand your anger and it's completely justified. No one will kill anyone. Despite all the evil things Clementine did, she's still Prince Sbu and Princess Kayise's mother. We can not possibly kill a woman who gave birth to the King's children. The elders will decide on the punishment they deem fit for her but no one will die. On behalf of her, I apologize for letting you people down." Spha, Sbu and Gugu look at Nomtha like she's just grown a horn on her forehead. "You can all enjoy the food, drinks and take with you everything you can afford to carry.

Thank you." The King looks at Nomtha then to his real love and smiles. Spha drags Nomtha inside the house.

"What was that? You are sorry? You and who?" Spha is furious.

"I understand your anger my love. Can we just all forget the past and restore peace in this Kingdom? Please, for my sake. I'm not saying be lovey dovey with her but can you at least try and tolerate her?" Nomtha flashes a smile to him. How can he possibly say no to her when her smile is all it takes to wipe all his tears and sadness. Prince Spha pulls Nomtha to him, his lips passionately searching for hers as they get lost in their desire for each other, their bodies savoring all the intimacy. Spha throws himself on the bed taking her with him. His hand moves to her back, he unzips her dress revealing her soft skin, he touches her bare skin and a moan escapes his mouth. Nomtha grabs the hem of his T-shirt and yanks it off, their eyes meet and once again they kiss passionately until they both pull out of the kiss panting.

"I missed you babe. I was scared, scared of the unknown. I counted every second waiting for your return, things were bad and I was losing my mind. I didn't know how to deal with everything. Thank you for bringing my mom back and finding another sister for me." He hugs her tight and finally breaks down. Nomtha let him be until he finally calms down.

"I missed you too Sweetheart. What gave me strength and hope is that you didn't break in front of everyone, you remained strong. Thank you for protecting my sister." Nomtha kisses her forehead and lays her head on his chest listening to his heartbeat.

"That's a dangerous position babe. I'm horny as F, please don't torture me any further. I don't want to break my promise." He shyly smiles.

"I'm also wet down there." Nomtha looks at him with longing eyes.

"Okay, stop!" He tickles her, she quickly jumps to her feet leaving him on the bed. Someone knocks. "Come in." Spha says, Nomtha gives him a deadly stare. How could he do that, when they are both almost naked.

"Ummmm.... I will come back later." Nombu stifles her smiles.

"Come back here little sister. It's not what you think, something is wrong with her zipper." He lies.

"I'm not a baby brother. I might be illiterate but I know what two people in love do behind closed closed doors. Anyway, that's none of my business. I thought you and I could have a heart to heart chat, bond as siblings but you will have to put on your shirt first." Nombu says with a bossy tone.

"Oh no! Sis, you're bossy or you are trying to be? Let's not forget who is older here." They all laugh. "Babe, come here." He pats a space next to him on the bed.

"No. She's leaving this room. I've been with her for weeks now and we bonded perfectly. I want to talk to you alone. Get out sister-in-law." Nombu chases her out. She straightens her dress and exit the room.

"You don't have to hide from me Kayise. Come here." Nomtha opens her arms.

"I'm sorry sister-in-law." Kayise sobs.

"It's okay you were being childish like a child that you are. Your brothers love you and that will never change, okay?" She nods.

"Don't you love me anymore?" She fiddles with her fingers.

"I never stopped loving you. You distanced yourself from me." Kayise hugs Nomtha tight as she finally realizes what an angel she is.

After everyone had bonded and forgiven each other, Nomtha told them who took the twins and why. The King thanked her

for all the sacrifices she did for his family. Clementine apologized to everyone but no one forgave her including her own children. The royal council took away her crown and she was declared a royal slave. Agnes got a lighter sentence which is serving the community for 6 months.

"Grandpa we did it." Nomtha smiles.

"I'm proud of you my girl. You won the first battle now you will have to maintain the peace of this kingdom. You will become the first female King of this kingdom." Nomtha is astounded.

"No grandpa. I don't want to be the King, ruling Queen or whatever, I just want to be Spha's wife that's all. If he becomes the King then I will be the Queen. I'm too young to get too serious with this life. I want to enjoy freely with Spha, have a beautiful family and travel the world before I die and regret not living my life yo the fullest."

"Is that what you want?" Nomtha nods. "Okay then so be it. Be happy my dear grandchild. Always remember who you are and help all those in need."

INSERT 30

TWO WEEKS LATER.

<Some things take time, they need patience and persistence.>

Nomtha is finally going to get married to her Prince. Not only her but Zodwa also found her soulmate, it's a double wedding. I don't know if that makes sense but I know you understand my point.

"Man, I can't wait to remove that veil from her face and finally call her my wife." Spha says grinning as he adjusts his jacket.

"Brother, tell me something, did you and sister-in-law..... you know?" Sbu can not find right words for his question.

"If you are asking about having sex then the answer is no. I've never felt the way I feel for her, she has that thing that soothes my soul by only looking at her. We didn't have to do all of that to confirm our feelings for each other." Spha says proudly.

"I'm proud of you big brother." The two brothers hug.

NOMTHA'S POV.

Not so long ago I was just a girl with nothing, only my family and my pride. If someone had told me back then that I will one day marry the Prince, I would have laughed back to that person. Let's not talk about the six digits of my bank account, I don't care about money really but what can I do if it keeps finding its way to my account. My sister paid me for that launch, I said that as a joke but she took my words seriously. Spha couldn't stop laughing when a bank notification popped in my screen.

"I thought your sister was the crazy one but I think you are more gaga than her. How could you ask for such a huge amount for only wearing nice clothes, put on makeup, walk the runway and pose for pictures. Are you for real babe?" He laughed out loud, I felt bad about the whole thing.

"I was joking with her. I don't know why she thought I was being serious. Let me call her." But before I dialled her number, she sent me a WhatsApp message.

*****Don't you even dare think of sending that money back, if you do, I will kill you I swear. Thank you for everything, from those sleepless nights you had because of me, for those days you spent at the library studying on my behalf, for all the insults you endured because of me, for all the tears you shed because of me, for almost going against the people you love and respect a lot because of me, I'm sorry and thank you. You deserve an award for being the best sister! I couldn't find a suitable trophy

for that so I sent you that money. Do anything you wish with it. I love you mntasekhaya. Hlale wazi ukuthi you have a special place in my heart.****

I couldn't stop my tears. I let the flood gates open as I read the message over and over again. Spha took my phone, read the message and hugged me tight.

"I'm sorry for laughing about it. I never thought it was this deep." He kissed away my tears. A thought crossed my mind, I smiled and pulled out of the hug.

"What now?" Yeah it's always hard to keep up with a girl's emotions. I abruptly got off him, got the laptop, browsed the web, booked the best hotel there is and booked two tickets.

"Sweetheart, come with me to Mauritius." Spha looked at me like I had just developed a third eye. "Come on honey." Seeing that I was dead serious about it. He picked me up and spinned me around.

"Mauritius and Israel, here we come!" What? Did he just say Israel? As if reading my mind he said. "Yes babe, Israel is our second destination." And so it was decided.

Guess what? We did not only toured those two countries, we went to Italy, Spain, England and lastly we visited a place which Spha calls a home away from home. New York, where he grew up, studied and learned everything there is to learn about life

and it's hustles. It was hard going to the beaches only in beach wear, swimming together, sharing a bed but we managed to keep our promise.....

"Hellloooo! Anybody home?" Sis Sne snaps her fingers bringing me back to where I am. "Why is your mind so far away? Don't tell me you're planning to be a runaway bride." Everyone in the room laughs.

"Never! I love my dear Prince, you all should relax."

"That's good to hear I was starting to get worried. Your makeup is done now waiting for your shoes. They forgot them at home but I trust Gugu to bring them now." She spins the chair making me face the mirror. Oh. My. Word! My sister really did magic on my face, I look like one of those top models dressed for a Paris Fashion week. Okay, a girl takes note of all the details. That being said, sit back and listen attentively as I describe my wedding dress. I'm not wearing one of the most expensive wedding gown but I'm slaying in my own Ndebele attire, designed by my dear loving sister. The dress is a boob tube, blue is the most color of it. It hugs me perfectly from the top, to my figure and flares when it reaches the knee length. There is this thing, I don't know what these fashion people call it, it covers my shoulders, part of my chest exposing my cleavage a little bit then, it's really long at the back. Since my dad is half Zulu and half Ndebele, I will be wearing a Zulu headgear and

anklets. I couldn't miss the chance to wear this beaded Ndebele neckpiece and the shiny gold bangles for anything in this world. My make up is wow, so I'm good to go.

"Sis No, you look am-en-azing!" There she goes with her own invented English words. My sister from another mother is emotionally.

"Thanks darling. You look gorgeous, Sbu will never let you out of his sight. The dress is perfect!" I compliment her. Mom comes in

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she looks at me and wipes her tears.

"My Sunshine!" She hugs me tight and cries.

"Mom please don't make me spoil my makeup." Everyone laughs. "I know what you're thinking Maa, I will always be your daughter. I won't neglect you and dad, I love you." Nomtha kisses her cheek.

The Royal Princess step inside the room rocking the same dresses, shoes and make up.

"Whoooah! Who came up with this idea? Right now I can't recognize who is who?" Nomtha jokes.

"Shut up Nomtha! Listen the guys are complaining they've been waiting like forever." Gugu says. "You look stunning my daughters-in-law."

"Oh please don't start. You will never be someone else but my bae." The girls laugh.....

SPHA'S POV.

There are so many people gathered here today. Everyone wants to see if I'm really going to make her my Queen. They all thought I was going to use her and find someone of my class (as they put it) to marry but no, to me love knows no class, race, color or age. Only my heart knows what it wants and it chose her for me, a decision I will be forever grateful for it. I can't wait to see her. I'm overjoyed and nervous at the same time.

Anthony keeps telling me to call down. How can I keep calm? Aunt Gugu comes and informs me that they are on their way. I want to surprise her by singing her entrance song.

Her bridesmaids are standing in a line wearing their yellow and blue outfits. I don't know how these women do it, but yeah, they all look good today. Aunt Gugu and Nomtha's aunt signal to me that its time. I take a minute to calm myself down, signal

the band to start hitting the drums and guitars. Sis Nombulelo looks at me and gives me a thumbs up, so does mom and dad. I start to sing.

Ndiyababona bonke kodwa

Dali nguwe

Ndiyababona bonke kodwa

Dali nguwe

I wonder yintoni na le endenza

Ndicule nguwe

I wonder yintoni na le endenza

Ndicule nguwe..

She looks gorgeous, she's always beautiful but today My Rose looks more beautiful. For a moment I get lost in her beauty and forget that I have to sing for her.

Nd'zakubamb'egxeni mihla yonke Yokuphila kwami.

Ndizokukhuthaza nob'izinto Sezibhek'ecaleni.

Umlingani ngowani na xayengasoz'

Akupholis'amanxeba, mhmm.

Ntombi ndiyabulela zang'indishiy'

Enyanyeni, eh eh

Ndyakuthembisa ntomb'entle

Ndzabalidwala lakho kude kuvalwe.

Ndyakuthembisa ntombe'entle

Ndzabalidwala lakho kunaphakade

(Umamiya)

Ndzakubabonisa mamiya

Ngob'abaninzi bathi ndidlala

Ngawe

Ndzakubabonisa mamiya

Ngob'abaninzi bathi ndidlala

Ngawe

Ndiyababona bonke kodwa

Dali nguwe

Ndiyababona bonke kodwa

Dali nguwe

I wonder yintoni na le endenza

Ndicule nguwe

I wonder yintoni na le endenza

Ndicule nguwe

Kawubamb'isandla sam ubayeke

Abanezothe.

Ngoba, ndithembele kuwe ntombazane ngakho konke.

Ndingenza nantoni ndingavuma

Nangoku ngako konke.

Soze ndikuyeke mama

Soze ndikuyeke mama

nangoku.

Ndyakuthembisa ntomb'entle

Ndzabalidwala lakho kude kuvalwe

Ndyakuthembisa ntombe'entle

Ndzabalidwala lakho kunaphakade

(Umamiya)

Ndzakubabonisa mamiya

Ngob'abaninzi bathi ndidlala

Ngawe

Ndzakubabonisa mamiya

Ngob'abaninzi bathi ndidlala

Ngawe

Ndiyababona bonke kodwa

Dali nguwe

Ndiyababona bonke kodwa

Dali nguwe

I wonder yintoni na le endenza

Ndicule nguwe

I wonder yintoni na le endenza

Ndicule nguwe

NARRATED.

The moment Nomtha steps on the red carpet, she looks around.

"Ready? Are you ready to leave your dad and become a Tshabangu." Her dad asks.

"Once a Mahlangu, always a Mahlangu." Nomtha smiles to him but her smile suddenly disappears as she hears Spha's voice, her heart skips a beat, it was never ready for this. Tears stream down her face as she remembers everything they've been through to be here today. She remembers how many people wanted her dead only because she fell in love with the Prince. Prince Spha meets them halfway still singing, he's crying too. He pauses,

"Take care of her. She's not just a random girl but a special one. Never be the reason she sheds a tear because my love for her knows no bounds my Prince. I don't want to hear her complain. I trust you." Bab' uMahlangu hands over his daughter to the Prince.

The Royal poet is back on duty as he chants the Tshabangu names. The Prince and Nomtha kneel before the King, he blesses them. They leave and walk towards the alter. They're

both lost in each other until they hear the pastor calling Spha's name.

"Prince Sphamandla Tshabangu, do you take Nomtha--"

"I do." Spha doesn't wait for the Pastor to finish his statement, people laugh.

"Nomthandazo Blessing Mahlangu, do you take Prince Sphamandla Tshabangu to be your lawfully wedded husband?" Nomtha looks at Spha as tears keep rolling down her cheeks. Suddenly there is silence, everyone is waiting for her to say something. Some maidens are praying for her to refuse to marry the Prince.

"I do." The King sighs, so does everyone. The pastor tells them to say their vows.

"Nomtha 'My Rose' I promise to love, protect, cherish, I know you're an independent woman but please allow me to provide for all your needs, I also promise to be a loyal husband and treat you like my equal part. Like this round ring, my love for you is endless." He puts the ring on her finger.

"My dear Prince, I promise to love you, to be a loyal wife but I won't promise to be submissive trust me that will be lying before God and everyone present here." Everyone laughs. "I will respect you and serve you as my husband, not even death will do us apart. This love is forever, for many lifetimes to

come." She puts the ring. People cheer for them. Before the pastor can tell them to kiss, Spha grabs Nomtha's waist and pulls her to him. His lips search for hers and they have their first kiss as husband and wife.....

"Where to babe?" Spha asks Nomtha holding the steering wheel.

"Wherever you wish to take me to darling." She says.

"Dear world, here we come!"

FIVE YEARS LATER.

"Sbusiso Jr! Stop teasing your grandparents!" Kayise reprimands the twin.

"What did I do Aunt? It's Alwande who keeps teasing them." Sbu Jr. says.

"Aunt, your parents though. They don't understand a single English word." Mzwandile laughs.

"Muzi! What are you saying?" Nomtha shouts at her son. Muzi hides behind his grandmother.

"He was just joking. Let him be, daughter-in-law." The King says.

"Dad, one day you both will die and it will be too late to try and instill good values in them. Please don't let my children become spoiled brats, they have to know how to talk to elders." Spha says putting his laptop bag down.

"Son, grandparents will always be grandparents. You can't change it no matter how you try." Queen Nozizwe says, smiling.

After the wedding Clementine couldn't take it anymore, she ended her own life. That old scary men came demanding her dead body but Nomtha dealt with him accordingly. Princess Nombulelo passed her ordinary and advanced level exams, she's now studying law in UK. Aunt Gugu remarried, she's happily married with two adopted children. Sbu registered an events company in Zodwa's name, she's now a businesswoman. The two have a daughter now, she's two months old. Sbusiso Jr and Melusi Jr (the twins) now attend school and they are the younger version of Prince Spha and Prince Sbu, they are troublesome. Prince Spha and Nomtha have one son, Alwand'uthando(Alwande) Mzwandile (Muzi), he's also a typical Tshabangu boy.

Anthony and Sne moved to London where Sne's business is flourishing. She's one of the best designers in the world and they have one daughter who is four years old. Bab' uMahlangu and Zandi adopted three children, one boy and two girls. Nobuhle graduated and is now working in one of the biggest companies in Africa. Kayise is getting married soon.

Everyone is living a happily ever after.

THE END!!!!