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REVILING THE HIDDEN SECRET by Lindiwe Khoza

Prologue

SNETHEMBA

I'm the only girl in a family of four boys. I'm hiding myself to the society and my parents. I'm not ready to come out to reality I'm not ready yet. It just so ingrained in me through society, family, friends and peers that as a woman I'm destined to get married to a man and have children how amazing is that?

People around me look up to me. I get questioned like, do I have a boyfriend? I just give them the simple answer 'yes' knowing very well that's all lie, people believe that LGBTI

society go through break ups and heart broken. (*Lesbian ,Gay ,Bisexual' Transgender and intersex*)

Not everyone go through break up or heart broken, as for me I just don't have feelings for males, I'm a lesbian and I'm a role model of my life providing an alternative narrative, Upon reflection though, I'm not interested in 'boys' as my peers are, but I tried my best to, I just don't fit in but inwardly found it rather awkward I'm not meant to be.

Max: Sne!

As I was driving

Me: Yes

Max: Malwande want to ask you something.

Me: Okay shoot.

She laughed, she's forever happy.

Malwande: When will we meet your handsome boyfriend?

That was the kind of questions I face everyday when I walk down the street. And I didn't expect it from her, she's my best friend's girlfriend and I have feelings for her but I can't tell her that since she's dating my friend I can't betray him like that. Maxwell and I came a long way, we grew up together those who doesn't know believe that we will get married someday, that won't happened he's supportive, like my brothers.

Me: Why?

She looked at me, she's such a bully.

Me: You will meet him when times goes.

Malwande: Really?

She rolled her fabulous eyes, we were dropping her to her house, she's the only child, quite surprising that she doesn't have a child.

I Snethemba Tshabalala my brothers and Max call me Themba, others call me Sne. I'm 26 years old I'm doing my final year in

teaching hopefully after I graduate I will find a job and depend on myself. Maybe by then I will be ready to face the reality. Girls have always caught my eye than boys.

MALWANDE ZULU

I looked at them as they drove off, I love being around people because I forget all my sorrows. I walked towards the house with the hope that my mother she's back, well I put my hopes up she was not yet back.

I cannot say that I had a memorable childhood, when my father died I was still an infant, I didn't know anything about death and life, my mother brought her boyfriend to our house whom he was my step father, everything was fine until I reached the age of 12 where I started developing like every girls when the grow up,

My step father started to looked me in a different way I did not pay attention to the signs of abuse because I never thought he might hurt me, it started by him touching me my butt, asking me to sit on his lap

and playing with my breast while I seated on his lap, because, I was daddy's girl, I had to seat because I didn't suspect that something was off, one day he said. "*Lwander I have to test*

your cookie one day." I didn't understand what he meant by then, until he suggested that I should get, circumcised because boys will use me, and I won't be able to make my future husband happy, my biological mother Zandile Zucchini agreed to destroy my life, I don't understand what kind of a mother would allow that to happen, to her daughter, he believed that female circumcision was the only solution for me. I got circumcised but life after that was hard, my step father turned me his sex toy, because he was he brained washed me by saying. *"We playing game"*

I ran away from home and went to my aunt, I couldn't explain what was happening at home because I was embarrassed, and scared that he might come for my life, my aunt, took me back home because her husband didn't want me in their house, I ended up escaping the abuse, but I ended up homeless I lived on street for a month, until God sent a good Samaritan who took me to child welfare.

Zandi had only 3 children, my brother whose older than me by 5 years (Xolane Zuccini or Williams if I'm not mistaken) why I'm, his father uncle Kingsley Williams took him from my mother for some reasons, after they took him, I was only left with my younger brother he was only 3 years when I left home.

The family that was in need for a child adopted me and they are taking good care of me from the age of 12 they still do, Mr and Mrs Zulu are good parents, Mr Zulu he's working abroad as an electioneer, and my mother Mrs Zulu she's a nurse at the local clinic, they know how I ended up at child welfare and they are very supportive. I'm Malwande Zulu, I'm 27 years old, also doing my final year for teaching, and this is my journey of life.

1

MALWANDE

I sitting alone on the couch, when my mother walked in.

Ma: And why are you sitting with like that?

I looked at her.

Me: Sitting like what?

Ma: Sitting like you are depressed or something?

Me: I feel like depressed, whenever I'm alone.

She sat next to me and hugged me, sometimes, I wished my real mother was the one who was comforting me, during times of loneliness.

Ma: Lwande look you are a beautiful young woman, stop letting the past to rob you your happiness. While the present can plague our minds when we have a lot on our plate, the past can take a hole of our mental facilities when it comes to dealing with people around us.

I looked at her.

Me: I cooked your favorite meal.

She smiled.

Ma: I will speak to dad about this, Lwando, you need to start seeing your therapist again.

She knew very well that, don't want to go there, I don't feel comfortable to share my pain with anyone especially a

stranger, she's the only one who can listen to me, where would I be without this family.

Me: I will be fine.

Ma: Did you manage to talk with your boyfriend?

She believes that now is the right time to tell Maxwell about me being raped and being circumcised, I feel embarrassed about that, there are times where I feel to be on Sne's life.

XOLANI WILLIAM

I looked at the picture of me and my sister, she was a happy child, when I came back to my mother's house 10 years ago, I was told that she ran away from home without a valid reason, there is no such, there is no such that a person can just wake up and decide to leave without explanation as especially to a 12 years old.

Thando: She will see her way home, remember that Mama Azizi said that she's safe, and she will come back home when the time comes.

Me and my wife consulted few traditional healers and two prophets they keep on telling us the same story that she's safe wherever she is and she will come back on her own. I don't want to hear that shit, I want them to show me the place where is Malwande that's all I want.

I'm Xolani William, mix race male, my father he's a colored and my mother Zandile Zucchini she's black she's a mother of 3 me, my lost sister Malwande and my little brother Gift, he's 24 years, I don't have a child yet, my wife she's not ready to be a mother yet, each time I looked at this picture my heart bleeds and I feel like nothing is making sense.

SNETHENBA

My brothers and Max laughing at me, because my father suggested that he wants reward me for being a loyal girl, so he came with the plan to perform memolo for me because I'm now ready to be someone's wife, so this idiot were enjoying the fact that I will be wearing like a woman

Memulo is a traditional ceremony that commemorates the coming of age of a Zulu lady. It is a very meaningful ceremony as it marks the transition of a Zulu girl into womanhood, signifying that she is now ready for marriage. It is a reward from

the girl's parents for good behavior such as remaining a virgin, waiting to get married to Mr right.

Max: I wish Malwande was hear to see you sulking Themba.

They laughed

Me: Guys the is nothing funny about that, I'm the one who is going to uncontactable.

Sibusiso: Why didn't you tell him that, you need to tell him that you are not ready for that?

Nicolas: UCabanga aye ku baba, a fike athi baba angikakulungeli, ukugqoka ingubo yemvunulo. *(Imagine going to that man and tell him that you are not ready to wear a dress)*

They laughed even more, this idiots.

Me: I will surprise you one-day.

Max: Kanti uyi ntombi ntoo. *(Are you a virgin)*

They continue laughing

Me: Go to hell.

I ended up joining them.

2

MALWANDE

[FOLLOWING DAY]

I feel stucked on my past, while others are on the future.
Maxwell looked at me, I asked to meet up with him, so that I
can tell him who I'm I. But I find it to hard to open up.

Max: I believe you didn't call me, just to look at me.

Me: I need to have a reason to talk or see my boyfriend, how impressive?

Max: I didn't say that.

People tend to be quite different in the things they think about. Some people are always thinking about the future, and the good and bad things that might happen to them. Other people have their mind mainly in the present without much thought for the past or future. I'm just stuck on my past. Maybe if I wasn't force to circumcise I was going to be one of many wo are confident about themselves, Sne she's very confident about herself, sometimes we make fun of her and she doesn't even care.

Max: Malwande talk to me, what is it that is eating you up, why are you always on your dream land?

Me: Baby I love you, I really appreciate your undying love, but I'm a less of a woman, I can't have children.

He cuts me, we never had any conversation about our future together.

Max: Baby what does this coming from?

We never talked about kids. But I didn't know where to start.

Me: I thought I should bring you into my world, since we're on an open relationship.

Max: Thank you baby there is nothing to worry, don't please yourself that much, I don't love who you are, but I love you, there is nothing wrong with you, and that doesn't define you, I love you as you are smart, lovable, beautiful, and worthy. I don't want to hear the wordy, "*less than other women*" ever, you are woman, and that woman she's my girlfriend.

I rolled my eyes.

Max: I love you.

I kept quiet

Max: May I should be louder, so that people can hear how much I love you.

Denm you Zandi and your boyfriend, they ruined my life.

Female circumcision, is partial something is total cutting away of the external female genitalia, that has been practiced for centuries in parts of Africa, generally as one element of a rite of passage preparing young girls for womanhood and marriage, often performed without anesthetic under septic conditions by lay practitioners with little or no knowledge of human anatomy or medicine. They ruined me I'm in fatality and that's permanent, I should leave with that pain, I sometimes I experience severe pains during our encounter, and sometimes we do fight because of that

he believes that I don't want to make love with him. The truth is that I don't have the courage to open up to him, I don't feel comfortable opening up to my boyfriend.

SNETHEMBA

I and my brothers, we were having lunch, this memulo thing is draining my energy

Nicolas: We can make funny and laugh about it, but are you aware that she supposed to stay 7 days in the the house with her friends and practicing and we both know that our sister won't survive a day indoors.

We looked at him, he's the second born, he comes after Calvin then it's Sibusiso and I come after him, then the last born is Samuel.

Sam: Do you want to do this, Themba?

My brothers and my friend Max call me Themba, they know about my condition and they accept me as I am. My parents worked very hard for me and my brother we are secured and we have everything we need, now it's pay back time, I won't go against their will.

Me: I don't know.

They looked at me, I shook my head, they chuckled.

XOLANI

My mother walked into my room. What happened to privacy in this house, she took the picture on my closet, she then sat on the edge of my bed.

Me: Mom.

Zandile: My son I'm worried about you.

I looked at her.

Me: Why?

Zandi: You are my son I should be worried about you, especially when you don't want to talk to anyone.

She's worried about me, what about her daughter not her daughter?

Me: Tell me, how do you sleep at night, knowing very well, that your daughter she's missing?

Zandi: Xo it's hard, I'm trying to be strong but it's hard, I wish she could return home and tell me where did I go wrong.

Me: Mother the is no 12 years child can wake up in the morning and decided to go, the must be something that you did to her, as a mother you were supposed to be her best friend, I have my own father, when I need guidance I go to him, Gift has his father too and I'm here for him, as boys we talk to our fathers, you as a mother you should've picked up something was wrong when she first went to aunt.

She started crying, Me, Malwande and gift we only share a mother, our fathers are separate, and my sister's father died when she was still a baby, I don't know her father's family, if I knew them I was going to seek help from them and my mom she's refusing to tell me where they are, she give me false alarm each time I ask her about Lwande's from family.

3

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (Biological mother of Malwande)

Life has not been easy ever since my daughter disappeared, I sometimes wonder whether she okay, each time I'm having a meal my heart sank, does she gets enough meal, during winter my heart breaks during rain days because I don't know whether she's covered. Xo he's right, I should've been her best friend. I know that she was mad of me for the fact that she got circumcised, but it's our belief to practice female circumcion.

People believe that circumcision practice is an abuse of humen cruelty. There is very little information about the origin of female circumcision. However, observations of some female mummies in Egypt and the description of circumcision on ancient Egyptian wall paintings supports the opinion that this tradition dates back very long and that it has continued for many years. The historian Herodotus states that circumcision was practiced by the Phoenicians, Hittites, and Ethiopians, circumcision is also practiced in the tropical areas of Africa, the Philippines and by the tribes of the upper amazon and the women of the Arunta tribe in Australia. The practice of circumcision is also called "tahara" in Arabic which means the

procedure of cleaning. About the relationship between cleanliness and circumcision, the historian Herodotus asks, where did the ancient Egyptians learnt that when the reproductive organs of all peoples on earth were remaining the same. It was also been pointed out that cleanliness came before beauty for the ancient Egyptians. Many applications have been carried out in unhygienic conditions without anesthesia and mixtures of plants, cow dung and butter have been used for wound healing . Severe pain, bleeding, urinary retention, ulcers in genital area, adjacent organ injury, sepsis and even death can be seen following procedures with scissors, part of glass, blade, bark, plant thorn performed by persons who do not medical professional training, thats one of the scariest part.

Infections, keloids, genital tract infections, sexual inherited diseases, especially genital herpes, increasing HIV infection risk, labor complications, sexual disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder can be listed among late period complications. Also, cases with Type 3 female genital mutilation are more risky since complaints such as requirement of deinfibulation, frequent recurrence, re-requirement of surgery, urinary retention, menstrual problems and painful sexual intercourse are frequently seen.

Voice: Mom should I get you something to eat.

I could hear that my daughter in-law was talking but my mind was blown away.

Thando:Maa are you already.

I didn't answer her, she hold my hand.

Thondo: Mam Zandile!!

Why is she shouting. I friked out

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she was shaking

Me: Thando why are you shouting my name.

MALWANDE ZULU

We ended up taking a walk, I didn't get the courage to open up, I really wish I can tell her that. Pain and suffering are part of my life. As much as I try to avoid pain, the reality is that I need to face. I can't overcome my situations people say life is precious but on my world I can't realize how life is precious.

Max: Baby.

Me: Uhm.

Max: I was wondering, we should take a weekend away.

Me: Like today?

He laughed

Max: No next week perhaps.

I stopped walking, he stopped as well.

Me: Where to?

Max: You can choose between Durban and Table Mountain.

Since I got to Gauteng, I never wished to visit KZN or surroundings areas.

Me: I will think about it.

In life I've learnt never to make decisions without consulting my heart first.

Max: How much time do you need?

Me: Just give me a day or two.

He wrapped his hands around my waist and we kissed.

Max: I love you

I nodded, we kissed again and we continued walking.
Sometimes I feel like throwing my hands up and saying I give up, I've had enough, this pain I'm feeling is more than I can take.

BUHLE ZULU (ADOPTIVE MOTHER)

I was in call with my husband, regarding our daughter's situation, she's sinking deeper into depression, she takes it as a joke but I can see that she's not drowning deeper and deeper into depression.

Him: Baby you work at the clinic, you are a nurse, I believe at your workplace there are services, such like therapist, you can organise.

I cut him

Me: Why are you acting so strange Ntokozo Zulu?

Ntokozo: I'm at Brazil 9 hours, 45 minutes to get there what I'm I suppose to do baby, you know how stubborn is our daughter.

Me: I know that you are miles away from here, but you are the man of this house, leander she's our daughter I can't make decisions without consulting you.

He cut me

Ntokozo: She's old now mommy she can turn on us.

I cut him. I and my husband we both can't have children, we adopted Malwande when she was 12 actually we wanted an infant but when we got to child welfare my husband liked Malwande he beggan to investigate her case then that's how she was adopted and she's a lovely daughter who listen to elders.

Ntokozo: I'm sorry Buhle I didn't mean to-

I cut him.

Me: All I'm asking is your moral support for our daughter.

Ntokozo: Thats true love, I will call her, let's not give up on her, we don't want to regret it.

Me: Thank you honey that's what I wanted to hear.

Ntokozo: Let's not let any hurdles big and small of life trip to stop us from being there for our daughter.

XOLANI WILLIAM

I was on my sleep when I heard my wife screaming my mother's name, I got up and walked to the sitting room but I didn't get to them, because my mom was so angry.

Zandile: Don't ever shout like that.

Thondo: Mam Zand you got me worried, I didn't mean to scare you or something.

Zandi: You don't do that Thando, you need to respect me.

Thando: I'm sorry mam Zandi I'm sorry

Zandi: You sorry my foot Thando-

I cut hear I don't know what was the argument all about

Me: Thando genuinely apologize mom what more do you want from her?

She looked at me

Thando: Baby is okay.

Me: The is nothing that is okay here, she needs to return the same respect you are giving her.

Zandi: I'm sorry my children, the problem is not her, could is me, I want my daughter Xolani, please help me to locate her.
(Crying)

I thought she never cared about her. I can go to my father's place to have a peace of mind but I don't trust my step father around my mom, that man he's toxic actually he's abusive, even though my mother doesn't want to tell me, but I know that, the is this other weekend I and thando decided to go to Cape Town to visit my dad, when we get back my mom was bruised and she lied to me that she got mugged.

4

MALWANDE ZULU

LATER ON

We went to his house, Max his patiently we were completely
bikes, I wished my phone could ring and disturb us. We've been
in a relationship for 3 years now, I've learned that things
change, people change, and it doesn't mean I will forget my
past or try to cover it up, it simply means that I can't heal.
Letting go it will take years for me to get there. "Let it go"

Max: I'm I boring you Lwande

Me: No I'm just tired

Max: So I'm tiring you?

He started to kiss me, softly, sweetly, tugging at my lips with
his. He cups my breast, brushes the nipple with his thumb, it
was tempting but when I think of the pain I will be feeling it's
too much for me.

Me:Max I can't.

He gently bites my top lip, actually he was sucking it, he stopped.

Max: Relax. (Whispered)

He tugs at my nipple, rolling it between his thumb and forefinger. I pushed him.

Me: I'm sorry.

Max: Lwande talk to me.

I looked at him, I rose up from the bed, I'm angry at the world, what did do to deserve such cruelty life. I keep on pushing people that cares for me.

He grabbed me by my hand and looked at me, knowing him very well this won't end well.

Me: Let me go.

He shook his head.

Max: Why you keep on doing this.

That came out as an whisper.

Me: Maxwell please.

His hands snared my waist and he lifted me, tangling my legs around him and pushing me to the wall.

Max: You are not going anywhere my love.

He was kissing me, his kiss was rough and demanding, turning me into a ragdoll of his arms. I wrapped my hands around his neck. The rougher he was, the more I bit back, the more I took out my anger for the world that cursed me. Maxwell, and my foster parents care about me, but I keep on pushing them, Mr and Mrs Zulu they don't give up, even though Mr Zulu can be hard on me but at the end of the day he's making sure that I have everything that I need.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

What I feel is a little different than feeling like I owe to my parents, especially my father

what will he do what if he finds out that I'm a lesbian, the love that he has for me will fade away.

You know how it feels trapped in female's body. My male brain inside my female body is trapped and unseen by other people beside those who are closed to me.

Nicolas: You don't have to become a transsexual to make dad accept you who you are.

My brothers are very supportive even though sometimes we see differently.

Me: You seems to forget our Father.

Samuel: She's not ready to tell him, it not easy as it seems.

I spent my whole life lying about who I am. I do want to come out but where will I start knowing my father very well he will hate me for the rest of his life.

Me: You guys don't understand, I'm his only daughter.

Kalvin: You are only his daughter but this is your life not his, talk to him you don't owe him anything.

I owe my parents I'm where I am because of them.

Samuel: Telling the family won't end your journey Themba. You need to figure out who you are stop trying to make him happy.

Now I was ashamed his point of view.

I missed being around my friend and his crazy girlfriend, yeah Malwande she's crazy in her own way she always find something to make a joke of, I like her craziness it brings positive response into my life.

Me: I'm out of here.

They looked at me.

Sibusiso: Some of us are needed at work tomorrow, so let me go get prepared.

He doesn't stay with us, he's mommy son, they only come to visit us during weekends if theyhe feels like as for my mother doesn't like Jo'burg that much.

Me: Mama's boy.

Sbu: I will be your worst enemy than umemulo ceremony.

That name again, can't have a normal conversation without them dragging my sexuality to our conversation.

XOLANI WILLIAM

I dislike it when my mother take out her frustration on my wife.

Zandi: I'm sorry son.

She's been apologizing from the past 3 hours.

Thando: It's okay Ma.

Zandi: The thing is that I can't stop thinking about her, I failed my own daughter. (Crying)

She's telling the truth, when I think about Malwande everything seems to be wrong.

Zandi: I'm sorry.

I get what she's feeling, but why now? Why she takes out his frustration out on my wife.

Me: Zandile stop it, with your sorry.

Thando: Baby stop it please, you are not helping.

Me: She's a mother she was supposed to see that something was wrong.

Thando: William stop it. (shouted)

Me: Don't stop me-

She cut me.

Thando: I'm out of here.

She got up

Me: Thando!!!

Thando: Hai!!!

She walked away and left me with my sobbing mother.

MALWANDE ZULU

He was now nibbling on my clit and tongue fucked me. His finger also doing it magic down there, I released a mindblowing orgasm, I wished, I can be that girl who pleases her boyfriend but on this stage I can't, I'm just a girl who's trapped in my own body, the pain I'm feeling is unseen.

He came up and kissed me. Before he could enter on the paradise someone came to my rescue by knocking at the door.

Me: The door

Max: Let's I ignore the shit.

Me: Can you atleast attend the door.

He clicked his tongue.

Max: I'm not going to do that.

Voice: Maxwell I know that you are in here.

That was Sne

Me: You know that she won't go away.

He was pissed off, he dressed up.

Max: Don't move I'm coming back.

He walked out. Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion. I dressed up and walked to the sitting room to join them.

Maxwell looked at me.

Him: And you?

Me: Baby I think I should go.

That was excuse, always I come up with stories when we have to do love, it's painfully I can't bare the pain.

Sne: I didn't come to steal him away.

Me: Sne I don't mind to be in that room screaming his name on your presence.

Max smirked

Sne: I will pretend like I didn't hear that Max.

We chuckled. Hidding the unseen pain by laughing is what I do and it feels normal. For how long will I keep on running away from this, how far will I reach, I didn't asked to be circumstanced or raped by my own mother's boyfriend.

Sne: This is the energy I was looking for, then idiots brothers of mine.

Me: What happened?

They looked at each other.

Me: What are you on about.

Sne: Let's just forget about it.

Unsolved problem can't help us to get the solution.

Me: Okay then friends, let me go before I kill you guys.

Sne: Hamba yethisha. (Go teacher)

Me: Why don't you go to your boyfriend's house?

I know that she doesn't have a boyfriend, I like to see her pissed off for few moments.

Sne: I'm at his house.

We laughed. I'm not even offended, that statement.

5

05

SNETHEMBA TSHABALALA

[3 MONTH LATE]

My father said the ceremony will be carried on my birthday. Next month, I can't wait for the nightmare to be over. Maxwell was telling me about his boring relationship, as his friend had to be supportive, I don't see anything wrong with Lwande to me she's perfect.

Max: I don't know what's wrong with Lwande, one moment she's fine the next minute she's cold, I love her but, I can't keep on convincing myself that I'm happy with my relationship.

Me: Have you tried talking to her?

He nodded.

Max: She always telling me that the is nothing wrong.

That's what woman say, "*I'm fine*" the is nothing wrong. In life we all have an Unspeakable secret is an irreversible regret, an unreachable dream and an unforgettable love.

Me: What must I do?

He looked at me, that was what I could offer him.

Max: I don't know, what I know is that I love her.

My friend he was madly in love, Malwande mustn't break his heart, she's this only hope.

Me: Are you considering to set her free?

He won't do that any guy wants to have her and if he does that the girl will be in someone's arms.

Me: I'm the last person to give relationship advice, but you need to dig deep and get to know what is wrong with her as well as you can. It's not always easy to dig deep, especially for those who have never been comfortable talking about their feelings. And it's not necessary to make every conversation a heart to heart. By next year this time we will be educators, and we will meet those kids, who will need us to be their shoulder to lean on, you need to start communicating effectively with her, let her be your friend.

Max: Thanks Themba I will talk to her, actually I want her to trust me.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's Biological mother*)

My relationship with my son is crashed, Gift's father keeps on telling me that Xolani will come around, I can't lose child because of my negligence, Xolani and Gift are my hopes.

Thando walked to me.

Me: I don't need anything makoti.

She smiled, honestly I was hoping that Xo would marry a mixed race lady, but I was wrong. I don't like this girl, she's not good for my son.

Thando: Today I will have to disappoint you Mom, I'm not here to offer you food.

I looked at her.

Thando: I know that you want your relationship with your son to be strong again.

I looked at her.

Thando: Let's be friends I promise when he sees us together, he will be happy.

She's not suggesting me to be her friend, she must just do what she's here for.

Me: Don't you have anything to do?

Thando: Everything is perfect, we can go for shopping or something.

Me: My laundry basket is full, go do something with that.

Thando: Xo gave me the instructed me that I should never touch your laundry basket ever again.

Me: Aw

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so your husband brought you to my house, to clean up, cook for him and sleep with him then he pay you for that.

She smiled

Thando: Ma I'm trying here.

Me: Yes Thando you right you are trying, how long have you been married?

Thando: 3 years.

Me: If you could use that money to visit gynecologist, deal with your fertility issue Thando.

She looked at me and walked away, that served her I'm not going to be her friend

XOLANI WILLIAM

I was on lunch, I'm a technician, I was sitting with my friend Sibusiso, he was always complaining about his father.

Sibusiso: I don't understand why my sister doesn't want to tell my father that she's a lesbian.

Me: It's not easy, Tshabalala.

Sibusiso: Hai suka Willam.

Me: It's easy said than done.

There are two good things in life freedom of thought and freedom of action.

Sibusiso: On the 30th of next month it's her birthday, she would appreciate it if you come with your wife.

At least he changed the topic.

Me: If is around KZN do accept me and my wife there, but if it's in Jo 'burg sorry bruh I won't make it.

We laughed, I can't go anywhere, the was something that didn't trust my stepfather, I love that woman even though she doesn't like my wife, but at the end of the day she's my mother she gave birth to me.

MALWANDE ZULU

Life is hard, I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep but I'm afraid of my past, Mr Zulu came back last week to check on us.

Dad: Don't you have class today?

Me: Dad I'm sick.

He checked my temperature.

Ntokozo: But you look fine.

Actually Max and I we had an argument, which might separate us this time around, I had one of my episode few days ago, we had our first round, but I couldn't bare the second round.

Me: I don't want to be around people.

He gave me a determined look.

Ntokozo: Baby only a therapist can help you going forward, then you will be fine.

Me: I'm not looking forward to share my pain with anyone besides you and mom.

Ntokozo: When any type of mental health and emotional affects your life and function, therapist are recommended.

Therapy can help you learn about what you're feeling, why you might be feeling it, and how to cope.

Me: Dad I'm not going to do that.

Ntokozo: Baby please don't do that, allow us to help you, therapist is the only solution we have for you.

Me: I will be in my room if you need anything.

Ntokozo: You need to work on your anger and loneliness. Everyone feels angry at times, even passing rage isn't necessarily harmful. Seeking support to deal with these feelings may be a good idea when you don't pass, extreme compared to your situation, baby I'm afraid you might hurt yourself someday or it might lead you to take violent.

I can't hear the end of it. I can't talk to my boyfriend what about a stranger? My case causes embarrassment or makes me want to avoid people I love and those who care for me.

MALWANDE ZULU

Later on, My father was busy making noise, with his annoying knock at my door. I rolled my eyes in aggravation and glared at the ceiling, hating the noise that dad was making at door. My past leave deep scars on my heart was part of me. And no one will ever understands how I was feeling, and how deep I was hurt, I mean no one, because it hasn't happened to them, even the mental health counselor was not helping at all. They don't know the true unfeeling pain that I was carrying everyday.

Ntokozo: Lwande my baby please open this door.

I kept quiet.

Ntokozo: I get it you don't want to talk with a strangers ok talk to me then.

I rolled my eyes and got up to open for him. As soon as I opened the door he hugged me, I cried on his arms.

Me: I can't dad, I don't want to, it's hard to let it go. its more than I can take

He brushed my back.

Dad: I'm sorry baby.

I was fortunate to have them as my parent, they want the best for me.

Ntokozi: The day I brought you home, I knew that I must be a father to you, and to sacrifice everything to help you grow. Most sharply, dad knew was to give anything for you but not to be in this room alone cuddling those teddy bears, I made a promise with myself that I would give anything for you and mommy to be happy.

We broke the hug.

I looked at him he had tears too. If he knew that I stabbed those teddy bears long time ago, that he thinks I was cuddling. My mom believes that I'm a danger to myself. In his mind he thinks I didn't see those tears.

Ntokozo: I won't force you to do anything that is against your will, it's okay if you don't want to talk to someone who is well trained then let daddy be your therapist.

Me: Therapist won't help me, dad, this is deep, you can't help me.

Ntokozo: But mommy she's here for you.

Me: She can't help me either.

Ntokozo: Okay let's go have drinks, just a father and a daughter.

Me: I'm flirted but-

He cuts me

Ntokozo: I'm taking no for the answer.

Me: Okay let me take a shower.

All I had within my body scars from my past emotional hurts.
These scars, as well as the underlying damage

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are invisible, it hurt, painful. No one will understand the
wounds I have because no one sees my wounds.

XOLANI WILLIAM

My colleagues they forever complaining, we all have problems
but I will never bring them to work.

Sibusiso: Mr Williams is home.

As he announced, with excitement. I wish I was this happy about home time, when I think about going home my stomach gets knots immediately, because there is nothing that will distract me from the sorrows and pains that I cannot explain.

Sibusiso: Xo! I believe that Thando she's waiting for her husband at home.

I looked at him.

Me: Home is where a happy man belong.

There is no happiness or whatsoever at home, sometimes I wish I could paint my room with black paint, to display how I feel, because those bright colors are messing with my mind. He helped me to clear my desk.

Sibusiso: I must get myself a beautiful woman like Thando.

We laughed.

Me: You've been singing this song from university.

Sibusiso: Let's just say I'm still looking, if you had a sister maybe I was going to take care of her.

I love my sister I want the best for her, but I don't see this guy being my brother in law never, he's my friend and he's a player.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

Our class was boring without Malwande and her funny jokes. Instead of us going home, we went to the club that is nearby his house.

Max: It's her phone still not going through?

I tried calling her again, her phone took me straight to voicemail.

Me: Let's give her some time. She will return our calls, when she switch on her phone.

He banged the table. Malwande must fix this, I don't like to see my friend hurt like this, he was a mess.

Me: Let's do like this, after this drinks we will go to her house, hopefully she's fine.

He shook his head, he was drunk.

Max: Love has a fierce way of keeping us tied to people who hurt us. The problem start with us blaming each other without getting to the bottom of the matter, the way the world works we trust our insecurities than our partners.

I lifted my head up and looked at the door, Malwande walked in holding his father's hand.

Me: You don't have to worry she's here with her father.

He looked at them.

MALWANDE ZULU

We sat at the bar, I was having Savannah and my father was drinking flying fish I really wanted something to distract me from my sorrows and pain but I didn't know how.

Dad: Life challenges needs us to be strong.

I looked at him.

Me: I don't get it, why did you choose to work aboard?

He lifted his glass, crazy question I know, I don't want find myself agreeing to go to a therapist.

Dad: Great opportunities don't come everyday Lwande, I had to grab the opportunity with both my hands.

I drank my savannah. There's some truth to the idea that alcohol can reduce stress. Alcohol is a sedative and a depressant that affects the central nervous system.

Dad: Slow down Malwande!

He took it, we laugh. I heard Sne laughing. I turned and looked at her she winked at me.

BUHLE ZULU (*Malwande's adoptive mother*)

The past month was hard for my daughter she didn't know whether she was going forth or backwards. I had to trick my husband to come home. I know he will do anything for our daughter. Even though he was avoiding me, I don't understand why he is avoiding me, I'm his wife for goodness sake, this long

distance relationship it doesn't work for me anymore. I ended up using my daughter's illness for him to come home. I know that long distance relationship goes through periods when I feel like I don't have much to talk about. There are times where we used to talk every day, but now we only connect once in a while.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

My eyes were drawn to the Malwande. I know that she's my friend's girl friend but I can't help noticing how beautiful she is all I could think about was to kiss. If she wasn't my best friend's girlfriend I was going to have her in my palm.

Max: Bafo stop staring at my girlfriend like that.

Me: How could she do this, she's ignoring our calls.

He looked at me.

Max: Remember that Mr Zulu comes after a while, they are catching up, it's a father and daughter date. I will talk to her tomorrow.

He was too understanding.

Me: Is she dating her dad or you?

He giggled.

Max: What kind of a question is that?

Me: I was just checking because she lives under the same roof with her man.

He cuts me.

Max: That man comes after a while to be with his family. Beside I do spend time with her. The is one thing we tend to forget that family is the best thing in the world, you and Lwande you are still lucky because your fathers are still alive.

Me: Manje usudakiwe. (You are now drunk)

Max: I'm telling the truth

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it's a good thing to spend time with your family sometimes, because we are here for a second death can visit us at any moment.

Me: I think we should go.

My eyes were still on Malwande and her father, she turned and looked at us again. She got up and said something to her father. They laughed.

Max: Nothing comes before family Sne, family is life.
Relationship is relationship, but family is for life, family is forever.

This guy is drunk sure. Malwande walked to us. I wish I was able to look at my father like she does.

Malwande: Sne you are making me nervous.

As she walked to us. I can't help it I like her.

Malwande: Hi friends!

Us: Sawubona thisha. (Hi educator)

She smiled.

Max: Ungahlala phansi. (You may take a seat)

She shook her head, he's too soft on her, he needs to man up.

Malwande: I'm not joining you guys, I just wanted to say hi.

We looked at her.

Me: Why didn't you attend classes today?

Malwande: Because I wasn't feeling well.

She look perfectly fine to me.

Me: But you look fine.

Malwande: You tend to forget that my mother she's a nurse.

Me: But you should've came to school.

Malwande: I had fever.

Me: But you are here.

Malwande: My father force me to come here, I wasn't in the mood for people.

Max: How are you feeling now?

Malwande: We will talk later baby.

Max: You will call me?

She shook her head.

Malwande: I will come to your place, my phone is damaged.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's biological mother*)

It feels so insecure, like I had to compete with my daughter in law, especially with the household and who what is the best for Xolani. My son had to marry someone in his standard. Gift and his father walked in.

Gift: Hello Ma!

[Me: Boy!](#)

He's my last born.

Gift: Why is sis Thando crying?

I looked at him.

Me: She had an argument with Xo.

His father: But Xolani hasn't back yet.

Unlike him, by this time, Xolani he's back.

Gift: What do we have for supper?

Me: Go ask Thando

MALWANDE ZULU

My father let me go with Sne and Maxwell, he didn't protest. I'm thinking of taking a break from dating I need to find myself. I know that Taking a break can lead to breakthroughs but I need to disconnect from my past to reconnect to the my current life.

The plan was I'm going spend a night with Max. Some phrases are scarier in a relationship how I'm I going to tell him that we must take a break?

Sne was the one who was driving us, she drive off into the hills and we got to his house and he took off his clothes and lie on his bed. I went to the bathroom to freshen up. When I was done I wrapped my body and walked to his bedroom. I sat on the bed and I put my hand on his shoulders.

Me: We need to talk.

I didn't know where to start.

Max: Before we could talk lean against the headboard I want to see something.

I did as he asked me to. He grabbed the towel and I was completely naked I looked at him, he reached into his drawer on his bed and brings out a condom and he gave it to me. I looked at the condom. We were both drunk he reached into the drawer again and bought a pair of sunglasses.

Max: Put them on.

I did.

Max: Look at my girlfriend she's beautiful.

I blushed. Knowing very well that will end in tears. Max loves me unconditionally.

SNETHEMBA TSHABALALA

I don't see my father agreeing on sleep away from home. My father he's something else, his rules are toxic. I wish I had a understanding father just like BabZulu. I got home, my father was the one who opened the door for me. He looked at me as I took a seat.

Dad: Sne how come Malwande allows you to drive her boyfriend's car?

Me: She's his girlfriend not his wife.

Dad: You know that the 3rd person in relationship is a poison.

Me: I and Maxwell we've been friends since we were kids.

He cuts me.

Dad: I'm not saying you must not be his friend, but You need to stop taking his car.

Me: Maybe if I had a car I wasn't going to do that.

He whistle.

Dad: What a good way to ask me to get you a car.

Me: Where is everyone?

Changing the topic.

Dad: Your brothers are always in my house, they are busy blowing my money.

I checked.

Me: Whose money they suppose to spend?

He smirked. For the first time in many years I'd see his teeth. My father hardly smile or laugh.

Dad: The only person who should spend my money is your mother.

Me: She's at KZN most of the time, and we are here with you, and we are your children, if we don't spend your money then who will do that?

Dad: Okay Sne you have a point, I'm the head of this house, therefore I need to take care of my children and wife.

I never imagined myself sitting in the same room with this man. Not alone chatting with him. I think my brothers planned this. They've been encouraging me to tell him that I'm a lesbian. That's not easy as they think.

MALWANDE ZULU

I took tube of lotion that he was holding, I squeezed my fingers to my body as I was still leaning on the headboard. I was inviting him to take full control of my body, All I wanted was the night to be remembered.

Max: I like this new Lwande.

He lay on the bed, and placed his hands on his head. There comes the nightmare of my life. Fear hooked my stomach and pulled it toward my chest.

Me: Can I get something stronger.

Max: You are drunk already.

I chuckled.

Me: Baby I saw J&B on your cupboard can you get me a glass please. I drank a lot because I could not handle the thought of what I was doing.

Max: Hold a second.

His mother lives at Polokwane.

He walked out and came back after couple of minutes, with a glass of whiskey. I drank it like I was drinking a water.

He started kissing me.

Me: Please be gentle.

He helped me to lie on my back against the pillows, and I took of the sunglasses.

Max: Put them on.

Me: No you put them back.

He continued kissing me. I lied there, naked.

Xolani William

Thando she was packing her clothes, I don't know what was happening

no one was willing to tell me what is going on. I locked the door. And put the keys on my pocket.

Me: Jy gaan nêrens Thando heen nie. (You are not going anywhere Thando)

Thando: Watch me Xolani.

Me: What is going on?

Thando: I just want to go home.

Me: This is your home, remember what's mine is yours?

She shook her head.

Thando: Xo please.

Me: Okey if you let me know what happened I will let you go.

Thando: If I continue leaving here I will get crazy trust me.

Me: Why is that?

MALWANDE ZULU

I groped for him, though I was scared but the whiskey played its role. I wasn't myself.

Me: Please.

My lips touched his. As he continued kissing me again, and slipping the shorty. His strong and gentle hands began to stroke me, his hands, his lips, followed by his tongue. Not frightening.

Knowing what he was doing. I felt my nipples rise, and it startled me.

Max: I won't hurt you.

I closed my eyes.

Max: You won't fight me tonight?

I nodded, he slowly pushed his dick in.

Me: Mac! Ma!!

Max: Shhh...

He whispered.

Max: Shhh, it's all right, don't worry, just relax and listen to your body.

He was slow, rhythmic, gentle, moving down my body, down, I was nothing but my body there was a sharp brief pain, and then a sweet spasm went through me. I seemed to rise into the air. No more pain I was enjoying the moment the incredible night.

Me: Oh yeah right there baby.

If I was feeling like that each time we have an encounter I was going to be the happiest woman on earth.

XOLANI WILLAMS

I looked at her crying. I was not going to open that door. She must get that in her mind. She knelt down.

Me: Thando you can cry all you want, but I'm not going to open the door.

Thando: Williams please.

She bagged.

Me: Mrs Williams you are not my girlfriend you are my wife. Therefore I have the right to know what's going on with my wife.

Thando: I'm trying baby but I can't.

Me: Talk to me, you know that I'm a good listener.

She nodded.

Me: Talk to me.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

MONTHS LATER

Here comes the day I was not looking forward to I had to attend undergo various classes where I was supposed to be taught of everything that is expected of me and the disappointments that I'm going to face since I'm a woman.

My mother entered with 3 old woman into small room.

Mom: Ntombazana.

I was tired, at midnight, I and the girls we had to leave the house completely naked to go and sleep by a river, we were singing and dancing all night. All needed was to sleep.

Ma:Ekugcineni yilesi sikhathi ukuhlolwa intombi. (Finally to be tested)

I had to lie down and carried their work, I was shaking, not that I was scared but I was uncomfortable.

Old woman: Kugcwele. (It's full)

They ululated. I wished I could just flee or get sick, I wished something could go wrong.

I joined other girls, to bath and get ready in our Zulu attire to begin the celebration. I had to wear grass-reed beads embellished skirts.

Girls:Ngilibalekele noma sengikhulile. (I will never forget it when I am older)

They were singing memolo songs. Malwande promised to come, but I don't think she will. She's no longer with Max the

are calling it a break. My friend he's hurting, he loved her. If I was him I wasn't going to let that girl go.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

Atleast I will be out of this house for few hours. worn fully Zulu attire that covers my body since I'm a married woman and grass hat. Honestly speaking, I love my husband, but I think he married me for his selfishness reasons. His sister was my friend growing up, I don't know what made her left home. He thinks that I know why she left, well Malwande wasn't the girl to open her

Xolani: Look at you.

I smiled.

Xolani: Instead of going to the Tshabalalas why don't we go to my father.

He wrapped his arms around me and started kissing my neck. His step mother is better than his mother, she's welcoming. MamZandi she's always yelling at me for no reason. Always telling me that I'm not good enough for her son. The saddest thing is that I can't tell Xo about that because he will hate her. I don't want to come between them.

Me: Sibusiso het ons genooi

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ons moet sy wense eer. (Sibusiso invited us, we have to honour his wishes)

He chuckled.

Xolani: Why do I have a feeling that Sbu and Mrs William are messing up.

Me: We leave to share Mr William.

He let go of me. I smiled, I love this man with everything I have

Xolani: Thando!

Me: Get ready we need to leave.

He whistle.

Xolani: Mrs Williams she's messing up with my friend. And she's telling me to that we leave to share.

I laughed. I love my husband, but his mother she's pushing me to not trust myself. I believe that Xolani doesn't love me but he me to lead him where is Malwande. Lwande she wasn't a girl who would share her pain, she would hide her pain by her beautiful smile.

MALWANDE ZULU

Maxwell didn't fight with me when I asked for a break. He respected my decision. We only meet at school but we hardly communicate. We act like strangers. Sometimes I miss him. But I need to stick to the plan.

Sne invited me to her memolo ceremony, I could decline her invitation, since I'm not a fan of KZN, but I needed something that will drift away my loneliness. And I believed that entertainment will help me to drift away my distress, that is leaving and contributing in my life. KZN is overwhelming the atmosphere is so welcoming. The driver looked at me as I showed him the location that Sne sent me an hour ago.

Him: Where are you from?

Me: I'm from Jo'burg.

Driver: Wait I thought you come from Brazil or somewhere.

Me: Well I'm from Gauteng.

Driver: How much was your flight?

Why is he interested?

Me: R900

He looked at the mirror.

Driver: Bus is more cheaper than the flight.

I just nodded.

Driver: Whats your name?

Me: Malwande.

Driver: So Malwande doesn't have a surname.

Me: What does it matters.

Driver: Let's do like this, I'm Miles Langa.

Me: Nice meeting you Miles. I'm Malwande Zulu. But you can call me Lwande.

He smirked. Everyone in this world has someone extraordinary in their life. Someone who will complement their days, someone that could make them happy even just staring at their face, and someone that can cause them to sacrifice everything just to make sure their smile doesn't fade away. I find that person, and I took him for granted. Max and I we had our own complications, but he was always there, for me.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

We got to the Tshabalalas, we were not that late. I looked at Thando she smiled. If I didn't know better I was going to take her comment serious, but Thando loves to play. That's the main reason I love about her, she's friendly and approachable. I thought it was going to be fully but I was wrong. Because I managed to make packed my car under the tree.

Me: We are here.

Thando: I can see that.

Me: Get out of my car.

Thando: Why so rude?

Me: We live to share remember?

My lips crashed on her neck.

Thando: Aww Co

She moaned my name in response. I stopped kissing her.

Thando: What was all that.

I got out of the car and walked to her side. She got out.

Me: Lets go back home.

Thando: Why?

Me: To finish what I started.

Thando: Keep on dreaming.

She said as she walked away from me. I locked my car.

Sibusiso was sitting with his brothers, and his cousins. And their friend. I walked to them.

Me: Gents.

I sat down.

Them: Xo.

Sibusiso: You made it.

Me: You didn't give me an option.

Sibusiso: This is sister's day, I want her to see that she's worth living.

His brothers whistle. As they see the girl who was entering their yard.

Nicolas: Hawo sukanini madoda. wangena uthisha. (Gents here entered the teacher)

Samuel: Intombi ka Zulu. (Zulu's daughter)

She bow a little bit then waved at us.

Nicolas: She's forward.

Maxwell smiled.

Max: I'm glad she came.

Samuel: The game you are playing with her it won't end well

Sbu: What happened?

Nicolas: Don't ask to much, they are calling it a break.

Sibusiso whistle.

Sbu: What happened bro?

Max: She needs time to find herself.

Sibusiso giggled, I know that he will say something crazy like he is.

Sbu: Was she lost, Max wake up she didn't want to hurt your feelings.

I cut him before he could say some hurtful things to the poor guy.

Me: Stop it Sbu, the is something we need to understand, most fundamental sense of taking a break doesn't means that couples are officially breaking up, they just decided to take

some time off from each other and see how it will affecting their relationship.

Sbu: Xo my man have you seen that girl?

I shook my head. He won't mind to describe how beautiful she is.

Brothers: The African Zulu daughter.

Max: Guys I'm still here.

We laughed.

BUHLE ZULU (*Malwande's adoption mother*)

I read my daughter's text. "Mama I had a safety trip." I smiled. Seeing her happy makes me happy. I called my husband right away.

Ntokozo: What do you want Buhle?

Wow, what a jerk.

Me: I need to have a reason to check on my husband?

Ntokozo: I'm busy.

Me: To busy to call me, to busy to check on us.

Ntokozo: I don't have time for this.

Me: Zulu this long distance is no longer working.

He's distance.

Ntokozo: What do you suggest?

Me: I suggest you come home or we come there-

He cuts me.

Ntokozo: Come where Buhle?

Me: There.

Ntokozo: Ngeke ukubone lokho. (That won't happen)

Me: Ngabe ukhona ombonayo? (Are you seeing anyone)

He hang up.

MALWANDE ZULU

We surrounded them as they were singing and dancing. She's memolo had lot of people, people came in numbers, she was kneeling down as people were giving her gifts. I couldn't tell that she wanted nothing to do with that ceremony

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She she's forever speaking and blushing. But today she was only clapping her hands while others were singing and dancing. She was defeated.

Girls: Ubaba uthe angimule. (My father told me to kiss him)

They were dancing the memolo dance they didn't have that vibe. Their leader was lazy to sing hence why there is no overwhelming movement. I wished I can join them. These songs they were singing relevant for umemolo. They were communicating and predicament, of her fears and her wishes. That song they were singing is a symbolic of how she respect her parents. Singing and dancing is part of that umemulo. I looked at her, then smiled.

Me: Ubaba uthe angimule. (My father said I must kiss him)

I don't know what pushed me to sing out bid louder. She got up.

Girls: Awu yebheni ngiyakwesaba (Oh no I'm scared)

Me: Khona ngizoba intombi. (So that I will be a girl)

Her brothers like to say I'm forever forward, if they knew that I'm hurt behind my smile they won't even say that.

Girls: I-Awu yebheni ngiyasaba (Oh no I'm scared)

She walked to me whilst she was making dance moves. Well she was inviting me to dance with her.

Me: Ukuze ngibe nesoka (So that I will have a husband)

I smiled whilst I was singing.

Them: Awu yebheni ngiyasaba (Oh no I'm scared)

I got up and dusted my hands then joined her to dance.

Me: Mina ngeke ngibalekele ekhaya labazali bami. (I won't run away from my parent's house)

Them: Ngeke ngilibalekele noma sengikhulile. (I won't run away from it even though I am a grown up)

The smile I was looking for on Sne just appeared. People whistle and others they ululatuted. Whilst we danced.

XOLANI WILLIAM

The girl brought some light on Sne's face, judging by how she warmed her smile.

Sbu: Wa yidlaladlala indima uthisha. (The educator played her role)

Sne and the girl dance moves, made people to be active. We all came here for Sne not those girls who were singing before the girl blessed us with her beautiful voice. We were bit far from them but the exphecss in and with their faces and voices not to mention their dance they were nailing their moves.

Max: The song expresses the fear and tension.

This guy loves that girl. But he needs to respect her wishes.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

Malwande made my day no lies. She always has the ability to make me feel better, hence why I begged her to come. I was tired but her voice kept me awake. My father stopped us. She went to sit down.

Dad: Mantombazane le ngoma unomyalezo ukwesaba kwakho Snethemba mayelana nezinguquko zempilo yakho. In fact, my daughter is afraid that one day she will get married.(Girls this song has a message for your fears Snethemba about the changes in your life.

If it happens I get married I will be marrying a girl. He looked at Lwande.

Dad: Ntombi KaZulu uzwakalisa inhlonipho yezifiso zakayise futhi izethembiso azenza kubazali bakhe, we-Maxwell mfana wami udinga ukba yindoda, le ntombi yakho igcwele amahlaya.(Ms Zulu expresses respect for her father's wishes for her father's house and the promises he made to her parents, Maxwell my boy you need to just man up, this girlfriend of yours is full of jokes.

We laughed. My brothers whistle.

Dad: Amantombazane ngeke uhlale njalo ngaphansi khophahla lwo baba, sebakulile manje, badinga ukushada. (Girls will not always be under the roof of their father, they are old now, they need to get married)

We laughed.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

My father had to give a speech and give me a spear, although the girl's spear is not for fighting, it however it's a symbol that I have fought and won the battle of childhood which it was a difficult battle to conquer but I conquered that battle.

How funny was that, I'm 26 years but they keep on saying I've conquered the battle of girls. Because I passed my journey without letting boys in my father's house, my father saw that as an opportunity to perform that boring ceremony as his gift to thank me. The spear symbolises the fact that I'm indeed a conquering hero, I'm not a coward or a loser so it's the right thing to carry it in public.

Dad: Uma umuntu elimile ensimini, uyavuna.

(When a person has sown in the field, he reaps.)

I glanced down.

Dad: Uma evuna, uyazidla izithelo. Induku le ikhombisa ubuqhawe, akekho umuntu olwa ngaphandle kwesikhali. Induku le ikhombisa ubuqhawe bakho, ngoba ngempela akekho umuntu ongalwa ngaphandle kwesikhali. Lento le luphawu lokukhombisa ukuthi usukhulile. (When he harvests, he eats the fruit. The rod shows bravery, no one is fighting without a weapon. This rod shows your strength, because really no one can fight without a weapon. This is a sign of maturity)

That means I can do my own decisions with the freedom he was giving me, without him interfering.

Dad: Uyibambile impi wayilwa, azoqhubeke uyilwe.

(She has fought the battle, and fought, let her continue fighting)

People ululatuted.

Dad: Lona khuzoba ngumkhonto wakho wokulwa njalo ndodakazi yami. Ungihloniphile Snethemba wethu, ngalokho-ke ngithi ngiyabonga Mshengu. (This will be your constant battle spear my daughter. You have honored me Snethemba, so I say thank you Mshengu)

They played drums others whistle and women they ululated. Mshengu falls under Tshabalala clan names.

Dad: Sihlangene lapha bantabenkosi ngalo mntwana uSnethemba. Ungiphathe ngenhlonipho, nami ke kanjalo ngamhlonipha njengengane ngoba engihloniphile. Ngiyabonga, kakulu ngane yami. Ngiyabonga Snethemba. (We are gathered here

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beloved, because of this child Snethemba. She has been respectful, and I will respect her, because she respected me. Thank you so much my child. Thank you, Snethemba)

Drums played. Others ululated as he praised our clan name. He used concrete facts for the audience,

to make it easy for them to grasp the abstract facts concerning my memulo. He used the familiar language and familiar concrete objects so that everyone could understand. The singing and the gifts proceed. My mother walked to me. She knelt before me.

Ma: Udinga ukusikhombisa ukuthi ubonga kangakanani. (You need to show us how to you are)

I looked at her. She's my mother she supposed to understand how I'm I feeling.

Me: Ma I can't.

Ma: Please try ntombi. (girl)

I looked around people were dancing.

Me: Ma I feel trapped in this whole thing.

Ma: USibusiso ungitshela ngobulili bakho, ngiyabazi ubunzima obhekene nabo, kodwa udinga ukuzenzisa. (Sibusiso told me about your sexuality, I understand what you are going through, but you need to pretend)

She was cut by the women who called her. For how long I'm I going to pretend like everything is okay?

Leader: Ngiyanibonaga bazali. (My parents I appreciate)

Girls: Ningikhulise kanzima. (You have raised me so hard)

Leader: Kepha manje sengiyabona. (But now I see)

Girls: Niyayibona impumelelo. (I see success)

I wish I could just flee

MALWANDE ZULU

I had a great day, with a especially the overwhelming speech from his father, he meant each and every word. Her Uncle have a speech too. Memulo performance does not compare only the speeches and the

giving of gifts but also dancing accompanied with songs relevant for the occasion.

Later on. After the ceremony I helped where I could, it was getting late, I didn't wanna miss my flight. I said my goodbyes to Sne's parents. Her mother suggested that I should sleep over but I refused, I just wanted to be out of KZN. I walked to Sne's room, she was looking at herself at the mirror

Me: Itshitsh. (Virgin)

She looked at me.

Sne: Uzophuma la. (You will be logged out)

We laughed.

Sne: Thanks for coming.

If she knew I had to debate with myself, she wouldn't thank me.

Me: It's ok.

Sne: Have you talk to Max?

I shook my head.

Me: Uhm I have to go Sne.

I do want to talk to him but it feels like I will be hard on myself.

Sne: Why are you leaving this time, it's late I won't forgive myself if anything can happen to you.

I nodded.

Me: Don't worry, my flight will departure at 8pm.

She gave me a determined look.

Sne: Why flight?

Me: Because is faster and cheaper.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

I was waiting for my wife while listening listening to Sibusiso and his brothers. What I like about them is their relationship and madness.

Nicolas: Max you need to man up.

Poor Max he's been hearing that from those brothers.

Me: Guys you didn't know that he needs to man up until your father told him to.

They laughed, I wasn't joking but they find that as a joke even Max himself was laughing. Thando walked to us. Sibusiso whistle.

Sbu: Thandolious!

He's such a fool at times.

Thando: Hello Sbu.

He got up.

Me: Don't think about it bro.

We laughed they shared a hug then broke it.

Me: Sbu my friend, I won't mind to break your knees in your house.

We laughed. I got up.

Thando: I told you that we leave to-

She stopped talking while she saw Sne and her friend walking to us.

Nicolas: Nakhu kufika amantombazane e-qgomu. (Here comes the qgomu girls)

We laughed

Girl: Brothers I'm leaving.

We all looked Max.

Girl: Guys I-

She stopped talking.

Girl: Lethu!!

Thando: Malwande Zucchini.

I looked at her. Indeed it was her. How did I miss that?

Malwande: Thando.

They screamed and hugged each other. It was emotional moment for them, so was I? Tears streamed down from my eyes. They broke a hug.

Malwande: And she's married.

Zulu women wear different stages of their lives wear different attire. The older they get and as they are married, the more they cover their bodies.

Thando: Yes I'm Mrs Williams.

She blinked her eyes.

Malwande: Williams as my brother?

Me: The one and only Xo Williams.

She jumped to me. We shared a hug.

Her: Xo.

She just cried in my arms.

Me: It's okay sis.

She cried so hard. That made me cry too.

Malwande: He..... She

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MALWANDE ZULU

My heart was beating so fast. We broke the hug. I couldn't believe my eyes. He wiped my tears using his thumb.

Xo: Thando my eye are deceiving me.

It was unbelievable.

Thando: Indeed it's untrue.

She was also in tears. I looked at everyone. They were all shock. I wanted to open up but with this people I couldn't get the

courage to open up. Indeed it was untrue I landed with a sudden, astonishing hybrid, made up with childhood memories. One of the things I've noticed about bereavement is how the past spreads itself now across my everyday reality in a more concerted way than before, with two impossible beings occupying my middle distance.

Me: Guys I have to go.

Max looked at his phone.

Max: It's already late Lwande.

Everyone nodded, agreeing with him. He was always caring boyfriend. Chances of getting out of the Tshabalala's yard was very slim.

Me: My flight will departure at 20:00.

Max: Malwande even that flight was going to take you from here to your house I don't care it's late.

Me: Bab...

Xo: Can't you go tomorrow?

I shook my head.

Sne: Guys she will be fine, I will drive her to the airport.

Max: Themba she will go home tomorrow morning.

Me: Max why are you doing this?

Max: Let me call your mother and see if she will agree that her daughter must-

I cut him. There was no way I was going to win that, my mother was going to agree with him.

Me: Sne your mother said I should stay for the night can you please confirm with her if the offer still stand.

Sne: You are my guest therefore yes you can sleep over.

Me: Let me alert my mother then.

I moved away from them.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

She was alive all along? Indeed she was safe, judging by how Maxwell handled her madness of wanting to leave. Sometimes not sharing what is going on with your life is wrong. Hence why in life we need to have a friend bond. I and Sibusiso have been friends from university. I never told him about my lost sister.

But he used to tell me about his siblings and how crazy they are. Maybe if I swallowed my pride and told him he was going to lead me to her. Malwande walked to us again.

Malwande: Max my mother wants to talk to you.

She gave him the phone. He excused himself.

Sne: Are you alright?

Malwande wiped off her tears.

Malwande: I don't know Sne

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the is this part of me wants to be out of here, but at the same time I want to be here.

Sibusiso: I never thought I will see this day. Lwande crying?

He was being himself.

Me: Let's say I'm a girl of my own.

Thando: Malwande what happened to you?

She looked at her.

Malwande: If Zandile and her boyfriend are still alive they got all the answers.

Me: What makes you think they are dead?

As far as I know my mother said she has no idea why did my sister left home. We all sat down on the chair.

Malwande: Xo as I said go to your mother ask her what happened, I think she will tell you.

Thando: I don't think she will tell us anything.

Me: Why don't you come with me, I will ask them-

She cut me.

Malwande: Askis! I'm not going there Xo.

She said that in frustration.

Sne: Okey calm thisha you won't go there. (Educator)

She looked at her and smiled.

Me: I really want to understand why you don't want to go with me?

Max made his way to us, he gave Malwande her phone.

Max: Mrs Zulu she said I should keep an eye on you for this week because she's going somewhere.

Sbu whistle.

Sbu: She gave a week to look after her daughter?

I looked at Thando.

Malwande: That won't happen Sbu I can take care of myself, I'm a big girl remember?

Max: You are a big girl Lwande but your own mother believes that you will harm yourself.

She looked at him.

Max: I'm sorry but I promised her to take care of you. She should've asked anyone else. But she believes that you will be safe with me.

Malwande: Excuse me.

She got up from the chair.

Malwande: I need some time alone.

Max gave her the car keys. I really want to meet that Mrs Zulu she has the reason to believe that Malwande might harm herself.

Thando: Xo what is the way forward?

Sne: Guys what is going on?

I looked at Thando. Now I have to answer tell them what is happening.

Me: Sne I believe Lwande she's your friend maybe she told you about her past life.

She looked at Max.

Sne: We are class mates and she's Max's girlfriend whom he's my friend, that makes her my friend too.

Me: I'm sorry to put you guys in this position. But I want to know more about her parents?

Sne: Her mother she's a nurse and her father he's an engineer he works for big companies abroad he only visit them after a while. And how are you related with her Xo?

Me: Let's say I'm her brother I can't explain how but yeah I'm her brother.

Thando: Uhm I think we should leave.

MALWANDE ZULU

I sat on his car. Max doesn't deserve all this he deserves to know the truth. I sent him a WhatsApp text.

"Can we talk? He responded "Sure"

I believed that he will look at me differently. He knocked on the window. I unlocked the car. He entered.

Max: Are you alright?

I nodded.

Me: Max what I'm about to tell you, promise me that you won't judge me.

He gave me a determined look.

Max: Baby we've been dating for 3 years and we are in a break for a month you should know me by now that I can be everything but not God.

That respond was like he's demanding to know what was happening.

XOLANI WILLAMS

The next day. I never thought I will be positive like I will be happy again. When I got home last night the first thing I did was to call my father and let him know what happened he advised me to dig deeper into my mother and her boyfriend.

I walked to the launch she was sitting with Gift, her boyfriend and Thando. I hope Thando didn't tell them anything.

Me: Good morning family.

I pulled out the chair and sat on.

Gift: What happened in that room, brother?

I looked at him and laughed.

Gift: Sis Thando she's over the moon and you too, what happened?

Me: Ok little one lets say. God answered my prayers.

Zandi: Did you get a promotion or something?

Me: Something like that.

Thando: Vertel my hier hoe het jy die een gemis. (Tell me how did you missed that one)

Me: I don't know but all I know is that I'm the happiest man alive.

My mother looked at me.

Zandi: Is she pregnant?

My wife she's not ready to be a mother, I will wait for her until she's ready.

Me: Not yet Zandi.

They looked at me.

Me: Mom I want to know what happened to my sister maybe if I get all the answers I will be more happier than now.

She swallowed...

Zandi: How many times should I tell you that I don't know what made your sister to leave.

Me: Didn't you have any fight with her. Like you always do with Thando?

Zandi: Not that I know off.

I looked at her boyfriend.

Me: Isaac you were always here, do you know what happened.

He gave me a determined look.

Isaac: Excuse me.

He got up and walked away. I looked at Thando.

Me: Gift count me and Thando out for breakfast.

Zandi: You are acting weird.

I looked at her.

MALWANDE ZULU

We wewe with Sne's parents having a breakfast. I never thought that one day I will find the courage to open up about my past. It was hard but I finally got the courage to open up to Max. Telling Max about my life it felt like I was releasing out all the buried pain that was buried inside me. It feels like I was holding on my happiness. Old wounds have many ways of stealing into relationships. They can disrupt a connection, prevent a connection from reaching take off, or slowly pull at a relationship until it gasped for air.

Life is unpredictable, the more we believe, the more it will become a rock bottom. I considered that as a momentary wave while living and also as a lesson for my needs. Mom was right I was supposed to tell Max about who I was long time ago. The pain that I was hiding, it got a place and hide itself. I see the brighter future in my life. It's true when you keeping things to

your heart you are killing yourself without being aware but sharing the pain is like giving it to that person you are sharing it to.

MaTshabalala: Malwande!

I shook my head. They laughed at me. I was really lost in my thoughts

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thinking about my life.

Me: I'm sorry.

Mr Tshabalala: Where is your mind?

Sbu: She's here but her mind is miles away from here.

I smiled, then apologized.

Me: Brothers who has Thando's contact?

I couldn't take their contact yesterday. I was blown away by joy and anger at the same time.

Sbu: I will forward you their contact.

I smiled. There is something about Sne I think she's not happy about me and Max we decided to work things out. My phone beeped. I checked Sbu sent me Xo and Thando's contact. I needed to meet with her, Max suggested that I must save money instead of catching a flight. He will drive with me to Jo'burg.

Me: Sne please help me with the dishes.

Ma: Cha ngane yami wena uyisivakashi. (No my child you are our visitor)

Me: Ma take this as my appreciation for your hospitality.

MaTshabalala: We are the one who should thank you Lwande, your performance made my daughter's day to be a successful one.

Sne's brothers whistle their father stop them. Well that is not allowed.

Mr Tshabalala: We-Sne ngikholwa wukuthi uthatha amanothi kuye, awulindi ukukhunjuzwa ukuze usule itafula. (Hey Sne I believe you are taking notes from her, don't wait to be reminded to clear the table)

This man though, my father is way too different from that man, Mr Zulu let me learn from my mistake, he won't tell me that in his generation that's incomparable. She got up we tickle the table. She seems like she was waiting for that moment.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

Xolani was happy I'm sure he couldn't sleep. Yes I was happy that we finally find her. But the question was where will that put our marriage. The look from his mother I didn't wish to be in that room anymore.

Xolani: Thando shall we?

This breakfast date is not everyday thing. He was happy.

My phone started ringing. I looked at it. It was unregistered number.

Me: Can I take this.

He nodded. I answered it.

Me: Thando.

Voice: Hey it's me Lwande.

I almost screamed.

Me: Oh hi.

Malwande: Can we meet before I leave.

Me: Yeah sure, where and when?

She laughed.

Malwande: Name the place, I will pick the time.

Me: Okay I will let you know.

Malwande: We will be heading to Jo'burg around 2pm, so let's meet at 12 mid-day today.

Me: Okay then.

She hanged up. I looked at Xolani. He just smiled.

Me: Let's get going because I have a meeting by 12:00.

Xolani: Are you now working?

Me: I'm meeting with my friend.

He gave me a determined look.

Me: The girl I met yesterday.

I don't understand why he doesn't want to tell MaZandi that Malwande she's fine.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

I and Lwande we are meeting with Thando. Max didn't want to come with us. Max allowed us to use his car. My friend love his girlfriend, he can do anything to keep her safe. She's Max's girlfriend but I have a confusion feelings for his girlfriend.

Me: How long does a break from a relationship take.

Honestly I like Malwande. I couldn't tell her how I felt about her.

Malwande: Why?

Me: Is just that I don't understand you and Max you said you were taking a break and you were hardly talking to each other. For a month, now you are acting like everything is okay.

Malwande: Taking a break from a relationship it might take a week to a month. It should be enough time for both parties to determine whether they should stay together or what, if a month passed they still don't see a change they can continue with their break. Beside I and Max we didn't break up it was a break.

She was my crush but I was not able to confess how I feel about her I guess that was an ego thing and I hate it because was she right there didn't break up it was a clear break.

Me: I'm sorry.

She smiled, she's forever wearing her smile.

Malwande: No harm done babes.

That's what she does brushing off our conversation always.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

The were times where I'd gave up on searching for my sister, though traditional healers told us that she was alive and safe. I couldn't believe that. I drove Thando to the restaurant where she was meant to meet with Malwande.

Me: I just don't understand why can't I join you guys.

Thando: We call it a girls date.

Me: Wow.!!!

She laughed. She got out of the car.

Me: And my kiss.

Thando: You demand to much Xo.

Me: Demanding what belongs to me.

She got in, and gave me a kissed.

BUHLE ZULU (ADOPTIVE MOTHER)

Ntokozo had me many reasons to doubt his loyalty. So I decided to take the last flight to Mexico City last night. Malwande will have to forgive. I was communicating with my husband's cousin they work together. I didn't gave him the obvious thing. I just asked him details of the place where they were. He gave me willingly.

MALWANDE ZULU

That restaurant was busy. It had a vibe that attracts customers. I needed a bathroom. So I asked Sne to accommodate me there. We left Thando with some of her Slay Queens friends.

Sne: Lwande remember that we need to head back to Jo'burg.

Me: Just a minute.

Sne: What's taking you too long?

I got out. She was standing at the basins.

Me: I'm done happy now?

Sne: Wash your hands.

I walked to the basin.

Me: Thanks for reminding me.

She opened the tap for me.

Me: Thank you.

I washed my hands. She pushed me up against the wall and kissed me. I pushed her.

Me: Sne what are you doing?

I asked her in frustration.

Sne: I love you.

I didn't want to be rude. But I was frustrated how could she do that? I'm straight, or maybe I pushed her to the direction where she thought I'm into her. I was just being friendly to her. As my class mate and my boyfriend's friend.

Me: That's sweet, but you know that I'm in love with someone, else.

I faked a smile.

Sne: We can do this without anyone knowing.

Me: You are out of your mind Snethenba? Let's go

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Thando she's waiting.

I don't get it how do you feel attracted toward someone on the same as gender you? Things has changed from the last

generation. I walked away from her. Thando was sitting alone, I joined her.

Me: Where are your friends?

Thondo: Say that next to Xo. He will take me to his father house for good.

Me: Why?

She took a sip of her juice.

Thando: They were my friends from college, so we all quiet school without a valid reason.

Me: So Xolani doesn't want you to be their friends because of that?

She nodded.

Thando: He believes that they're bad influences.

Sne walked to us. I looked at her, she acted like nothing happen.

Me: Thando I'm sorry but we have to go.

Thando: We bearly have an hour Lwande.

Me: I'm sorry. Max called we have to leave.

Pure lies.

Thando: Why are you leaving today?

Me: Tomorrow we have a class and I need to catch up with my work.

Thondo: You are studying medicine?

I wanted to become a well known doctor but everything changed on my first year at medicine school. I had a best friend, her name was Pretty we could do anything together. She was like a sister to me. Until she decided to stab me in the back. That is another scar from somebody I trusted her. She slept with my fiancé who happened to be my ex fiancé. They have a child together. So I couldn't continue with medicine but since teaching was a second choice I decided to go for it and I love doing it.

Thondo: I'm sorry I didn't mean to make you sad.

Me: You done nothing Lwethu.

I told her which field I'm studying.

We got up and shared a hug.

Thondo: I'm going back to that house.

She whispered. We broke the hug.

Me: Is that bad?

She nodded. Poor woman.

Thando: It's weekend, so I and MamZandi we are pretending to be friends.

Me: Why don't you go home.

Thando: You want Xo to remind me, that he's the one who approached not me, you want him to remind me that he is the man?

I sat down again. She sounded like someone who is not happy in her marriage.

Me: Thando I know that Xo he's my brother but if he's abusing you. You have to report him and leave.

Thando: He's a good man, friend and a brother too. But I think he married me because he wanted me to link him to you.

Sne: That's not true. He wasn't going to marry you.

Me: She's right. But if you are unhappy just leave.

Thando: As I said he won't allow me.

Me: Than he must get you a house if is that the case.

Thondo: I tried but he believes that Isaac he's abusing your-

I cut her before she could revil some secret.

Me: Zandile deserve everything that is happening to her.

They looked me.

Me: I'm telling you the truth. If I could get a chance to kill I'm going to kill her and Isaac.

Thando: Hai Lwande. (Laughing)

I wasn't joking I was telling the truth. A young man walked to us. She stopped laughing.

Him: Sis Thando and Sne.

Them: Hi Gift.

Gift: But you said you have a meeting.

She looked at me.

Me: Sne we have to go.

Gift: I'm sorry. I'm Gift Zucchini.

I swallowed.

Me: Nice to meet you Gift. I'm Malwande Zulu.

He extended his hand to me.

Gift: Wow great to meet you too Sis Malwande. I had a sister with the same name as you.

I cleared my throat.

Thando: What are you doing here?

Gift: My father and I we are having drinks.

I swallowed. Fear hooked me right there, I didn't know what to do or react.

Me: Sne you will find me in the car.

Sne: Are you alright.

Me: I have to go. I need to be out of this province now.

It was too hard to catch my breath

Thando: Gift can you excuse us.

I was shaking, and breathing too hard. That's the reason I wanted to be out of there after the ceremony. He walked away. Sne went to the bar.

Thondo: You need to calm down Lwande.

I nodded. Sne came with a glass of water. I drank.

Me: I'm sorry about that.

Thondo: It's okay...

MALWANDE ZULU

I ran out of the restaurant. I wanted nothing but to be out of that province. I was the one who was driving because Sne was busy telling me that we barely have an hour for that lunch date. Thando decided to come with us.

Sne: What's wrong with you???

Me: If you could just shut up I will be happy.

Sne: I never thought that you can drive.

I gasps...

Me: Just because you, my mom and Max are always driving. That doesn't mean I can't drive.

She nodded then exhaled.

I was once tempted to bury my pain, I know that Sne will tell Max what happened and Thando will do that too.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (Biological mother)

Xolani was acting strangely this morning. I think Thando she's pregnant. I was then I wasn't going to put my hopes higher. The cursed I put on that girl was to make all her pregnancies end in a miscarriage. The curse will stay with her forever and she was going to struggling with infertility for the rest of her life. I warned her before she could marry my son that she must stay away from him but she didn't.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

After dropping Thando off I decided to come Sibusiso's house. I was surprised to receive her call telling me that they've cancelled their date or whatever they were calling it.

Sbu: Max look who is driving your car.

Max: How could Sne let that happen?

Nicolas: Uthisha usikhombisa elinye lamakhono akhe. (The educator she's showing us one of her hidden talents)

Those brothers could turn everything into a joke. Their humor can keep things exciting, fresh, and vibrant. Sne and Thando walked to us.

Sbu: Judging by how shocked Ms Zulu almost killed you.

We laughed. Surprisingly Sne and Thando didn't laugh.

Sne: Max we have to go.

Max: What happened?

They sat on the chair.

Thondo: Lwande she's not herself.

She seems to forget that she's not the girl she grew up with.

Malwande walked to us. She greeted us. She seems fine to me.

Malwande: Max take me home.

Max: Come on we still have an hour 35 minutes.

Malwande: I want see myself out of this province.

Max: Okay just calm down and tell me what happened?

Malwande: He was there.

She started crying.

Me & Max: Who was there?

Malwande: The man I told you about yesterday.

Max got up and pulled her away from us. Well they left us confused.

Me: Thando and Sne what happened?

They looked at each other.

Sne: I have no clue.

Thando: I think we should go.

She was not giving me the answers I was looking for.

Me: We are not going anywhere Thando.

She was avoiding eye contact with me

Thando: You are not being reasonable right now.

Sne: Okay Xo we are not sure what's happening with your sister or cousin or what so ever you call her. But that girl she's not the Lwande I know.

Samuel: Sne we both know that she's always happy but she's also a human she has emotions.

Sne: She ran out of the restaurant like someone was chasing after her. I'm worried about her.

Sam: Did she say anything?

Thando: The only word she kept saying was that she wants to be out of here.

Me: And you let her drive?

Thando: We tried to stop her we failed.

Her body language was showing that she was so scared.

MALWANDE ZULU

He looked at me. Like he was feeling sorry for me. I thought I can hide my feelings but I failed.

Max: So your little brother approached you?

I nodded...

Me: I and Sne we had our own fight. So I didn't want to be rude next to Thando I asked Sne that we should leave. That's when Gift approached us

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he greeted them before he could introduce himself to me. I didn't have a problem with that until he mentioned that he was with his father that's when I got scared.

Max: I understand baby, remember that he won't touch you ever again, I'm here for you, I'm sorry baby.

Hence why my parents like him.

Max: I'm sorry that you had to go through that.

I nodded...

Max: Instead of dealing with your emotions, You need to face your fears, you cannot run forever your need to face your reality.

I shook my head. I was the one who was affected so I wasn't going to allow anyone to tell me what he was telling me.

Max: Scars need to be treated in order for them so that you can heal.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

Later on. No one was willing to say what happened at the restaurant.

Sne: Max why are we leaving now?

She was supporting that before.

Max: Lwande she has 6 outstanding unit standard, that she has to cover.

Sne: Tell me you are joking. Malwande she's always step ahead of the class.

Max: Themba there are times where we drag our feet as she was dragging her heels, she wasn't just delaying her assessment because she wanted to delay, this whole break situation was hard for her.

What a protective boyfriend.

Sbu: But you guys are doing the same course help her be there for each other.

Sne: We are talking about the Malwande Zulu here she's always step ahead of everyone in the class.

Max: As I said they are times where strong people feel fall and they need help from other people. And remember when it comes to school work we need to be a team Sne your lecture keeps on reminding us that we need to be a team, soon we will be starting with our practicals.

Thondo: So the three of you are doing your final year?

Sne: Yes Thando.

She bit her nails then looked at me like I'm the one who said she must quiet.

Me: It's not too late to go back to school vroulik. (Wifey)

Malwande and Mrs Tshabalala walked to us. Sibusiso's parents loved her no lies.

Ma Tshabalala: My children travel safe, Samuel, Maxwell and Sne nina kumele nibheke iNkosazana yethu. (You guys should look after our princess)

Sbu: As for Princess Ma?

He always has something to say or complain.

Ma Tshabalala: She's a princess because of her surname Sibusiso.

Sam, Sbu, Nico and Sne bow, this brothers are really crazy.

Malwande: You guys can't be serious right now.

We laughed. She's amazing, I even forgotten that she was not okay few minutes ago.

Malwande: I'm ready to leave Mr Maja.

Sbu: You forever forward Thisha. (Educator)

Malwande: I guess you wanted to say goodbye.

We laughed.

Me: She's amazing.

Malwande: Dankie broer. (Thank you brother)

Me: When will I see you again?

Malwande: You can come visit me at any time. My door is always open for someone who will bring me a smile on my face.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (Biological mother)

I entered their room, I took Thando's panty, I needed the one that is dirty but since I couldn't get it. I will use the clean one.
She can't be pregnant

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I made sure that they don't think of it being a mother one day.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

Sam was the one who was driving.

Malwande was acting like nothing happen at the restaurant. Especially after that kiss I was hoping that she will ask me to stay away from her or Max but she didn't, she was just the Malwande I know. The love I had for my friend's girlfriend was insane but I couldn't help it. After I kissed her I had that feeling of pure joy, happiness, and emotion that swept through me. I looked at them through the mirror. What wonderful couple. My ceremony was meant to bring them together again? That was the question in my mind. I want the best for my friend. But the feeling I had for his girlfriend made me to have jealousy of him.

Sam: Lwande!

Malwande: That's my name.

Sam: How come you are related with Xo?

Malwande: He's my cousin.

I turned and looked at them.

Me: How come Gift doesn't know you?

She rolled her eyes.

Me: And Thando called you Zucchini the other day. That didn't make sense.

Malwande: The last time I saw Gift he was only three years if I'm not mistaken. And our mothers are related that's all.

Me: Okay understandable.

She kissed Max I believe she did that on purpose.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

Later on. We joined my mother, step father and Gift for supper.

Zandi: Thando you haven't touch your food.

Thando: I'm not hungry thanks.

That's strange.

Me: Are you alright?

Thando: I'm fine, I ate earlier.

We ate in silent.

Me: Can I help you with the food?

She didn't say anything, she just stared my mother and stepfather.

Me: Thando!!

She freaked out.

Thando: Jeez why are you shouting?

Me: Ek praat met u en u reageer nie. (I'm talking to you and you do not respond)

Thando: I'm sorry, you were saying.

Me: It doesn't matter anymore.

She nodded and looked at Gift who was staring at her.

Thando: You ruined my day Gift.

Gift: I'm sorry I didn't mean to scare her.

Thando: Well you did and I will never see her ever again.

I was lost for a moment.

Gift: But I didn't do anything-

She cut her.

Thando: Save it and never mentioned how you ruined my day.

Gift: But-

Thando: I'm done here.

She threw a fork at the table got up.

Thando: I'm sorry Gift, the thing is Sne's friend wanted to help me to get back to school.

Gift nodded.

Him: Its okay I understand your frustration.

She nodded and walked away from us.

Zandi: And then?

I shrugged.

Gift: She will be fine.

He got and followed her.

BUHLE ZULU (ADOPTIVE MOTHER)

Upon my arrival. I called his cousin to come pick me up at the airport. He did come.

Vusi: I thought you were joking when you said you at the airport.

Me: I'm too old to play.

He laughed. I didn't laugh, I was sending him a little message. His phone rang. Luckily it was connected to Bluetooth. He looked at me. Before he answered.

Vusi: Porque tenemos un problema, tu esposa está aquí. (Cuz we have a problem your wife she's here)

Caller: Tell me you that you joking?

He looked at me. That was my husband.

Victor: ¿Crees que iba a hablar este idioma si estuviera bromeando? (You think I was going to speak this language if I was joking)

I didn't understand the language they were speaking.

Me: I will appreciate it if you use the language that I understand, Victor!

Ntokozo: Buhle is that you?

I kept quiet.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

Gift followed me, I must say he's the only person who I can speak to in this house when my husband he's at work. But if he's not here I'm in my own I can't stand my mother in law.

Gift: I'm sorry that I made your friend feel uncomfortable.

Me: it's okay Gift.

Voice: You too need to tell me what is going on with you too.

I turned and looked at him.

Me: Gift I will be fine, please excuse me.

He nodded and walked out. Xolani looked me.

Me: Ek dink jou ma en stiefpa is die rede waarom sy weg is. (I think your mother and stepdad are the reason why she left)

Xo: What makes you think like that?

Me: I don't trust this walls I will tell you what happened later.

MALWANDE

MONTH LATER

Everything was going fine. I do communicate with my brother and his wife now and again. We started with our practicals 3 weeks ago. They've separate me and Max, and we are in different placement. I was placed with Sne. I haven't told Max that she tried to kiss me and I'm not going to do that. As a student teacher I do not conduct classes on my own, I conduct the class under the supervision of a qualified professional educator, like Mr Mchunu.

He's experienced and he normally makes notes of my description relating to my performance along the way, which he submit every Monday to my tutor.

Mr Mchunu: After the break you will be conducting grade S 10.

My heart sank it was the first time conducting them I was told that they are the best class in all grade 10s. His name is Siphesihle Mchunu.

We conduct two subject Accounting 10 and 11 and EMS for grade 8 and 9.

Me: Thanks sir.

He nodded. That's reminded me of my first day was like as student teacher was hectic but he was there to support me. Honestly I was excited and nervous in equal measure. However, I tried not to worry too much because Mr Mchunu ensure me that everything everything was going to be fine. And indeed it was fine.

Sphe: See you than.

I was not in the mood to face Sne.

Me: Mr Mchunu can I join you?

Mr Mchunu: I'm going to mc Donald.

Not good for my liking. But what will I say.

Me: Can I join you?

He nodded.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

I told Xolani what happened the other day at the restaurant. He tried to ask his mother but she's was not willing to telling him what happened. But I could tell that she was feeling guilty about something and that I will find out either from her or

Lwande. We didn't tell them about Malwande. Our marriage was blissful, it felt like his sister added something to our marriage.

Zandi: Thando ngidinga u-R280. (Thando I need R280)

Xolani gave her money in the morning.

Me: But Xo gave you.

Zandi: I'm not asking you.

She was not asking she was demanding it.

Me: I don't have it.

Sometimes turning down her plea for financial help is difficult for me. But her son made me promise that I won't give her the money unless he ask me to do so.

Zandi: Have you worked for that money?

I shook my head.

Zandi: My son work hard for that money.

Me: And he works hard to provide for his wife.

She brushed her chest. Her breathing was more noticeable, she slapped me before I could ask her that 'she was okay'.

Me: You slapped me?

She nodded. I couldn't believe that, she does treat me like a slave but I never thought the will be a time where she could lay her hand on my face.

Me: I see why did your daughter chose to go. You are nothing but a shameful mother.

She rubbed her chest again and took few steps backward.

Zandi: What did you say?

Me: No child deserves a mother like you Zandi

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you are a pain in your children's life.

I was tired of her abuse, the only thing I told myself was if that's the end of my marriage so be it.

MALWANDE ZULU

We sat there and enjoyed our meal and conversation.

Me: Mc Donald is too good for my liking.

Sphe: You say so.

We chuckled.

Me: Even my boyfriend knows that I don't like Mac D.

Sphe: I feel sorry for him.

Me: Why?

Sphe; The is nothing wrong with Mac D.

Me: Do you bring your wife here?

He looked at me.

Me: Mr-

He just laughed at me.

Me: No ways.

He laughed even more.

Sphe: Ms Zulu we only have 10 minutes left. There is nothing wrong with this food, just eat.

I nodded.

Sphe: You don't like it because it's affordable?

I didn't answer him.

Me: Thanks sir.

We got up.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

I received a call from my mother, she couldn't speak or say something because she was crying.

My supervisor looked at me.

Sup: You know very well that your team won't copy without you.

I nodded.

Me: I agree but I need to go.

Sup: Promise me that whatever it is will be fixed by Monday.

I nodded she gave me extra time two days was enough time to sort out whatever it is. I couldn't complain it was fair.

Sup: I'm giving you this two days because you never asked for a sick leave, you deserve it.

I nodded again. She smiled at me. I bid her goodbye and left.

MALWANDE ZULU

We got back to the school yard.

Sphe: You ready.

I nodded repeatedly.

Me: I was born ready Mr affordable.

Sphe: I'm Mr affordable now.

I laughed. He got off the car and walked to my side to open for me.

Me: Thank you.

He nodded. We walked to the direction of his class. We met Sne and the two guys that we came with for those practicals. Mr Mchunu greeted them and walked passed them.

Sne: We thought you were lost.

Me: Sorry guys I couldn't join you.

They looked at each other.

Me: I have a class to conduct please excuse me.

Sne: Wow Ms Zulu, this is how it should be?

I just walked away from them.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

The trip wasn't that long, there was no traffic. I got home. My mother she was sitting outside the house. I got out of the car and rushed to her I didn't even close my car.

She was crying.

Me: Ma wat het gebeur. (What happened)

Zandi: Jou vrou het my geklap. (You wife slapped me)

Me: She did what?

That was unlike Thando.

Zandi: Ungishaye ngempama waphinda wangithuka. (She slapped me and insulted me)

I walked in to the house.

Me: Thando!!

She kept quiet. I made my way to our bedroom, there she was covering herself with the blanket.

Me: Thandolwethu!

She remained quiet. I removed the blanket, she was also crying but silently. She didn't look at me right away.

Me: How could you attack my mother?

That's when she looked at me. She had a mark on her cheek.

Thando: I'm tired Xo.

Me: So when you feel tired you decided to attack my mother?

Thando: Wow I can't believe this.

She cried.

Me: I know that my mother she's.

She cut me.

Thando: Your mother she's evil Xo.

Me: That's it I'm taking you to your mother.

Thando: Finally.

Me: Start packing your bags.

Thando: With pleasure.

She got up I was disappointed in her. She started packing.

Thando: I've always known that this day was going to come.
And it came.

Me: What was that?

She kept quiet. I love this woman but her behaviour was unexpected.

Me: You slapped my mother Thando and you accept me to be okay with that?

Thando: Like mother like son.

Me: Se dit weer. (I beg my pardon)

She kept quiet. I grabbed her with her braids.

Thando:Ma!!!

She screamed. I started beating her.

MALWANDE ZULU

The following day. My mother was just sitting on the couch enjoying her coffee.

Me: Mama.

She looked at me.

Buhle: Lwande!!

She put down the mug.

Me: Aren't you going to work?

Buhle: Greeting doesn't harm anyone baby it doesn't matter that we were in the same house.

Me: Sorry Ma how are you?

She smiled, sometimes she thinks that I'm still a teenager, I can tell that she was not fine, she was just hiding that behind her smile.

Buhle: I'm fine thanks and yourself?

Me: As you can see.

Buhle: Come sit down next to me.

Sat next to her.

Buhle: I got a new job.

Me: Okay.

She swallowed.

Buhle: It's a good job because is not a clinic I will be working shifts.

Me: Congratulations mom.

Buhle: Thanks but is not around Gauteng.

Me: As long as you are happy I'm happy.

Buhle: Port Shepstone hospital.

Me: KZN?

She nodded.

Me: Mom I'm happy for you.

She sighed like she was relieved.

Buhle: I thought you were going to be angry at me.

Me: Kungani kumele ngithukuthele Ma, you got a job that you always dreamt about, working at the clinic wasn't for you, you always wanted to work at the provincial hospital. I will be selfish if I do that. My life doesn't look the way I thought it would be, but thank you for being there for me it's now my turn to return the favour. You supported me with everything, you were always there for me. (Why should I be angry)

She hugged me. We broke the hug. Honestly my mother she was not strict like my father but she wasn't my favourite person or close like I was with my father, her personality wasn't cold, mean, nor neglectful, the thing is that she was always seemed to be in her own little world. Than my father, when my father he's around, the is this vibe I can't even describe, but he brings life to our house.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

We were having a breakfast. The house was quiet, normal Thando and Gift were the only people to start the conversation. But since Thando she was not around my little brother decided to isolate himself from us. I kept on checking my phone hoping that she will call but no she didn't. I missed her. Her laughter and love, kindness.

MALWANDE ZULU

I heard a car hooter. I wasn't looking forward for another day especially to see Sne's annoying face. To think that I took her as my friend and a friend who will never stab me at the back but no she's just a snake like Pretty.

Buhle: Lwande!!!

I told Max that I will catch a taxi

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but my boyfriend told me that if he still alive and he's still my boyfriend, I won't use a taxi. Honestly life has many rooms is up to me whether I use all the keys for each room. And life only offers one second chance. I took my hand bag on the coffee table and kissed my mother then left.

I walked to the car. I find myself feeling as if I've been there all day and then I realized that I just got there.

Max: Good morning to you too thisha. (Educator)

Sibusiso he's the one who came up with thisha's name or nurse's daughter. Sometimes I wish Sne was like her brothers.

Me: Morning guys.

They laughed at me.

Me: Thank you.

Normal I join them on their madness comments or laugh with them, and that I was giving Sne more power to think that she can owe me. My phone started ringing. I looked at it. It was Thando.

Me: Thando!

She cried.

Me: What's wrong?

Thando: I'm done with Xo.

She was happy that her marriage was improving.

Me: What happened?

She continued crying.

Me: Let's do this, calm down for now, when you ready to talk give me a call. Any time.

Thando: I.... I

She hung up. I got worried about her, I called Xo right away. The one thing I have learnt is that unhappiness in the relationship is the unhappiness that bleeds over into our lives. I've been in and out relationships in the past three years and I was unhappy. Honestly I was the problem because I couldn't open up. He answered his phone.

Xolani: Sis if you are calling me about Thando just save your breath.

I couldn't believe my ears I thought I was just dreaming.

Me: I'm not interested in your marriage brother, but since you gave me the platform to ask, what happened?

Xo: I'm sorry thisha, you won't believe what did Thando do.
(Educator)

Me: I'm all ears.

Xo: I know that she had problems with my mother but to hit my mother that was beyond.

Me: That is unlike your wife. Are you sure that she did that?

Thando hardly fight for herself. I know that I've been gone for years but she's still the same Thando who was my friend beside that she's my brother's wife.

Xo: Zandi said so and I believe her.

The biggest snake in the world.

Me: Do you have a proof that she did that?

Xo: No.

Me: And what did Thando said when you ask her?

Xo: I was angry I couldn't ask her.

Me: Let me guess, you think she did that?

Xo: Yes.

I swallowed.

Me: I don't know but sit with Zandi and your wife get to the root of the story.

Xo: Is to late I laid my hands on her and I kicked her out.

I didn't know what to say than to shook my head in disbelief.

Me: Xo you did what?

Something just walked through me and left a shock and disappointed.

Me: Ek is teleurgesteld in jou broer. (I'm disappointed in you brother)

Xo: She made me do that.

I cut him.

Me: That didn't give you the right to beat her, Xolani you are a snack just like your mother.

That's what I could say to him.

BUHLE ZULU (ADOPTIVE MOTHER)

My husband and I we are going through divorce. We agreed not to tell Lwande because we thought it might hurt her. We will tell her maybe after she graduated. Ntokozo has been cheating on me.

So with that I didn't have the energy to fight him than filling a divorce. I was fortunately to find a job immediately after I resigned from my previous job. The is this friend of mine who works at the hospital he helped me to get the job. All I could do was to grab the opportunity with warm hands.

Taking a break from Ntokozo's house was going to help me to regain my strength and dignity. I won't say that I hate him or anything, I know that Ntokozo he's a good man, loving father and a loving husband too. And besides men are like roots. Once the roots take hold, a small plant will begin to emerge and eventually break through the soil. Ntokozo has started cheating

there is nothing that will stop him. It will only be fair to let him have fun without feeling guilty. I love him with everything I have but I can't afford my heart to be broken again by the man I love. I'm not that strong for that.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

I sat on my mother's bed I was on my own world. Dreams faded away into the mountains, or sea I was not even sure. My life flashed before my eyes. Every muscle of my body screamed at me to flee, but I remained frozen. I kept on questioning myself what did I do to deserve such a cruel life. Life wasn't fair for me it was an unfeeling life for me.

Mom: Here take this it will help you.

Her voice was miles away.

Mom: Thando!!!

I shook my head and came to reality.

Mom: Take this it will help you.

She made me a cup of coffee.

Me: Thanks Ma.

She sat next to me.

Mom: I called your uncle he can't come here this weekend, but he suggested that you must take a break before you file a divorce.

I really loved my husband but after yesterday I hate him.

Me: Ma!

Mom: Yes.

Me: Speaking of a break, can you borrow me R1000 I will pay it back.

She nodded. I once promised Malawande that I will visit her for a week that was a good time to fulfill my promises. My mother walked out...

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

He dropped us off. Lwande didn't even talk to me nor greeted me. Life is like a train she will need me and day. The passengers on the train are seemingly going to the same destination as me, but based on their belief in my belief that the train will get them to their desired destination they will stay on the ride or they will get off somewhere during the trip.

MALWANDE ZULU

A WEEK LATER

My mother moved out surprisedly she took everything that belongs to her. If I didn't know better I was going to say she's going for good. But she ensured me that she will come back.

Thando visited me, she needed a break. My parents didn't have a problem with her being in the house. They do call me everyday to check on me. Xolani hasn't called me or his wife. Proving he doesn't care about his wife he doesn't know that his wife was with me.

Me: Thando I will see you later.

My mother gave me her car, so there is no need to see Sne's annoying face every morning anymore.

Thando: See you sis.

I looked at her. She seemed worried.

Me: What's wrong?

She took a deep breath.

Thando: I've always known that my husband doesn't love me. He was using my love to get the information about you.

Me: But you said everything was going well until Zandi became a devil.

She nodded.

Thando: Everything was fine. The only mistake I did was to tell his mother that she's not a good mother.

Me: Sometimes anger control us. It can make you say things that we are not supposed to say.

She nodded

Thando: Thanks for allowing me to stay with you while I'm still looking for a job.

Me: It's okay Lwethu I believe you were going to do the same to me.

She nodded.

Thando: I wish I was also doing something that will keep me busy and forget about Xo.

Me: There are many opportunities lying there, you can do a short course.

Thando: I hear you.

Me: You can even study online.

Thando: It's easy for you to say that your parents are still taking care of your needs.

Me: Play on my laptop and check courses that you might be interested on. Then I will talk to my father.

Thando: You don't have to, you have done so much already.

Me: Bye babes just do as I say we will talk later.

Helping a friend doesn't require a signature it requires kindness and generosity.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

My life was shutting before my eyes. My number one woman was gone. I went to his mother's house. She gave me a juice. She sat beside me.

Ma: Umkhwenyana senzeni sivakashelwe nguwe ekuseni kangaka. (Son what did we do to be visited by you so early in the morning)

I glanced at the glass. I didn't know what to say or where to start.

Me: I'm sorry Ma, I came here to check on my wife.

She nodded and got up from the chair.

Ma: Please give me a minute.

I nodded. She walked away. My little brother hardly talk to me and my mother. He believed that Thando didn't touch Zandi. But why would my mother lie about something like that? My mother came back with Thando's uncle. His name is Sphamadla we call him Madla he sat on the chair and looked at me.

Madla: Williams what do we do to owe this visit early in the morning?

Me: My apologies for worrying you in the morning.

Spha: I'm listening.

Me: I came to check on Thando.

He shook his head.

Madla: So you know this house now?

I looked at him.

Madla: You kicked our daughter out like she was nothing, the is nothing that I will talk to you.

He got up.

Madla: Loveness please show this young man his way out

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the is nothing that I will say to him beside his uncles or father.

He walked away. If both my siblings are disappointed on me what about my father and uncles.

BUHLE ZULU (ADOPTIVE MOTHER)

He opened the car for me.

Lucus: Ready?

Me: I was born ready.

Lucus: The uniform suite you.

I blushed. He's charming no lies. He was my friend years back at varsity until Ntokozo break our friendship by marrying me and we moved to Gauteng.

Me: You still boring?

He laughed. I was going to start working.

Lucus: But you are smiling.

I smiled even more. I felt like a teenager again.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

With Malwande ignoring me. I decided to lie low but feelings cannot be hidden. She became too close with prof Mchunu and other educators and the Principal. They seems to like her so much. I looked at them having their conversation and laughing.

MALWANDE ZULU

Sihle: Students like you Ms Zulu it will be only fair to join them.

Mr Mchunu suggested that I should join grade 9s and 8s for the trip that will take place next week.

Principal: It will be nice Ms Zulu.

Her Surname is Dladla she is not that old.

Me: Okay I will see what I can do.

What I like about my colleagues we get along, they don't treat us like student especially Mr Mchunu he treats everyone equally.

Sihle: I will contact your tutor.

I nodded.

Sphe: Or I should contact your boyfriend?

Me: Weee ma...

I placed my hands on my head, we laughed.

Educator 1: That will be the best.

Educator 2: He won't allow that to happen.

Me: Guys please.

We laughed...

Principal: So we do have a boyfriend?

Amen.

Sphe: They both on the same field.

Principal: He is a teacher?

Me: Not yet ma'am.

Educator: I feel for your children, you guys will make sure you harass them to focus on their books.

Me: ngizoba ngumama osekelayo. (I will be a supporting mother)

I wish I could tell them that I can't have children, but I couldn't all thanks to Zandi and her boyfriend, they've ruined my future. That will be my wounds forever. Sometimes I question myself what if Max wakes up on day and decide to find someone that will be able to carry his children. That's my fear I can't lose him, I will lose my mind.

BUHLE ZULU (Malwande's adoption mother)

My first day wasn't that bad. I enjoyed it. It felt like I was working there for years, my colleagues were welcoming Doctors were not that bad. For the first time in a long time I felt good about being a nurse. Dr Mdluli walked in. She's young and respectful too her name is Zodwa maybe she is in Lwande's age. I was sitting at the staff room having my coffee.

Dr Mdluli: How are you finding your first day sister Zulu?

Me: I love it so far.

Dr Mdluli: Still early Sister, night shift is more enjoyable.

How could I enjoy a night shift at the hospital?

Me: Oh.

I took a sip of my coffee. She sat down and took out her launch box.

Dr Mdluli: Don't listen to people who say there is ghost weighing around this place, that's what they believe.

I placed the mug on the table.

Me: This is a hospital people die every day and their families don't take their beloved spirit.

She laughed before I could finish what I was about to say.

Dr Mdluli: So you believe that there is ghost here?

She continued laughing.

Me: The are ghost here and they are hunting.

Dr Mdluli: Then they must go hunt their families not us.

I find myself laughing. Lucas walked in.

Lucus: Mdluli what are you feeding her?

She laughed her chicks out.

Me: Njengo-dammit.

Lucus: Suka dammit.

We laughed. Somewhere along the way we got Dr Mdluli lost.
That's how we use to greet each other back than I miss those

day's, where I didn't worry about what tomorrow holds for me.

Dr Mdluli: I'm out of here.

Me: Is your lunch over?

Dr Mdluli: No I just don't want to include myself in dammit whatever you call it.

Me: Musa ukuba amadlingozi. (Stop being dramatic)

Lucus: How old is your daughter again?

Me: She's 27.

Lucus: I'm sure she's kind like her mother.

Me: If you put it like that yes, but she's her father's daughter.

Malwande like Ntokozo than me, sometimes I used to get scared because of their relationship, but at the end of the day he is her father he never looked at her that way.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

Playing on Lwande's laptop helped me so much I applied for a Learnership and got responded that tomorrow I must go to Pretoria for the interview. I checked and the academy was legit nothing was suspicious. If it happens I pass the interview, I will receive 30% theory of bookkeeping and 70% skills and a stipend of 3500k that will cover my traveling transport and my needs too. I was happy but at same time I was stressed because I didn't have formally clothes and my original ID with me. I left everything to that prison. I was needed to do something for myself. My phone started ringing it was my mother. I answered.

Me: Mommy.

Ma: Your husband was here.

I wasn't even surprised.

Me: Okay.

Ma: He said he wanted to check on you.

Me: You should've told him that I'm dead.

She laughed. My mother doesn't know either where I was either. I wasn't going to tell her, Xo won't mind to bribe her.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

She was sitting in the class alone busy with her phone. I walked in. She looked at me.

Malwande: I don't have the energy to fight with you Sne.

I sat down.

Malwande: I just need peace and enjoy my lunch hour alone.

Me: You have changed completely.

Malwande: Ms Tshabalala, I didn't change is just that people want me to, but I won't allow that to happen. I will never allowed anything to change me before

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I won't allow that now.

The more she was giving me that attitude it was the more I was feeling millions of butterflies flying inside me especially when I

was around her, Max will have to forgive me friends do betray one another.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

After Thando's uncle told me to where to get away, I went straight to the office, I just wanted to talk to her, and know what she might need.

I signed in with her emails, she just got invited for an interview the interview was going to take place tomorrow at Gauteng. But she won't be able to get there, she left everything that belonged to her. Beside she doesn't know Gauteng. I tried to locate her, I checked her last use location it was off. "Shit"

Sbu: That language from you.

I looked at him.

Me: Don't you have anything to do?

Sbu: Nothing much.

Me: Than do that nothing much of yours because that what you are getting paid for.

He giggled. And looked around and under the desk. I wished I could entertain his madness like I always do. But my life was incomplete. The was this missing part of my body and that missing part was making me moody and grumpy.

Sbu: What do we have cameras that records our conversation now?

Me: Sibusiso I'm trying to work.

Sbu: Xo what is it?

I swallowed I don't talk about my love life with my friend and colleagues I just listen to them and give them advises if needed.

Sbu: Talk to me maybe I could help you.

Me: You help me forget?

Sbu: You should not judge the worth or value of someone by his outward appearance alone.

I got up from the chair.

Me: I will go work somewhere else.

I took my phone and laptop then walked away from him.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

Later on. I didn't turn on the location with my husband being an IT it was going to be easy for him to locate me, he tried to call me I just ignored his calls, why now after a week. He can use his skills to get to me so with my location of it won't be that easy. Malwande walked in.

Me: Somebody knocked out early today.

She smiled. We greeted each other.

Malwande: I knock off at 14:30 the latest is 15:00.

I checked the time. It was 20 minutes to three. Wow time flies sometimes. Hence why we should use time wisely.

Malwande: We don't cook today.

I looked at her.

Malwande: Come on Thando sometimes we need to take a break from home cooked meal.

Me: I get that but I'm in need of formally clothes.

Malwande: Okay?

I explained to her she screamed with excitement.

Malwande: Let's go to get something for that will get the interviewer attracted.

Interviews and attractive doesn't get along.

Me: Your clothes won't fit me.

Malwande: Let's go do some shopping dear and see what will we get for you.

Me: Lwande I appreciate everything but-

She cut me.

Malwande: Don't tell me about money because it only buys time and bring us happiness for that moment. But we need to remember that there are chores that we find particularly draining. And money allows us to outsource those chores, eliminating something that once made us unhappy.

I understand where she was coming from, both Mr and Mrs Zulu were providing her financially. Its been said that money is the key to success others say money is the number one key of wickedness. I don't know what to believe anymore.

MALWANDE ZULU

The following morning, Thando was nervous about the interview, we spent the whole she night practicing the interview. I never been to interview before so I didn't have the courage to tell what to accept either than to say she will be alright. We printed out her CV and other documents where not there, for now we were relying to God.

Thando: What if they need it?

She was stressed about her ID copy.

Me: It's still the interview.

She deported...

Thando: I'm scared.

Me: Just be yourself.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

Some choices are poor and those choices end up with regrets. I wished I could go back to those time and redo all over. I regret telling my wife to leave. I didn't get to know what happened between her and my mother.

Zandi: Xo jy sal laat wees. (Xo you will be late)

Me: Ek gaan nie daarheen nie. (I'm not going there)

Zandi: Uzothola elinye imbali. (You will get another flower)

What makes her think I need another woman.

Me: There is no woman who will replace Thando.

Zandi: She's not the woman for you.

She was cut by Gift.

Gift: So Mom you are the woman for Xo?

We looked at him.

Gift: How do you sleep at night knowing that you have ruined your son's marriage Ma.

Me: Watch your tone.

Gift: Or what?

Me: Are you in drugs or anything?

Gift: Maybe if I was on drugs the world was going to be a better place, than being with you guys, I hate you, you all disgust me.

He walked out. I looked at my mother.

Zandi: Asnjë grua nuk duhet të jetë në jetën e djalit tim, unë jam numri një i tyre. (No woman should be in my son's life, I should be their number one)

Whatever she was saying made her smile.

Me: What is it?

Zandi: I was praying. Being a mother is divine and scary with the service compared to the service that your wife was giving you.

She seems confused. She got up from the chair and walked away.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

She dropped me at the company where the interview will be conducted.

Malwande: When you done give me a call.

I nodded.

Malwande: Just be yourself.

I nodded again.

Me: Thank you.

Malwande: Goodbye and good luck.

Me: I need that lucky.

She drove off. I walked in to the reception.

Me: Hi!

She smiled at me.

Lady: Hello!

Me: I'm here for the interview.

She nodded.

Lady: What time is your interview?

I told her I was 30 minutes early. I told her my name. She asked me to join the other candidates. I sat next to the girl she was shaking. I greeted her.

Me: Are you alright?

She shook her head.

Her: I'm bit just nervous.

My body was behaving so weird. But I tried to remain still.

An hour later I my name was called. I followed the lady who called me. I sat down on the chair and looked at the lady and the man. The lady looked at the file.

Her: Thandolwethu Williams?

Me: Yes.

Her: And it says you are married?

I nodded.

Her: My name is Catherine Ncumalo and this is Alpha Ratau.

Me: It's good meeting you Ms Ncumalo and Mr Ratau.

She gave me a determined look I doubted the sound coming out of my mouth.

Catherine: Are you married to a white man?

I shook my head.

Me: To a mixed race...

Catherine: So far I like your personality.

I smiled. Honestly I was not myself I was uncomfortable. I wished I could be out of that room.

Alpha: Tell us about yourself.

My heart immediately started beating so fast.

Me: I'm well known for being a detail-oriented and well-rounded and I believe that I am team player too, I'm a good communicator and I can juggle multiple tasks at once.

Alpha: Because you are married will your husband allow you to be in class Monday to Friday, from 8:00 to 16:30?

I nodded.

Alpha: What will you benefit from from this Learnership if you get it?

Me: The Learnership will provide me with the skills in order to get the job experience.

BUHLE ZULU (Malwande's adoptive mother)

I had a patient who was complaining a stomach bug.

Me: Do you get enough sleep?

He nodded. The stomach flu can't be cured by medications, and antibiotics won't help when it is virus is the culprit of our life.

Me: Please avoid alcohol and caffeine such as coffee, strong black tea

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and chocolate, which can affect your sleep at a time when getting enough rest is crucial-

He cut me.

Him: I can't work without a coffee.

Me: How often do you drink water?

Him: Do you want me to the tell you the truth?

I nodded.

Him: I don't like water, I only drink coffee and alcohol.

Me: It is important to stay hydrated.

Lucas walked to the ward. He looked at the patient.

Me: Store bought oral rehydration solutions.

Lucus: ORS?

I nodded. He looked at his file.

Lucus: Get him ondansetron.

I nodded again.

Lucus: Keep him for the next 48 hours.

Me: Noted.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAM

After the interview, I went to the restroom it was pretty clear that I didn't make it. The interviewers were polite but they didn't sound interested in a person with non qualifications beside matric. I felt like I wasted their time.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

In order to win Lwande's trust and heart I had to be closed to her. She was sitting with Ms Dladla the Principal. I walked to them before I could reach to them their conversation was interesting.

Malwande: My parents would hate me.

Principal: But love is love.

Malwande: Yeah love is love but getting myself into hot pot with a married man is not love it is wickedness itself.

Principal: You just saying because you never been there.

Malwande: On my side I won't be able to look at another woman suffering because of me. Yes love is love but we have to remember that life is like a tyre pressure, what comes around goes around.

Ms Dladla cut her

Principal: Are we still talking about Ms Zulu and Prof Mchunu?

Lwande: They won't be Ms Zulu and Mr Mchunu trust me.

They laughed, she told her about her best friend who betrayed her. I admit she's my friend's girlfriend but what the heart needs is what I should fight to get. My feelings were so positive.

Principal: Now I understand where you coming from.

I cleared my throat. They looked at me.

Principal: Miss Tshabalala decided to join the big league today.

Me: That means I'm not welcome to big league team.

She laughed.

Principal: Did I say that?

She's a good person, I think she chooses people who should be around her, so far I never seen her with other educators besides, Mr Mchunu, Lwande and other two educators.

Lwande's phone vibrated she took out her phone.

Malwande: Ma'am the girl I was telling you about she's done.

Principal: As I said only 30 minutes.

She nodded.

Lwande: Trust me I won't get you into trouble.

Principal: Just go before I change my mind.

Lwande: See you than. (Smiling)

Principal: Don't get yourself into the mountains.

Malwande: If I'm applying for a break up with my boyfriend I will do that.

They laughed.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (Malwande's Biological mother)

Sometimes thinking out louder will get us into trouble. Gift walked into my bedroom.

Gift: Are you aware that you are a witch?

I looked at him.

Gift: What you did to sis Thando will happen to your daughter one day.

I swallowed. For some reason I felt bad. And remembered that I have a lost daughter. It's been long but I still believe that she's fine.

MALWANDE ZULU

I was in my way to get Thando. Being close with Siphesihle Mchunu was sending the wrong message to educators, they think we are dating. Getting the man on my palm wasn't a problem the problem was down there.

I got there and called her she was not picking up her phone. I got off the car and walked into the building. I greeted the receptionist and I told her that what I was looking for.

Lady: She was here maybe she went to the toilet.

I nodded repeatedly and tried to call her again. Still she wasn't picking it up. There comes the nightmare. I got scared thinking that she might be kidnapped or something, we live in a sad generation where everything involves money and wickedness. While I was still lost in thought somebody tap my shoulder I freaked out.

Him: Relax.

I looked at him. He is my ex boyfriend, his name is Alpha. Our relationship didn't last for 6 month because he was so controlling and he was beating me everyday, especially when it comes to make love. I ended that relationship.

Alpha: Are you hear for the interview?

I shook my head.

Me: I'm here for my sister.

He smirked.

Alpha: Since when do you have a sister?

Me: I do have a sister.

Thando walked to us.

Me: Finally you decided to come.

I was trying by all means to avoid that man.

Alpha: I'm still waiting Lwande.

Me: Waiting for?

He laughed.

Me: I should get going.

Alpha: Ngabe uyazi ukuthi ngisakuthanda. (Are you aware that I still love you)

Me: I wasn't aware thanks for letting me know. Thando let's go

MALWANDE ZULU

THREE MONTHS LATER

The was rumors of me affair, I don't know who separated those rumors. His wife asked to meet me, and I agreed because I had nothing to hide. She walked to me, we exchanged greetings...

Her: I must say you beautiful.

Me: Thank you.

She nodded...

Me: You also beautiful.

Her: And confused too.

I didn't say anything.

Her: My name is Dineo Dee Mchunu.

Me: It's great to meet you Mrs Mchunu. I'm Malwa-

She cut me

Dineo: I know who you are and I trust my husband won't ruin his reputation.

I nodded.

Me: At least there is someone who believe-

She cut me again.

Dineo: I know my husband when he's doing something behind my back. You are a wonderful young woman who is trying to persuade her career. Don't mind what people are saying, just focus and be yourself Ms Zulu.

Wow that women made my day.

Dineo: Don't mind what people are saying, I've been there before I know how it feels to be accused. There are nosy people everywhere oftenly, these people just can't help it but stick their noses in things they actually have no business with. Nevertheless, life must go on

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and sometimes you just have to go with the flow, don't mind people.

Wow that was epic.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

It's been 3 months without hearing from my wife. My father went to her mother's house she was not available. Things were falling apart Zandi became very ill and we had to take her to a hospital she was admitted. Gift didn't even care about our mother. I didn't understand how could a person be disliked by her own children. Lwande wanted nothing to do with Zandile yet Gift wanted nothing too.

Me: Gift I'm going to visit mom, are you coming with me?

Gift: I don't care about that women.

I looked at my stepdad.

Me: Are you coming with me or you will catch a taxi?

Stepdad: I'm coming with you, Gift your mother would be happy to see you.

Gift: It won't make any difference she doesn't care about us she's wicked.

Step dad: Ngiyacela ndodana. (Please son)

Poor man, his son just got up and walked away from us.

MALWANDE ZULU

Honestly I was relieved somehow Mrs Mchunu lifted down the burden that was on my heart.

Dineo: It was great meeting you Ms Zulu.

I nodded.

Dineo: I'm sorry with the rumors.

Me: Thank you for inviting me.

Dineo: You welcome.

She paid the bill.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

I was lying on the couch when my phone started ringing. I seat up straight and answer it.

Me: Thando Hello.

Voice: Hello you speaking to Catherine Ncumalo from Mlando academy.

Me: Okay!

Catherine: Are you currently working or what?

Me: I'm not working.

Catherine: Still searching?

Me: Yes.

Catherine: In that case congratulations Mrs Williams you got the Learnership.

I even forgotten about that Learnership. The only thing I could do was to wake up and looked at the sun until it disappears with my dreams and goals. In my heart I had many rooms giving up was one of the rooms and hating Xolani was the main room. Malwande was taking care of me she was sharing every benefits she was getting from his parents with me. Friends like her are to be kept.

Catherine: Mrs Williams!

Me: Oh sorry I'm just excited.

She chuckled.

Catherine: Understandble, can you come to our office on Monday?

I nodded forgetting that she couldn't see me.

Me: I can ma'am.

I was happy, that finally I was going to do something for myself. I wished I could share the good news with Xolani but I was still angry at him.

BUHLE ZULU (Malwande's adoptive mother)

Take chances and never have regrets. That's what I was doing with my life. I had to put everything behind. The only thing that was keeping me strong was Lwande each time I called to check on her she would tell me about her day. Maybe if I was blessed with children I was going to be more strong then I am. I felt someone's hands my shoulders giving me a massage.

Me: Njengo-dammit.

Lucus: Suka dammit.

We laughed.

Lucus: How did you know it was me?

Me: Are you really asking me that.

He kept quiet and kept on massaging me. He was promoting the wrong message to our colleagues. Imagine a Surgeon dating a nurse how does that sound.

Me: You are being foolish right now.

He stopped massaging my shoulders. And he sat on the chair.

Lucus: I've been looking for you.

He was supposed to be home he was off, I couldn't understand why he was there.

Me: Why.

Lucus: Because I'm fooling.

We laughed. Those who don't understand our friendship feel threatened by our friendship Dr Mdluli joined our crew.

Me: You such a motor. Why are you here?

Him: I missed Nurse Zulu and Dr Mdluli.

Me: You should be home.

Lucus: Home is where I belong but it's lonely.

Me: Tell me here why are you still single?

He smiled.

Lucus: I'm not ready to share my food with someone yet.

He laughed. That was hilarious answer.

Lucus: I'm overqualified for that.

Me: Relationship doesn't need qualifications.

Lucus: I thought it needed one since you chose to marry someone else.

Me: Let's forget about the topic.

BUHLE ZULU (Malwande's adoptive mother)

Later that day, Lucus was driving me home. I need to close my eyes for once and stand up for myself. I need to get a car honestly. Instead of depending on a friend. It's normal to prioritize spending time with friends and enriching relationships with them. However, if you find yourself relying too heavily on one friend to meet all of your needs, that may be a sign you've become codependency. I need to stand on my feet.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

Bringing Lwande closer it's hard, turning other teachers against her was also hard. Maxwell trust his girlfriend.

Max: Lwande won't date a man who's on his father's age.

Me: I get what you are saying. But people get attempted.

Max: How so?

Me: She's too close with Mr Mchunu.

My brother cleared his throat.

Nicolas: Themba you are close with Maxwell does that mean you too are dating him?

I shook my head.

Max: Guys we are talking about Malwande here she's a people's person we all know that.

Nicolas: We have to support that girl she's been nothing but a good friend.

It will end in tears watch the space. I tried to be her friend but she's pushing me

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I smell blood. I was taught that if you seek for something very bad just go for it. It doesn't matter who will get hurt. Turning my dreams into reality, required that I should take proactive steps towards whatever it is that I desire. I shouldn't expect it to happen instantly or overnight while I sleep. They say, it's a small price to pay at least for our humble opinion for something that can have such a profound impact on our life.

MALWANDE

When I got home I was welcomed by good news. She took her time to prepare dinner for us.

Me: I'm happy for you my friend.

She smiled.

Thando: Thanks for being a great friend.

We hugged. She deserves to be happy.

Life is too short to be anything but happy. I normally wear my smile and love deeply.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

She made her point, can she come home already. Yes I was wrong.

Sbu: Aren't you suppose to visit your mom.

I was busy with my work.

Me: I was there an hour ago.

Sbu: She's at Gauteng.

I lifted my head.

Me: Who's at Gauteng?

Sbu: Your wife she's staying with Ms Zulu.

Me: How long have you known about this?

Sbu: Three months ago.

I clapped my hands.

Me: You watch me searching for her-

He cut me.

Sbu: Dude you never told me what is going on. You didn't tell me that you are having problems with Thando.

Me: Is she okay?

He shrugged.

Sbu: I didn't get a chance to talk to her, she was inside malwande's car.

I apologised, I don't talk about my family at work.

Me: When are you going there again?

Sbu: End of this month.

That works for me.

Me: Ngitshele ukuthi uzohamba nini egoli? (Tell me when you going to Gauteng)

He sat down.

Sbu: I never heard you speaking IsZulu.

Me: You will get out of here.

Sbu: If you tell me that happen I will give you the address.

Me: idiot.

Sbu: Than forget it.

MALWANDE

Later that day. I've never seen Thando that happy, she was was over the moon. I believe the Learnership was the founder of her happiness. She gave it all to prepared dinner for us. She looked at me and smiled.

Me: If you can wear this smile everyday, I swear my brother won't even allow you to go to the store.

Thando: Arg really now?

We laughed.

Thando: I wish he was the first person to receive the news.

I nodded.

Me: Do you wanna call him?

She sat down. She missed him but she didn't want to show that.

Thando: Atleast not yet.

Me: Okay then.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

I don't know how do people believe one person over 100s of people. I don't know which potion did Lwande used to feed them, especially Max and my brothers. So I was meeting with Pretty whom was Lwande's friend. She glanced at her phone. I

was telling her that I need her to help me with Malwande.
While I was talking to her I saw bruises.

Pretty: You need to be aware that I left a baby with his aunt.

Me: Are you happy in your marriage?

She let placed her phone on the table.

Pretty: I wouldn't put it like that, I'm in an abusive relationship,
my husband and in-laws always remind me that I will never fit
on Lwande's shoes.

Me: How well do you know Ms Zulu?

Pretty: We were friends.

Me: I'm sorry but I need your help
she's a pain in my life.

Pretty: Honestly we were not just friends my mother and her mother are cousins.

This won't be easy as I thought.

Me: You won't be able to help me?

Pretty: It depends on what kind of help do you want me to help with, but I'm not going to kill her we are related.

Me: Relax I won't ask you to do that. I want you to seduce her current boyfriend.

She coughed.

Pretty: I won't be ruining her relationship, not alone I will be digging my own grave my husband will kill me.

Me: I didn't mean you must sleep with him.

Pretty: We done here don't ever call me.

She got up and started walking.

Me: 2500k each month.

She turned and looked at me than walked away.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

The following morning. I was late, I over slept. Honestly receiving the good news of Thando she's fine lighten up my mood. I was so worried of losing her.

Gift: Someone seems happy and late today.

Me: Whatever.

Gift: Is Sisi Thando back?

I shook my head. He got up and rushed to my room then come back.

Gift: The only person who can put that smile on your face is her come with it.

Me: I will see you later.

Gift: Send my regards to her.

Me: If you can go see mom at the hospital we will be fine.

He wanted nothing to do with her. He's the last born he supposed to worry about his mother not sister in law. I will send her an email when I get to the office.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

I was in call with my mother telling her the good news.

Me: I can't wait to be in the class.

Mom: I'm happy that you decided to do something for yourself.

Me: Thank you mama.

Mom: On a serious note where are you.

Me: Mom I'm fine.

I was not ready to tell her that, she won't shut her mouth, she will tell Xo where I am. Knowing my husband very well coming here anytime forgetting that he's the one who kicked me out.

MALWANDE ZULU

My father sent me an email letting me know that he won't be able to come this month again. Well if it was not for Thando I was going to lose my mind. My parents have abounded me. Especially Mr Zulu the father who understands how I feel.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

I typed my wife's email address.

"I know sorry wouldn't be enough to alleviate the pain and erase the bad memories. I believe and I regret my actions."

Whenever I think of her tears. What I fervently hope for now is for her to give me a chance to make her happy again and prove to her that I can be a better husband.

BUHLE ZULU (Malwande's adoptive mother)

[TWO WEEKS LATER]

Zulu hasn't signed the divorce papers, he was supposed to do that two weeks ago. I just wanted everything to be over. So that I can see what the future holds for me. Lucas walked in uninvited.

Me: We can be friends but it doesn't mean you should budge into my room without knocking.

He sat on the couch, we exchanged greetings.

Lucus: I would like us to go out.

I don't know how did he managed to change his work rooster, our schedule was the same, unless he has surgery to attend. So we both off duty.

Me: That would be delightful. Plus I need something to cheer me up.

He smirked

Lucus: Okay then get ready.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

I received a call from Pretty she wanted to meet up with me. I didn't just wake up and decided to be a lesbian or to love Malwande. That happened naturally.

Me: I thought you were not interested.

Pretty: Do you still need my help?

Me: Sure case.

Pretty: 16:30 at Madison's place.

Me: See you then.

She hanged up. If this plan fails I will consider my self as a failure. The plan will work on my advantage since Pretty betrayed Lwande before, she won't be able to believe Maxwell.

Me: Let the game begin.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

I started my classes few days ago, I was bit behind with my modules I had to work hard so that I can meet the deadline. The deadlines was pretty overwhelming, I had to make a plan to tackling my workload, prioritizing the most pressing assignments. Taking breaks and rewarding myself was new to me. My phone vibrated. I checked it was an email from Xo.

"Mrs Williams! You deserve far, far better than the way I've treated you. Please forgive me and allow me to come back into your life" I smiled, he's been sending emails apologizing.

Forgiveness is about goodness

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about extending mercy of how hurt I was, he doesn't deserve my goodness. I looked at it and put my phone on the counter.

MALWANDE ZULU

I glanced at my boyfriend he frowned. We were having lunch, since the whole saga of me sleeping with Mr Mchunu was taking much of my time, it was hard to reach out for him.

Me: Thank you.

Maxwell: For?

Me: Not believing everything that people are saying about me.

Max: Baby people will always have something to say, they will find the way to make you feel worthless, nothing is perfect in people's eye.

I laughed the last sentence made me laugh.

Max: I'm serious there is no perfection in our eyes, we don't want to see people happy.

Me: Very true.

Max: I guess you are coming with me.

Me: Where to?

Max: Let me see.

Me: Okay.

He laughed a little.

Max: My house is depressing, and my bed is too big for me. And my bedding is not that warm.

I hit him on the shoulder.

Me: No ways.

Max: I take it as a yes.

Me: So long you behave like a good boyfriend.

He raised both his hands to surrender.

Max: Hallelujah.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (Malwande's biological mother)

Weeks ago I was admitted due to my health. I'm getting older and weaker, now I think Xo made a mistake by letting his so called wife go. I can't carry all this duty by myself. I took a deep sleep on the couch. I find myself trapped in a cage, Malwande's father was sitting there looking at me.

Me: Help!!!

He didn't say anything, he couldn't say anything he just looked at me.

Me: Please!!! (Crying)

He got up and walked away.

Me: Don't leave me alone please.

The lights went off. I was now in the darkest place. Scared and all by myself. I cried no body seems to hear my cry.

SNETHEMBA TSHABALALA

The is nothing that I hate then being invited and that person doesn't show up. I waited for Pretty for half an hour and she didn't show up. When I was about to leave I saw her approaching me. I looked at her as she walked to me.

Pretty: I'm sorry for keeping you, it wasn't easy to leave the house.

Me: It's okay, you here now.

Pretty: I hate doing this to Lwande again, but I need to be out of my marriage. Before I die in the hands of someone I love. I've tried everything to save it, but nothing is working. It's time to end it, but being a single mother petrifies me at the same time I have pains.

Sometimes, loving someone just isn't enough if you aren't receiving the same love in return.

Me: It's that bad?

She nodded, well I was not interested, I needed what I needed.

Pretty: I'm forced to accept that my marriage is meant to be. The lies after lies and the cheating became too much to handle. He physically abuses me.

The blows are so unexpected.

Me: Now it's time to leave?

Pretty: I live in fear, I don't know if the next argument would put me to. I know that he will change one day. I want him to understand that his behavior is killing me. I wanted him to change.

Me: What makes you that he will change.

Pretty: Because I love him.

We as a country we are standing and fighting against GBV whistle we have girls like who thinks their abusive partner will basically change.

BUHLE ZULU (*Malwande's adoptive mother*)

Normal when I feel like the world is against me, I find something that will distract me. But going out and shopping that's Zulu and Lwande's thing. But today Lucus made me to see things differently.

Lucus: You have something on your cheek.

He removed whatever it is with his thumb.

Me: Thank you.

He smirked.

Lucus: We must do this more often.

Me: We?

Lucus: People who are friends talk to each other and spend time together. They trust one another and also help each other when they are in trouble or are hurt. Friends are people that can be looked up to and trusted.

I nodded repeatedly.

Me: Why didn't you become a lawyer or Advocate?

Lucus: You are saying I'm taking too much?

I laughed.

MALWANDE ZULU

The whole ideal of coming to Max's house was overwhelming.
He prepared a romance dinner.

I called Thando letting her know that I will spend a night with Maxwell.

Thando: Oh my goodness why didn't you tell me that she's sneak?

We laughed.

Thando: Next time I will chain you.

Me: Why? (I rolled my eyes)

Thando: I'm your sister in law remember?

Me: Remind me again.

She laughed.

Me: You should be happy because I'm giving you a space to catch up with your work.

Thando: Books, books, books!

Me: Tell me about it.

She started in the middle of the course, so she was trying hard to catch up. Max walked to me, I hanged up and put my phone away, probably I selected it on '***Do no disturb***' so do not disclose

Max: I have something for my one and only love.

Me: What is it?

He asked me to follow him to his bedroom. He displayed red Roses on his bed and chocolates, strawberries and a bottle of champagne on the side.

Me: Wow!

Max: This night is all about us.

I smiled. He played a soft music band. 'Crazy in love' by Beyonce ft Jay Z. I'm not Beyonce's fan but I feel for that music.

"I look and stare so deep in your eyes

I touch on you more and more every time

When you leave, I'm begging you not to go

Call your name two, three times in a row

Such a funny thing for me to try to explain

How I'm feeling and my pride is the one to blame.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (Malwande's Biological mother)

I couldn't understand what message was Malwande's father sending. That dream got me to swallow my empty pride I called Williams Xolani's father, I dislike calling Kingsley Williams but I felt like that dream was hunting me, it felt so really.

The reason why I don't want to tell my son about Malwande's family is because, Malwande's father and Xo's father are related somehow. When I broke up with Kingsley I wanted to hurt him by falling for someone he trusted I thought they were friends only to find out that they were related by the time I find out it was already too late because I was deeply in love and pregnant with Elias's child. That labeled me as a family tore apart. Their mothers were cousins, that made them cousins too.

Me: Your cousin he's hunting me.

Kingsley: What does that has to do with me?

Me: I need to meet with the Elias's mother, Williams.

Kingsley: Dat sal nie gebeur nie Zandi, tensy u vir hulle sê waar u hul dogter weggesteek het. (*That will not happen Zandi unless you tell them where you hid their daughter*)

Me: That family hate me, they never liked me, and they want nothing to do with me. On top of that their daughter she's missing and it's been years.

He cut me.

Kingsley: If Elias he's hunting you, that means you killed him.

Me: You know me I won't do that.

Kingsley: He passed away within a month you brought a man on his house, then after couple of years his daughter went missing and now he's hunting you how do you explain that?

Me: Forget that I called you.

The was no way I was going to tell my son about Malwande's family. I know the truth has it's way of coming out.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

Me and Pretty came to an agreement. She will seduce Maxwell.

Me: Make sure this doesn't backfire.

She nodded.

Me: Make sure that no one gets hurt.

After all I care for Max. She bid me a farewell.

MALWANDE ZULU

The whole idea turned to be cosy and discomfort situation. Max opened my blouse slowly, twisting each button with his thumb and third finger, then run his finger on my breastbone. Finally the blouse fell down, he looked at me more like he was studying me, before he could make me lie on my back he then caressed my breasts.

Me: Be gentle tiger.

The only fear of my life was encounter. It's painful and it brings lot of bad memories. He licked my nipples, then moved his lips slowly down my stomach, he removed my underwear, began to kissed me. He slipped his two fingers inside me.

As scared as I stopped him.

Max: Relax my sweet.

I closed her eyes as I felt his fingers inside me again.

Me: Maxi!!

My voice was softly. His fingers were pleasuring me. The music was still playing softly.

Cause I know I don't understand

Just how your love can do what no one else can

Got me looking so crazy right now, your love's

Got me looking so crazy right now (your love)

Got me looking so crazy right now, your touch

Got me looking so...

Me: Yes whoo, AHH!

The pleasure was taking it couse.

MALWANDE ZULU

There are times when we just have to look inside of ourselves and admit that we are worth it. After my encounter with Max I felt so different, I felt loved and I felt like a woman that I was never be. He took me from the earth to another planet.

'Heaven'

Lying on his chest it also felt like I was reliving something. I listened to his heart beat, I then dose of right on his chest. If I could be that happy for the rest of my life maybe I would forgive Zandile. Maybe I can visit her and thank her for caring me on her womb.

The following morning. Love can fool people, how did I agree to sleep over knowing that I need to report to work. That was the funniest thing I've ever made. We got off the bed and went to take a shower. As tiny as the shower room it is but we forced ourselves there. And took an innocent shower.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

It seems like days were not going. Loneliness was not coming into my aid. Thando hasn't answered any of my messages. Hopefully she didn't move on.

I tried to call her, but she wasn't answering any of my calls, massage, whatsApp and emails. I walked to the kitchen to find my mother preparing a breakfast.

Me: You should be in your bed.

She gave me a faint smile.

Zandi: I'm a mother Williams.

Me: You are a mother of two grown men remember?, We can do this.

I said that taking the plates from her putting them on the table. She looked at me.

Zandi: Do you think your sister will ever come back?

I swallowed my pump then nodded.

As much as I wanted to let her know that Malwande she's fine but thinking of betraying my little sister that was going to be war on it's own.

Me: I don't know, only God knows.

Zandi: I wish I could reach out to her, lately I'm seeing her father on my dreams i need to talk to her.

Me: Stop thinking too much. Focus on your health.

She nodded and walked away. Knowing her very well she was avoiding me, for what I don't know. I took over where she left off. "*Thando you are needed*"

She needs to come back I can't be busy with pots while I have a wife to do that.

MALWANDE ZULU

When I got home, Thando was having her breakfast.

Thando: Finally she graced me with her presence.

I laughed.

Me: Good morning.

Thando: What happened last night.

Me: A girl don't kiss and tell.

We laughed. I felt lighter for the first time in a long time. I went to change my clothing then joined Thando.

Her phone rang she just smiled and enjoy her breakfast, like she doesn't hear it. Zandile Zucchini and her partner might have destroy my life, but they didn't hold my life right?

BUHLE ZULU (*Malwande's adoption mother*)

Not everything is about me. Not everyone was meant to hurt me. The are people who will bring the best in me. I took my phone and called Zulu. I needed my to claim my life. He answered right away.

Ntokozo: Buhle ufunani. (*What do you want*)

That was the man I spent the half of my life with. He was treating me like a stranger.

Me: If I have signed the divorce papers I wouldn't be calling you.

Ntokozo: There are things we need to discuss.

Me: I'm listening.

Ntokozo: I can't discuss that over the phone, in two weeks time I will be there.

Me: I will be waiting then.

He hung up just like that. Sometimes I question myself what happened to my husband. But at the same time I need to remember that people change along the way.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's biological mother*)

Everyone was gone, I was left alone in the house Gift was still avoiding me.

Each time I try to shut my eyes. I was seeing Zucchini. Something told me to look at the mirror. Only to meet him looking at me. I was supposed to see myself on the mirror but no I was seeing a ghost.

Me: Zucchini!!!

He Loosen his tie. Fear hooked me.

Me: You are dead.

He giggled.

Me: What do you want from me.

He nodded. My hands were trembling.

Him: Finally you remembered how to humbled yourself.

Oh my goodness please help me.

Me: Talk to me.

Him: I won't rest until you and your boyfriend confess.

Me: What should we confess?

He giggled.

Him: You and you boyfriend took something that was dear for my daughter.
You didn't just destroyed her, you took her dignity.

Me: I'm sorry.

Him: I'm not the person you should apologies to.

I looked around the was nobody probably I was losing my mind.
It was only me and the reflection of a dead man.

Him: You destroyed her, I don't understand what kind of a mother you are.

Tears streamed.

Him: During the process of my daughter being circumcised her life was destroyed. Not only that the man you brought to my

house destroyed her for good, my daughter cannot have children, because of you and your boyfriend destroyed her.

I didn't understand what he was saying. I closed my eyes trying to keep my cool then opened them again. He was gone. I struggled to catch my breath.

Me: Zucchini!!!!

I punched the mirror. I saw a smoker...

Me: Come back here!!!

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

I've seen Lwande happy but today she was very happy. She was driving me to the campus. She was playing this track her brother used to play when he's happy.

I like you, girl, in particula

You in particula

Said I like your waist in particula

I like you, girl, in particula

Advertisement

yeah

You in particula

Said I like your waist in particula...

The robot closed.

She sang along she was blessed with a voice no lie.

Malwande: ***Come, come, give me the love, girl, Give me the love, girl, give me the love, girl...***

She was making the dance moves using her feet and hands.

Malwande: Come on Thando, life is good.

She drove off as the robot allowed us. On my point of view life is better not good. In that case, life is probably best for people who make just enough to save a little bit every month, and have enough to spend for their needs and wants.

Come, come, come, give me the love, girl

Bring di dance and gimme some culture

Come, come, give me the love, girl

Give me the love, girl, give me the...

She was on fire. She's always confident about herself, even before being accused about having an affair with a marriage man she still rise up and walk with her smile. Some things might

seem intimidating at first, but she was able to do much more than I even think possible. She managed to share the table with the wife of the man whom people suspect she was having an affair with. I myself I can't do that, because I don't know what is it that is waiting for me.

SNETHEMBA TSHABALALA

I can't believe that I'm about to betray my friend. Betrayal is a trauma experience that makes one feel like they're losing their mind. But what can I say? I wanted what I need, that's love only.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

Our facilitator was your upset. He was telling each delicates their marks. He walked to the delicate who was sitting next to me. He was very disappointed by our marks.

Delicate: I'm sorry sir.

Facilitator: When your stipend is not paid in time, you are the first to complain but deliver ntombazane you tell me that you are sorry. This is your future not mine. Girl

She nodded. She was the loudest delicate in the entire campus. Our campus had ten plus classes. Everyone was disappointed by their own outcome. I was so scared, because no body got the higher marks. He walked up to me. I played with a pen.

Facilitator: All the marks that I came across, I was accepting the lower marks from Mrs Williams, she started three months later than everyone.

He gave me my assessment sheet.

Facilitator: Sixty percent!!

They clapped their hands.

Facilitator: Guys you need to work hard in order to graduate.

We nodded.

Facilitator: You have all the recourses you need, from learner guide, internet and I'm here to help too.

Delicate 2: Internet need data to access on it.

We laughed.

Facilitator: You are unbelievable, your stipend is there, to cover that.

Delicate 2: Is there for me to get here everyday.

He didn't know what to say, he should've shut his mouth.

Facilitator: There are people who need this opportunity Ndeka. People who can do better than you.

Ndeka: Sir I don't understand why you are so angry, we are the ones that failed not you.

He asked him to leave his class. He gladly did that.

Facilitator: Delicates don't make me to treat you like primary school kids.

We nodded then apologies.

Facilitator: Right, I hope you all going to do better on your second attempt.

We nodded, the nicest thing is that we have three chances.

SNETHEMBA TSHABALALA

I called in sick. I wasn't sick at all, I just needed time to plan how will Pretty seduces Max. So I was meeting up with her. In order to get what I needed I had to strive. However a better life isn't going to found me watching TV, catching up with my favourite shows...

When I got to the club she was already there waiting for me. I walked to her. We exchanged greetings and ordered.

Me: How will you do this?

Pretty: It won't be easy but I will pull through.

I slammed the table with frustration.

Me: Don't tell me that shit.

She nodded.

Me: Here is the plan, tomorrow morning you wait for Max at the bus stop. You ask him for help.

She nodded, I know Max's weakness. So my plan was Pretty was going to wait beside the at the bus stop where we always buy scones. She was going to ask Max for help. I know Max will gladly help her especially when the child is involved.

Pretty: I must warn you, your boyfriend might get hurt.

Me: It doesn't matter who will get hurt.

Pretty: If my husband found out that I'm shitting around, he will kill me, and your boyfriend. We must get that in mind Sne.

I didn't even care

all I wanted was that girl to be mine. I know they're many girls whom I might pick, but Malwande Zulu was the special girl for me.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's biological mother*)

How do people enjoy their sleep in the afternoon? I had a disturbing dream, Malwande's father was hunting me, the saddest thing is that he wasn't guiding me where to find his daughter. Besides of telling me that I ruined my own daughter's life.

I was in the afterlife. It was a hell of after life it felt like hell. I felt numb like I wasn't alive. It was as if I was dead and I was in some in between existence. Malwande's father just looked at me.

That made me to feel little uneasy.

I woke up from that dream. My heart was racing. While dreams are open to interpretation, they can even do numbers in person. One can have anxiety from the dream. That dream left me wondering what does it actually means? That had to end, I had to make a plan, I had to find a way to communicate with him.

BUHLE ZULU (*Malwande's adoption mother*)

I was sitting on Lucas's office, resting. I dosed off the desk. I find myself in a room with Ntokozo and Lwande.

He was violent, angry and forceful. His suppressed temper exploded.

Me: I didn't cheat on you.

He became more violent. Surprisingly Zulu never laid his hands on me. But he was kicking me and accusing me if having an affair. Lwande was caught up on that environment.

Malwande: Dad let us go. *(Crying)*

She was trying to stop him. He was violently angry. I was afraid, I feared that he would physically hurt us.

Malwande: Daddy please let us go. *(Crying)*

Though I had hope that he will let us go because his Princess bagged and bagged him to. He walked up to her and started punching her, each and every punch that he was giving my baby it felt like he was punching me. I might not have children of my own, but the mother in me wanted to protect my daughter. I took a knife and stabbed him closed to his heart. I stabbed him repeatedly until he took his last breath.

Malwande: Mama you killed him. *(Crying)*

I closed my eyes. She panicked.

Me: I'm sorry baby.

She glanced down at him.

Malwande: It's over mommy let's get out of here before they catch us here.

I shook my head.

Me: Zulu!!! Mageba!!! Ntokozo!!!

I woke up from the dream with my heart racing. I was terrified shaking. Dr Mdluli walked in.

Dr Mdluli: Oh my goodness, what happened.

I couldn't answer her. I was still shocked by that dream.

She got me a glass of water. Then walked out. That dream seems scary and really at the same time. No matter how angry I am I won't kill anyone. I drank the water, whilst I was shaking. Lucas and Dr Mdluli walked in.

Dr Mdluli: Doc do something.

He walked to me and gave me the warmest hug. That made me calm down. We broke the hug. I told him about the the dream. He insured me it was just a dream. But still I was still anxiously, fear hooked me.

Me: It feels so really.

He nodded and asked Mdluli to excuse us. She walked out.

Lucas: You can go home.

Me: I will be fine.

Lucus: The dream about being attacked or attacking someone may not necessarily mean that there's a threat on your life.

Me: What does it mean?

Lucus: It reflects your incapability, fears, hopelessness or lack of faith in yourself. The fear of getting attacked makes you feel vulnerable, and for all obvious reasons, you will feel unsafe and insecure, maybe the person whom you are holding closest to your heart betrays you and you have a pain deep inside you.

I nodded. The honest truth is that I don't hang all my laundry outside because I don't want people to know the inner me, not even my daughter.

MALWANDE ZULU

[MONTH LATER]

Life doesn't wait for anyone. I was transferred to practicals school from my previous workplace. Because of the accusations of me dating my previous mentor, not that I didn't like my new workplace, but it's just that it was frustrating me like how they acted, students used to loved me, some of them they had a sister that they never had.

This fact that I was charged because of I was too close with my mentor. Was not settling well in me, it pains me, the stupidity rumors that I was having an affair with my mentor. Nothing in

this world is ever enough people always find a way to make one feels bad. The door bell rang.

Me: Thando are you accepting anyone?

Books were keeping her busy.

Thando: No maybe is Max.

She shouted from her

Me: Yeah.

But why would he come to my house without calling me.

I walked to open the door. Only to find Sibusiso and my brother Xolani on my door step. I stood there not knowing what to do or what to say. I love my brother but after Thando told me that she got beaten by him. I didn't want to see him nor to talk to him ever again.

Xolani: Won't you invite us in?

Me: Gentlemen.

That's what I could say.

Xolani: Dit lyk asof jy nie gelukkig is nie. (You don't look happy)

I let them in.

Me: Thando you have a visitors.

Thando: Tell who ever it is that I'm busy.

Me: To busy to see your husband.

She laughed from her room. Well she taught I was joking.

Thando: You can't be serious.

Me: If you could show your denim ass here you can see how serious I am.

Sbu just laughed. Five minutes later, I offered them something to drink.

Them: Orange juice will be fine.

Me: Coming right up.

I walked to the kitchen to find Thando pacing up and down. When did she get there, she was in her room minutes ago.

Me: You need to calm down, sooner or later, you will have to face him.

Thando: What does he want here. How did he know that I'm here?

Me: You need to calm down and go over there you will get all the answers you need.

She nodded

SINETHEMBA TSHABALALA

I walked to Maxwell's house. Then knock. It's been days since I saw him. Well my plan was going well because, Pretty and Max were getting closer and closer each day. She didn't succeed yet to get in his bed. That was the challenge we were having but soon she will find herself there, he opened the door I walked in.

Max: Themba when last did you spoke to Ms Zulu?

Ms Zulu? How professional?

Me: Your girlfriend blocked me.

He nodded.

We took a seat.

Me: When was the last time you check on her.

Well the more she was stressed was the more she was distancing herself from him, my plan was to destroy their relationship first.

Max: I spoke to her earlier, she said she's fine, Malwande she's good at hidding her pain.

Me: Reach out to her.

That idiot didn't smell the coffee.

Max: Everything was fine until she was sent to another workplace.

Honestly she was loved by many students and teachers. Me and my stupidity I made those allegations to seems more really. I wanted Max to see them like that not the school.

Max: Malwande can be fine even at her worst, I'm meeting with her in an hour.

Me: Did you ask her about those social media allegations against her and Mr Mchunu.

Max: I met with Mr Mchunu and his wife, two days ago, Mr Mchunu he's a decent guy, who's willing to help wherever he

can, he's too old to sleep with Lwande, on the other side his wife seems to improve their friendship which makes their marriages to be strong because they trust each other. So fuck those people who speak shit about my girlfriend. I don't give a fuck in what does the society says about her.

His phone ranged. He answered it, judging by the smile he was wearing it was Lwande.

Max: Rato. *Love*

As he walked to his bedroom. Honestly my plan was to make him see that his girlfriend she's useless. I wanted to encourage him to date Pretty. But with his girlfriend who don't have a backbone just called, everything was clashed. He came back and told me that he have to go.

Me: But I just got here.

Max: You can make yourself feel at home, Lwande need me to rescue her from Xo and your brother.

He said that walking out.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

I kept on stealing glances at him, to be truthful, I was happy to see her, but at the same time I was angry that he was there.

Xo: Aren't you going to give me a kiss.

I kept quiet.

Xo: So you have been hiding here all this time?

Still didn't say anything. Malwande walked to us she with her over night bag and a hand bag

Advertisement

probably she was planning to spend a weekend on her boyfriend's house.

Me: Huh!!! Huh-uh Malwande!!

She sat down.

Malwande: Well Mr Maja will be here soon.

I just paid my focus on her, trying by all means to avoid my husband.

Me: With that bag I must forget about you this weekend.

She frowned then looked at her brother.

Me: In that case I will have to chain you like a dog.

She couldn't hold it she just laughed. Her boyfriend was right she's good at hiding her pain. The social media hurled insults at her but she remained steadfast.

Malwande: Okay mommy can I go to my boyfriend's house.

She was trying to emulate babies voice or something. Which baby have ever asked that? We all laughed.

Me: No Lwande don't ever do that. (Laughing)

Xo: That mother will be sending her daughter on a lion's den.

We heard a knock.

Malwande: I will get that.

Me: He has the audacity to come here?

She laughed then got up and went to attend the door. To live with avoidance sometimes is to depriving ourselves with many experiences, adventures, and connections. Like panic-related avoidance behaviors may be prevent us from living our life to the fullest.No matter how much I was avoiding him. He wasn't giving up. He ran his hand on my thighs.

Xo: Honey I'm sorry. (Whispering)

That's what I was waiting for.

Sometimes, an apology is all we need to sort out the wors matters. Lwande came back with Max. We exchanged greetings they seat down.

Me: At least someone find the courage to get in today.

They looked at each other. That was power couple, I must say. It was hard for Max to get into Zulu's yard. He always waited for her at the gate.

Malwande: Okay Nurse Zulu can I find my way out.

We laughed.

Me: As for Nurse Zulu?

Malwande: Let's say I miss her, though she doesn't talk too much but her absence is killing me.

Max: Since people from KZN are here we can go there too.

Malwande: Me going to Kwa Zulu natal forget it Maja that won't happen.

I never come across someone who hate a place like she does.

Sibu: What did KZN do to you?

She looked at her brother.

Malwande: My life was ruined there, I was raped there, and I still find it to hard how does my own brother sit on the same table with a woman and a man who-

She stopped talking well the truth has a way to come out. Xolani removed his hand from me. Everyone was shocked, I was shocked too.

Xo: Come again Lwande.

She looked at Max then let out a loud cry.

Max: It's okay baby.

Shame he didn't know what to do or say. He just brought her to his shoulder and let her be.

Malwande: Forget that I said anything. (Crying)

Xo: Sisi you can trust me.

She lifted up her head then wiped her tears.

Malwande: Xolani, I can't trust you, you are Zandile's son. The woman who brought nothing to my life but scars that I don't think they will ever heal.

Xo got up and walked next to her. His skin was converting to redness colour. He was getting angry.

Malwande: Your step father encouraged your mother to perform women circumcision for me. As a snake she agreed. My life is damage beyond repair Xo, I was never happy there Xolani, your step dad turned me as his sex slave, he!! he!! he!!

She cried. What a sad story. I respected that man but after learning that he raped his step daughter. My respect for him faded.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

I was shocked and angry at the same time, my face was shooting open and everything was widening. I didn't know what to do. I looked at her as she was crying on her boyfriend's arms. She didn't plan to tell me that. I rubbed her back.

Thando: Let me get you.

Lwande cut her.

Malwande: I don't need water, I need both my parents here. The is this invisibility pain of mine, I can no longer tolerate it, I need my parents.

Me: Bel asb. (Please call)

Thando didn't let me to finish my sentence she just walked away.

BUHLE ZULU (*Malwande's adoptive mother*)

Yeah life happend. My life was upside down after that dream, I found myself on another man's arms after that scary dream. Well me and Lucus we had something special going on. But I

was feeling guilty with the whole situation. I felt like I was against my vows.

Lucus: Tomorrow by this time you will be a single woman.

He was happy that I was divorcing. I myself, I was not sure weather the divorce was going to be finalized, since Ntokozo asked to meet up with me tomorrow morning. We were in a hotel, I will go check on my daughter before I meet with Zulu tomorrow morning. My phone started ringing. I looked at it.

It was Thando. I answered it.

Me: Nurse Zulu.

Thando: Ma it's me Thando.

She was talking to fast.

Me: I know baby, it's everything okay with my daughter?

Thando: She's not Ma, she needs you.

Me: Social media always-

She cut me.

Thando: It's about her past.

I looked at Lucas.

Me: I'm on my way.

She hung up. I looked at him as I was struggling to catch my breath, knowing Lwande very well when her past life kick in, she loses control. My fear was she might hurt herself.

Lucas: Are you alright?

Me: My daughter need me.

Lucus: But we just got here.

I got up.

Me: Does it matter?

We can be in a relationship or what ever we called it, but when it comes to my family, I don't care who you are.

30

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

Lwande was standing at the window staring outside. She's been standing there for 30 minutes.

Me: Both Mrs and Mr Zulu are on their way.

I was trying to break the silence.

Xolani: You knew about this?

I shook my head. He looked at Max.

Max: She only told me after Themba's ceremony.

Xo nodded.

Xolani: I'm going to kill Zandi trust me.

Voice: Nobody will kill anyone.

We all turned and looked at him. It was Mr Zulu, I never met him, but he always video call his daughter.

Me: Mr Zulu you are welcome.

He nodded. I looked at Max the question was he was around all along?

He greeted us than walked to her.

Max: I think I should leave now.

Me: You can't do that.

Max: I left someone in my house.

Xo: Thanks for being there for my sister.

Max: She's my girlfriend I have to be there for her.

He got up. Everything was starting to make sense, how she hated KZN, how she ran out of the restaurant the other day.

Me: You won't leave without telling her.

Max: I will call to check, her later.

He was cut by Mrs Zulu. She was with some other guy, they walked to us.

Mrs Zulu: Maja I thought my daughter was healing.

Max: Nurse Zulu between you and me we know that Lwande can be '*fine*' even at her worst.

He was telling the truth, Lwande she's good at hiding her pain.

Mrs Zulu: Thanks guys.

She said that joining her family. I offered the guest something to drink he turned my offer down.

Me: Now because her parents are here, I need to excuse myself, my books are calling me.

Xo: Books?

I nodded.

Me: I'm doing a Learnership for book keeping.

Xo: But I came here to...

I cut him, he came to take me back to his mother's house, that won't happen. I was not going there.

Me: I'm not going anywhere.

He nodded, Max excuse himself, I did that too.

BUHLE ZULU (*Malwande's adoptive mother*)

She looked at us. In her thoughts she thought we came together. For how long was I going to pretend? How long was I

going to lie to her, the truth has its way of coming out. '*we are getting divorced*'

Me: Let me attend my guest.

Ntokozo looked at me.

Ntokozo: Princess can I have word with mommy.

She nodded and walked to join her guests. He watched her as she walked to them.

Me: What is it Zulu?

Ntokozo: I'm not divorcing you.

Where does that coming from?

Me: We agreed Zulu.

Ntokozo: Buhle don't try me, you think I will let you go to another man's arms?

Me: Aren't you dating another woman?

Ntokozo: I do and I'm going to marry her as my second wife.

I laughed a little. How is it easy for him to say that.

Me: And you find that funny? Zulu you are the one who looked at me in my eyes and told me that you are tired of my self-pitting attitude and my lack of vision, my non-existent ambition, my abysmal self-esteem, my low career standards, my never-ending whining and complaining, and my perpetual tendency to put off my personal projects. You are not happy with me so let me go.

He shook his head.

Ntokozo: You need to take care our daughter. She needs a mother.

Oh my goodness, he was not going to keep me because he loved me?

Me: Our separation won't stop me to be her mother.

I attempted to walk away he grabbed my hand.

Ntokozo: Uzophuma kulo mshado ngebhokisi lomngcwabo.
(You will be out of this marriage by a coffin)

I loved that man with everything I had with me. I felt alive when I was with him but yet things had changed. I was optimistic that things were going to be back on normal. I wasn't afraid to love him. Years ago I felt genuinely happy, like my life was worth living. Ntokozo was everything I had ever dreamed of but ever since I visited Mexico, I realised that our out marriage died long time ago. I looked at his hand.

Me: Ntokozo!!

He let go of my hand.

Me: Please don't make things hard for me.

SINETHEMBA TSHABALALA

I waited for Max for an hour, when I was ready to leave, he walked in. His eyes were red.

Me: Are you alright.

He nodded. He looked defeated by something what I didn't know.

Max: I never saw her feeling scared or helplessly like that, Themba, something has to be done.

I was lost, I had no idea what to say. He asked me to leave, he needed sometime alone.

MALWANDE ZULU

I don't know what pushed me to reveal my past. I'm still shocked myself that I did that. But proud at the same time, I was sitting next to Xo he was awful quiet. My parents walked to us. Them being there made me to feel safe again, It felt like I realised something on my body by the way.

Me: Dad when did you land?

Dad: This morning.

I looked at my mother.

Mom: An hour ago.

And they never saw a need to come home? I wasn't going to ask maybe they needed each other, me and my spoilt self ruin their plans. She looked at the guy I think he was their friend.

Mom: Suka we have to go.

Me: Go?

She let out a deep breath before she could give me a nod.

Dad: Unomhlangano nomqashi wakhe wangaphambilini. ***She has a meeting with his former employer***)

She smiled at him. That's my mother she's always on her dreamland her smile it's rare, she looked differently. She was glowing.

Mom: I'm sorry baby but I need to leave.

Me: You won't come back?

Mom: I don't think so.

I introduced myself to that Mr Suka, not sure if it's his name or surname **Suka!!!**

Me: Malwande Zulu, Nurse Buhle's daughter.

Man: It's nice meeting you Ms Zulu, I'm Dr Lucus nurse Zulu's friend.

That's when my mother took a seat. And asked me to introduce my guest, she was ready to leave, minute ago.

Mom: And your friend here.

She had a clue of who is that coloured guy, but she needed a formal introduction.

Me: This is Xolani Thando's husband.

They both nodded.

Dad: You welcome son.

Me: Xo meet my parents, Mr and Mrs Zulu.

Xo: It's my pleasure to meet you Mr& Zulu.

Me: Oh this is Mr Tshabalala. Mr Williams's friend.

My parents know him but I find it a need to introduce him not as Sne's brother but Xo's friend too.

Dad: Sbu as an IT guy I know, I need your help, can you please track the person who is behind my daughter.

He looked at Xo.

Sbu: Anything Sir.

Mom: It will blow over the is no need to do that.

Dad: Buhle I believe that the poor man he's waiting for you.

She smiled then got up.

Mom: If I didn't know better, I was going to say, I'm being kicked out of my house.

We laughed. Funny enough my father didn't laugh. They walked out. Mind me

I realised that Max was not around after an hour.

Dad: Baby please get me a green tea.

Funny enough I don't include green tea on my shopping list. I looked at him.

Dad: Rooibos with honey will be fine.

Me: Gentlemen?

Them: Same.

I dragged myself to the kitchen. When I got there I just cried. What is the use to try to act strong when you are hurting.

MAXWELL MAJA

Seeing Lwande like that took everything out of me. I was so distraught over her suffering that I actually I felt physical side effects. Which made me felt nauseous and lightheaded and completely out of whack with my own body. I loved that girl. I could even die or kill for her.

She told me that before, but it felt like I was hearing that for the first time. I figured out that something needed to be done about the person who was behind her on social media. I didn't want to see her sad again. So I asked my cousin to help me to trace the post.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

Mr Zulu asked me to stay. I wanted to be out of Jo'burg, I needed to go home and deal with my mother and her boyfriend.

Mr Zulu: I won't allow you to drive like this.

Sbu: Yeah man we still love you.

Finally my friend said something. Thando walked to us.

Thando: Where is everyone?

Mr Zulu: Mrs Williams we finally met.

She nodded.

Thando: Thank you, and thanks for allowing me to stay.

Mr Zulu: We family, we need to be there for one another.

We all nodded.

Mr Zulu: Beside this house is too big for her alone.

Lwande walked to us, she gave us our drinks.

Lwande: Ake ngiqale ngamabhodwe wami. ***(Let me start cooking)***

Mr Zulu: I will help you Princess.

Lwande: I want daddy to relax for today.

Thando: I will help you.

She was trying by all means to avoid me. They walked to the kitchen. Mr Zulu showed us Lwande's Facebook account, she was using another name on her Facebook. Someone by the name of ***Simthande*** tagged her picture with another guy. "*Our thee gorgeous Malwande Zulu dating a married man*"

Sbu: Lwande won't date this guy, even if he was the only person left in the universe.

Mr Zulu: Looked at the comments.

We did, people were saying hurtful things, Only few people came to her defense her but 96 percent were against her.

MALWANDE ZULU

Later We had a peaceful dinner, I can't change the past, or any of my past, because it will be always hanging there just eats my life away.

Sbu: Teacher I hope you heal soon.

I nodded. How long does it takes to heal again? The wounds I have are deep. I don't know how long should I wait for them to completely repaired.

He got up then open his arms.

Sbu: Waiting.

That made Mr Zulu to laugh, my parents never believed me when I said the Thabethe boys are crazy.

Me: Don't laugh just say you princess you said so.

Dad: You right he's crazy.

Me: You see.

I got up and hugged him. We broke the hug.

Sbu: Even this woman who ran away from us.

Thando: You can't afford me Mr Thabethe.

Sbu: Igoli lamshintshe umuntu. *(Jo'burg changed the her)*

We laughed. Laughter is not always a measure of happiness, it's a humour that works to hide pain: Laughter also releases tension, which can lead to feelings of anger.

BUHLE ZULU (*MALWANDE'S ADOPTIVE MOTHER*)

I was settling on the couch watching Lucus as he was making a cup of coffee. The pain of a ended relationship is the experience one will never expect. I didn't ask Ntokozo to have an affair, he did that willingly and I never asked to be on another man's arms that just happened unexpectedly.

Ntokozo had the nerves to tell me that he won't let me go to another man's hands. Lucus walked to me.

Me: He was expecting me to say *it's okay Mr Zulu you can marry your mistress and distance yourself from me*. That's crazy.

He gave me a cup of coffee then sat down next me.

Lucus: Give him some time.

Me: You know what hurts?

He shrugged. Poor boyfriend now he had to listen to me sulking.

Me: We had an agreement, he agreed that divorce was the only solution. Because he's Ntokozo Zulu he thinks that the world revolves him.

Lucus: Try to be patient with him, be gentle, kind, and give him time.

Me: Give him time?

He looked at me.

Me: Time to be lied on, cheated on, with more lies, and open another room so that my heart could be disturbed and become a heap of burdens?

Lucus: Hey, only time can heal your broker.

He took the cup from me then put it on the table, he kissed me and brought me into his embrace the adrenaline of his chest was pumping and my heart started to race.

Me: Hai man Suka busted buya demmit.

He laughed.

Me: He's such a busted.

Lucus: And I'm such a dammit.

We laughed, Lucus he's very proud of himself.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

I was sitting on the edge of my bed, busy with my school work, I was determined to pass I was determined to wear that gown and receive my qualification and say mama I made it. There are times in life that we choose bad moment and bad behaviour. That can cause severe problems in our marriage or our relationships with our partners.

As much as I was trying to avoid my husband but he was a chewing gum.

Me: Save your sorry Xo.

He sat next to me.

Me: I didn't say you must come in.

Xo: Uncle Ntokozo said I'm welcome.

Me: You are welcomed to this house not in my room Williams.

Xolani: I'm sorry for laying my hand on you baby, I promise that will never happen again.

That was my husband I know, the humble Xo Williams. I took my text book.

Xo: Jou glimlag skuil die afgelope tyd, en ek weet ek is die rede. Ek is jammer dat ek jou as vanselfsprekend aanvaar. Jy is 'n wonderlike vrou, en ek is lief vir jou. ***(Your smile has been hiding lately, and I know I'm the reason. I'm sorry for taking you for granted. You are an amazing wife, and I love you)***

I blushed whilst my eyes were glued to that text book.

Xo: Can my apology be so sincere that you will feel into your heart. I'm sorry for every hurtful word that came out of my mouth. I always knew that my mother she was a snake but I never thought she was that snake which is poisonous.

His presence brought back memories, the abuse of her mother and the day he laid her hands on me.

Me: Xo I'm disappointed in you, you didn't just broke my heart you broke what we had, you didn't give me a chance to explain what happened you... You... you.

I cried, he took the book that was on my hand.

Xo: I'm sorry.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

We were having a family dinner. Sbu was silent, it was unlike him, among my brothers he's the most talkative and crazy brother. Pretty was game on she said she had a plan to seduce Maxwell. She promised to drug him.

Me: Sbu what's wrong.

Sbu: Lwande she's a good girl she doesn't deserve everything she's been through.

Me: What happened?

Sbu: None of your business Themba.

Wow that was not my brother.

MAXWELL MAJA

Whilst I was lying on my bed, someone who doesn't have peace knocked on my door. Infact the person was not knocking he/she was kicking my door and that was annoying I lowed the music down.

Me: You will break my door.

Voice; Please open for me.

That was Pretty I checked the time it was 19h30.

Me: I'm coming.

I opened the door she walked in, she was badly shacking.

Me: What happened?

Pretty: My in-laws kicked me out of the house.

Surprisingly why did she chose to come to me.

Me: Why didn't you go home?

She just cried. I felt bad for asking her that.

Me: Sorry come in.

Intelligence start by learning to ask the right questions, specific thoughts how will the questionnaire feel about the question.

*F*ifteen minutes later. She was calm she explained that her in-laws kicked her out because of she didn't clean the house. I showed her my mother's room.

Pretty: I'm scared to sleep alone.

Me: I'm on the other room.

Pretty: Let's share a room.

Me: No that won't happen, my girlfriend might budge in and get the wrong idea.

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MAXWELL MAJA

I had my own issues, my own problems and someone decided to come with her own issues.

Me: Pretty if you don't want to use the room sleep on the couch.

She nodded.

She was the one who was desperate looking for a place to sleep not me, I was going to beg her, yet she was too demanding.

Pretty: I'm sorry.

She sat on the bed then covered herself with her hands.

Pretty: I feel like mother in law is the one in charge of my marriage, instead of me and my husband. She constantly tell me what to do and not do, what to eat and when to drink water, how to raise my own child, sometimes she gets angry if I don't comply with her instructions.

She was crying, I wanted to sit next to her and comfort the poor woman. But my mind was telling me otherwise.

Me: Have you ever communicate with your husband about your feel?

She didn't respond me. Communication is the key for a better relationship, it allows us to build a room for one another, if you fail to communicate with your partner bare in mind that relationship is on ICU it might die at anytime.

Me: Pretty I can't help you if you don't help me either.

She wiped her tears.

Pretty: She's a controlling freak.

Me: Hey don't say such.

Mind whispering can save one from danger. Instant of sitting next to her, I took a chair then sat.

Me: Does your husband feel powerless against his mother?

She sniffed then frowned.

Me: You need to discuss how you feel with your husband and help him understand that only two of you can lead your marriage together. The third person will only destroy your marriage. Create a room for your husband and forget about having her approval on every little thing, so hopefully, he can see who's in control in this marriage.

She looked at me then smiled.

Pretty: You evil Max.

Me: No I'm not.

Pretty: You whispered evil word on my ears.

She was looking at me.

Pretty: Do you mind if I make myself a cup of tea.

Me: I don't mind.

She got up.

Pretty: You want some?

I shook my head. She walked to the kitchen. I also walked to my room. My mind kept on arguing with me. I never locked my room but I did then instead my headset my ears.

MALWANDE ZULU

I was waiting for mommy, I missed both my parents. I was sitting on the couch hugging my legs, hoping that she was going to budge in.

Have you ever lens on a shame and vulnerability, where other things like trust, courage, creativity, joy and gratitude germinate? That was me vulnerability seems to accurate with the measure of courage. I couldn't measure how brave I was by how I reviled my hidden pain. I was in a space of alive and dead. I had those memories of being abused. I freely my tears.

Instead of her coming in with that door I was staring, my father walked to me.

Dad: You still up?

I nodded.

Dad: Why aren't you in your bedroom.

Me: I'm waiting for mommy.

Dad: She won't come back, she will sleep at a friend's house.

Everything was not making any sense. Firstly she took everything that belonged to her now she's going to sleep on a friend's house.

Me: Why do I feel like she's distancing herself from us?

He glanced down then sat next to me.

Dad: Princess, Buhle won't do that.

Me: Did you guys have a fight?

That question just popped in my mind then betrayed me by coming out.

Dad: We did, but it's nothing dad can't handle.

I nodded. I trust my father

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when he says he will handle something he will. He got up.

Dad: Nana you need to rest okay.

I nodded then got up

Me: I hope whatever it is is not about your TV that says "baby" every time you call me.

He nodded.

I retired to my bed. The first thing I did was to call Max, he answered after few rings.

Max: Baby.

Me: Don't baby me.

Max: I'm sorry, but you know I was not supposed to be in your house from the first place.

Me: But I needed you to be on my side.

He prefers me to go to his house, but he doesn't want to come to my house.

Max: I don't mind to come pick you up.

Me: I didn't say that.

There was a woman's voice calling his name on the background.
That was not Sne, voice.

Me: Who's that?

Max: A friend of mine.

A friend that I don't know of. But I trust him he won't lie to me.

Me: Okay we will talk tomorrow.

Max: Why not now?

Me: I'm disturbing you and your friend.

Max: Tsamaea. (Go away)

Me: You left here without a simple goodbye.

Max: My love we have the entire time for each other, you only get to see your family after a while. I will make it up to you.

I hung up. The sorrow I was feeling it was the price I paid for reviling my hidden pain.

I fell asleep after an hour. I had a recurring nightmare. It was very strange, it wasn't visual it was pitch black with a very negative energy, a feeling of impending doom spiraling into the darkness. I screamed for help.

Me: Ma!!

The was noone there. It was scary

I woke up, I wanted to flee, but I remained frozen. My breath quickened. The door opened, my dad walked in announced.

Dad: Lwande are you alright.

I shook my head.

Me: I'm scared dad.

I couldn't explain the dream.

BUHLE ZULU (Malwande's adoptive mother)

Through out my sleep I was waken up by my phone ringing. I reached for it and answered it.

Me: Hello.

Voice: Lwande need you.

Not even a simple hello?

Me: I will see her tomorrow morning.

I handed up then switch off my phone. I had accepted the fact that Ntokozo didn't need me. I distracted my attention from him. He had to remember that he was no longer making an effort to spend time with me. He wasn't returning my calls and text messages. I used to go to bed just roll myself over and turns off the light without him around.

The following morning, I went to take a full bath. With millionth questions. Questions with unanswered it's like locked rooms that doesn't have a key. I used to be Mrs Zulu with a loving husband who turned against me in just seven months.

Lucus: Buhle are you still in there?

He knocked.

Me: I'm not in here.

He giggled.

Lucus: Let me go search for her then.

I just laughed.

Me: Suka. (Go away)

I know I moved on so quickly It's not something that gets better after a night sleep. It's also not like a hangover that can be cured with medication. It's something that breaks my heart because of my "what-if's and could be's" From the minute I wake up until I headed to sleep again, I carried the pain of a failed marriage.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

I received a text message from Pretty. I was disappointed, her plan didn't succeed. Wait she slept at his house that counts right?

XOLANI WILLIAMS

Waking up next to Thando brighten my day. She was on a healing process, I was in a little world where I see myself as a failure. I failed two ladies. On one woman. Gift was right Zandi she's just a mother by name. She doesn't deserve to be called a mother.

Thando turned and came across me staring at her. Only time can heal your broken heart that's for sure.

Me: Relax I won't hurt you.

Thando: I know but I don't trust you.

I nodded repeatedly. I brought that to myself, she used to trust me now that trust is gone by my dumb actions.

Me: Promise me we won't quit school this time.

She nodded. I brought her into my embrace chest.

Thando: When I came here, I wanted to clear my head, I didn't know what was waiting for me Xo. Mrs Zulu and your sister welcomed me with warm hands, I became their responsibility, especially Lwande she had to share her allowance with me. That was a eye opener. I had to stand up on my feet.

Sadly I didn't get a chance to meet Mrs Zulu, but the Zulus seems to be great people.

Me: I'm sorry Thando for everything I put you through.

She nodded then the silent took over the entire room. Until she decided to break it.

Thando: What are you going to do with MamZandi?

Me: I'm going to give her the long rope to hang herself. I will start by moving out with Gift.

Thando: Anyway how's Gift?

Me: He hates me and Zandi.

Thando: Do you blame him though?

Me: Not at all, he is the one who made me realise that Zandi she's a snack.

Silent took over again for few minutes. She got up.

Thando: Let's go take shower, the is a spot on my back that I can't reach.

Me: How did you saw that spot?

She removed my arms around her then giggled.

Thando: And it's my day to prepare a breakfast.

Me: Sê net jy mis my. (Just say you miss me)

Thando: A little bit.

Guilty is formed of punishment, I love that woman, I should've trusted her and protected her when she said she didn't touch Zandi.

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SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

I called Max. He answered after three rings.

Me: Finally.

Max: Haibo Themba, I have things to do than waiting for your calls.

Me: Any plan for today?

Max: I'm meeting with Lwande in an hour.

I hanged up.

My chest was physically aching from the heavy sadness that it carries lot of weight.

Couldn't he come with another answer. I withdrew myself and tried to calm the panic. As my brother walked to me. He wasn't in the good mood.

Sbu: Themba!

Me: What do you want Sibusiso?

Sbu: Your sister in-law want a phone, please lend me for few minutes.

I looked at him, all his girlfriends don't last, I thought he was going to say that he was joking. But no he was wearing his serious face that made me to pay more attention to him.

Me: Why should I give you my phone?

Sbu: I want show her just to make sure is this a kind of the phone she want?

I gave him, he walked away from me.

Fifteen minutes later, he gave me my phone, he was still moody.

Sbu: Thanks sis.

Sis? Now I'm worried

Me: She's giving you a grey hair sure.

He nodded.

Me: Is she worth it though?

He got up.

Sbu: Screw you!!!

Me: And then?

Sbu: I'm meeting with Xo and Max in few minutes from now.

Me: I thought Max is having a date with his girlfriend.

Sbu: Me, Thando and Xo we are joining them.

AN HOUR LATER I discovered that my phone had no signal, Sbu he's an IT guy beside being my brother, I'm screwed as he said "screw you" I had to make a plan to ruin their so called meeting. I asked my other brother to ask Sbu where he is. He provided me with the information. I asked him to borrow me his phone, I logged in to my Facebook account, I texted Pretty, luckily she was online.

"Do you have any idea where is Max?"

"He went to the Merinda's club with his girlfriend, he left his phone"

That counts.

"Let's meet there, come with that phone, make a plan to piss off Lwande"

She replied with a smile.

Me: Bingo!!!

I removed my account from, my brother's phone then gave him his phone.

Nico: Thank you for your kindness Nico.

Me: Whatever Nico.

MALWANDE ZULU

We walked to the club, it had weekend vibe. Believe me when I say I'm a master of disguise, I can wear my best smile, just to hide my sorrows behind it. I gave Xo my bag and went to the dance floor.

People were screaming others joined me, the music stopped. I went to join my crew. Sne was also there.

Sbu: Teacher!

Me: Technician!

I pulled out the chair then sat down.

Me: Baby.

Max: Are you alright?

Me: Why wouldn't I be?

Max: I know this smile Lwande.

Me: I'm fine honey.

Max: Itumeleng will be joining us.

I looked at him hoping that he will say he's joking or something, the last time I saw his cousin things didn't go well between them.

Me: I don't have the-

He cut me.

Max: Please don't get angry with me. I asked him to hack the account of that person who is behind turishing your name.

I was confused until he gave me the clear explanation.

Max: According to him, he thinks one of your ex's is behind you.

Me: I don't think they would stoop that low.

He nodded.

Me: I hate the fact that you are putting your nose on my business. But thanks love, I appreciate your efforts. Is there anything I can help with?

I know that he was going to say no.

Max: Don't worry we've got all we need for now.

Sne: Bafo I can help you if you need any help.

Sbu coughed.

Sne: Are you alright?

He nodded. The waiter walked to us, she gave us the menus when she was about to leave, the unexpected woman joined us.

Me: Is this kind of a joke Pretty?

She gave me a side smile.

Pretty: Max you left your phone at the house.

House? She gave him his phone.

Max: Thanks Pretty.

It ringed into me, that I heard a woman's voice on the background last night.

Me: Max she's the friend you told me about?

He nodded, he can't be serious.

Me: Girl you listen to me very carefully, whatever business you are doing with my boyfriend, it must end immediately.

She smiled.

Me: You don't get tired by being on my way.

Pretty: I see that you are still shaken by me.

I laughed aggressively enforce loudly, she had guts to utter that.

Me: Me shaken by you, think again, you won James though he chose you

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but I know he's not happy, thanks God that his mother and sister are the to make sure that he is well taken off.

She smiled.

Pretty: You are a pain in my ass.

Me: Thando teach me here, I might get married one day, should a married woman be at a male friend's house by 10 at night?

Thando: When I got married, elders taught me that, Xo he's now my friend.

I nodded and smiled.

Me: Max she was at your house last night.

Pretty: Probably I spent a night at his house.

Max: Babe it's not what you think, she came to my house looking for help.

After what Pretty has put me through, and her husband who happened to be my ex fiance. I don't trust her but I trust Max as much as he trust me and respect me. Respect is a precursor to trust, it has to come first.

Trust is earned after there is already some level of respect in the relationship. But that girl cannot be trusted. She managed to get James to her bed. My only fear is that.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

I was accepting, a drama from those girls. But no Lwande she was calm. Sbu asked to have a word with me. We walked to another table he seems so disappointed.

Sibusiso: Themba you are the one who's responsible for putting Lwande on the mud. Do you mind telling me why.

I looked at him.

Sbu : No ways Themba.

Me: What is it?

Sbu: Mr Zulu is out for blood on the other side Xolani will make sure who is behind his cousin.

Me: You won't allow that to happen, will you?

Sbu: Is too late Themba, Max he's also digging in. Hence why I had disconnect your line.

Me: You son of a.

Sbu: The same bitch who gave birth to you.

He got up.

Sbu: If you want a panis, go try somewhere else Max he's in a relationship, I'm sure he's not the only man in this world.

No ways he thought I was into Max?

Sbu: I'm ashamed to be called your brother.

He walked away from me and join the crew. I joined them too. I looked at Pretty with the hope that she will make Lwande angry or something. She unzipped her jacket, surprisedly she was wearing Max's t-shirt.

Lwande: Pretty what game are you playing?

Pretty: I didn't know that I'm playing games.

Yes girl!!

Max: Girls.

Lwande: Max I never wore your shirt but the girl who is after me she's wearing your t-shirt.

Max looked at Pretty.

Max: What the fuck Pretty?

Lwande: Pretty what game are you playing, I know Max didn't allow you to wear his clothes.

She glanced down.

Lwande: Pretty why do you keep on wanting to hurt me, we were once best friends, our mother's are related, we should fight for one another not each other.

The hell?

Lwande: I remember my first day here in Jo'burg, you are the only person I was introduced to as a sister, you were always on my side, I can't even begin to count all of the times we used to do things together, because I know it would make me sad. I remember you once rescued me from the monster of a boyfriend, I don't know what changed. You've shaped into someone, I can't even recognize. You taught me how to be goofy and how to believe in myself and push myself. You taught me to be patient and a lot about self respect and self worth. And you helped me learn that my happiness is important. But right now, that Pretty she's gone, I can't trust or want to share a table with you.

They both shade tears.

Pretty: I don't hate you Lwande, I'm just jelouse of you, everything about you is perfect, your mother she's a nurse, and your father he's a electrical engineer. Wena you are always perfect in everyone's eyes.

Lwande giggled between her sobs.

Malwande: Perfection guys did you heard that Sbu?

He nodded. I'm going to kill Pretty trust me.

Lwande: No one is perfect, that's why we go through hardship.
I'm not perfect and you are not perfect.

She stopped talking.

Lwande: While we are there, find a pit to hide, because an
angry beast has entered.

Pretty: Sne..... Max..... I'm a dead meat today.

She was shaking.

Lwande: Just hide before he sees you.

She got under the table. While we still at it I'm going to put
Pretty on the hot plate

MALWANDE ZULU

The situation was tricky, she was under the table. I was holding my breath that he doesn't see me.

Pretty she's not my favourite person but her husband wouldn't mind to attack her right there. He was my fiance I've been there through there, he's abusive. He wouldn't mind to drag her out.

Thando: I think he's coming here.

I turned and looked at him. I took a deep breath.

Me: Lwande you can do this. You can trick him.

I got up making those people who were sitting with me worried.

Xo: What are you doing?

Me: Brother I have been thought the worst, I can handle James.

I took a glass of water.

Me: Watch and learn.

I walked towards him, I purposely bumped into him and the spilled into him. He paused there with the expression mixture of shock and anger.

Me: Watch where you going!!!

James: You are the one who bumped into me.

Me: Oh I'm sorry, my mind is everywhere.

James: Uhm.... I'm sorry babe.

Babe my foot.

Me: I'm sorry again.

I attempted to leave he grabbed my hand. And looked at the table where I was sitting.

James: You were sitting there where are you going?

With that man you needed to be smart.

Me: I and my boyfriend we have a little misunderstanding, so I need some fresh air.

James: Is he giving you any problem?

What was he going to do

Me: We will be fine, just that sometimes I make everything about me, it is my fault yet I don't want admit.

He looked at the empty table.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

We watched them as they walked to the table.

Thando: What do we do now?

Max: She said we must watch and learn.

Me: Watch and learn, Pretty she's under the table.

Lwande and Pretty's husband got up.

Max: I don't like what I'm about to see.

Me: You have to, you allowed her to go deal with that man.

He looked at me. Lwande walked out with that man, they were holding hands like some sort of couples, walking on a red carpet.

Thando: The cost is clear girl. He's gone.

Pretty got out of the table. Her breath was noticeable.

Max: You are related with Lwande?

She nodded.

Pretty: Our mothers are cousins.

He looked at Xo.

Thando: That means she's your cousin too right?

She nodded, that girl she is ruining my plan. Danm you Pretty, the plan was to make Lwande angry. But no I failed again. I had to come with another plan, giving up is not me.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's Biological mother*)

With Xolani being away, it was difficult. I had to take care of myself and everyone. Gift was not helping me at all. Did you

ever seek your children's attention? That was me seeking my son's attention. The only thing he was doing is to get come up with endless excuses about sitting sharing the same table as I am? Deep inside me I was sad and grieving for my son who was wanted nothing to do with me. I wanted to share my grief with my child, but he wasn't letting me in. His father walked to me.

Aron: You seem stressed why?

Me: I'm fine.

Aron: Don't lie to me.

I sigh...

Aron: Nightmare again?

I nodded, those nightmare do come and go, they part of me so I have no peace.

MALWANDE ZULU

He was breaking down inside there, we had to go out, I never seen a broken man as he was. His name is James, he's full of shit. But Pretty got him where he is small. The guy I use to date was not the one

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who would breakdown because of a girl, but there he was. And that made me think that he cared about Pretty. We were not meant to be. He told me that Pretty just gone missing.

Me: You are trying to tell me that you too didn't fight?

He nodded, we was sitting on his car.

James: Lwande I don't know what is going on with Pretty this day's. She's no longer the Pretty that I know, as I'm talking to you our son he's admitted at the hospital, all she does is going out come back late.

I didn't know what to say, how could Pretty do that?

Me: I'm sorry J.

James: It's not your fault.

I nodded.

James: Why are you being nice to me, I broke your heart.

I cleared my throat

Me: I cannot be angry forever J spilled water can not be undone.

James: I'm sorry.

Me: What's wrong with your child?

James: He has this illness called Bronchiolitis he was wheezing and he couldn't breathe.

I sighed...

Me: It's so sad.

I looked at him once again. He was not himself.

Me: You need to go home, you look so tired.

James: I've been looking for her, this is my last spot, if I don't find her within 24 hours I'm going to open a case of a missing person.

Me: Just promise me that you won't hurt her.

James: I promise, I just want my wife home, I want me and her to focus on our son.

Me: I know where she is.

James: Please take me there, I won't hurt her.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

Everyone was worried about Lwande.

Max: Why is she taking too long?

Me: Maybe she's trying to calm him down.

Sne: How could she walk out with another man, whilst her boyfriend is here?

What kind of a friend is she? Lwande walked to us.

Max: They she comes. (*Smiling*)

Lwande: Pretty hubby is waiting for you.

Her eyes winded.

Lwande: Max, this friend of yours has a sick child did she tell you?

Max looked at her. Lwande took a seat.

Lwande: Pretty your child need his mother, James he's trying to meet you half way, please do the same.

Pretty: He's going to kill me.

Lwande: You should've thought about that before you become the person you. J cares about you.

Pretty just cried.

Lwande: I know it's hard especially your in-laws but your son needs his mother. Don't turn your back on your child.

Pretty: Lwande you hate me, my mother too I have no one.

Lwande: Pretty my door is open for you if you need to talk to me, let's not fight because of a man, not even a man a guy.

We laughed, for a guy part, Sne just folded her arms.

Xo: Poor man was called a guy.

Lwande: He's a guy because he got between us.

Pretty got up.

Lwande: When you get home please give me a call.

She looked at Sne.

Pretty: I'm sorry Sne to use this as a tool to help me out. I've been trying to reach out to Lwande but I couldn't sorry Sne.

She banged the table. Oh my goodness I like that girl already.
She walked out.

Lwande: So you were messing around with Pretty?

She didn't say anything.

Lwande: Thanks that it ended because James was going to kill you, I don't know because you are a woman what he was going to do with you. That man he's a bullshit, he wouldn't mind to kill you. This goes to you Max you need to stay away from Pretty I'm not on the verge of losing you.

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SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

Pretty used me as an object I would never rest until I get what I need. The pain of betrayed left me with deep wounds. I felt the sense of betrayal when my Pretty walked out.

Thando: Sne!!

Lwande: Sorry Sne you should've asked me about her.

They laughed, everything with Lwande and Sbu always turns out to be a joke.

Max: Guys don't laugh, they have taken away my friend's girlfriend.

He sings this annoying song.

U-lovey wam uhambe namablessor

Uhambe namablessor aah

Bathath' umunt' wam

Bathath' isthandwa sam why

Nom' ungahamb' uzong' khumbula aah

U-lovey wam uhambe namablessor

Uhambe namablessor wahamba

Ihambil' intombi kamjita, ay ulova

Usho in front of phamb' kwabantu

Wathi "it's over"

Mina ang'nanto weeh

Mina ang'nalutho, mina

'Maningthathela yena nithi ngenzenjani?

'Maningthathela yena nithi ng'thande bani?

Lwande: Next time she must do her homework before she jump into a relationship.

She had no idea what was coming her way.

Me: How can you forgive someone who betrayed you?

Lwande: Occasionally I've realize that Pretty and James deserve each other, I never seen James in tears, but today he proves his loves for her and he can do anything to be with her. I only see people's faces not their heart or characters.

Me: So you will forgive her?

She nodded.

Lwande: The's only few people who can read my obituary that's my parents, her and Thando, so being angry for them won't help me with anything.

BUHLE ZULU (*Malwande's adoptive mother*)

Some of the things are not important, especially letting go of thirty years of marriage, but on the bright side Zulu wasn't happy with a low graded nurse like me, he decided to date someone on his field.

Well I'm meeting with him in 30 minutes time. He basically changed his mind about the divorce, what is the use of going back while there is no future.

Being a mother to Lwande taught me that nobody will bring happiness unless I do that myself. I never been inside the club but I was forced to meet with him there. Immediately when we got there my eyes landed on Lwande and her friends.

Me: I think Ntokozo set me up with this meeting.

Lucus nodded.

Me: I won't allow that man use my daughter to fight his battles.

She's old enough to understand why did we take that route, it was not easy but it is what it is. She's not responsible for our divorce and I was consciously aware of the it was going to affect her. We walked to them. They were enjoying their meals.

Me: My Lwande.

She looked at me.

Malwande: Mom.

She forceful smashed the potatoes with a fork and ate.
Probably she was showing sort of sad reactions.

Me: Lwande that is dangerous and destructive you know that?

I was not going to ignore that kind of reaction. She was hurting but trying to convince her friends that she was fine

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her destroying that potato was a sign, could not be ignored.

Lwande: Now she cared about her Lwande.

I took a seat she got up.

Me: Princess I'm sorry.

Lwande: Mom you know that I waited for you last night, dad called you, you just dropped his call.

Me: I'm sorry you caught up in this whole divorce situation, I'm sorry about that.

Lwande: Divorce?

I didn't notice that I said too much. She took the keys on the table.

Man: Sies dis my motorsleutels. (Sis that's my car keys)

Lwande: I need sometime to think.

She walked away.

Thando: Must I follow her?

I shook my head.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's Biological mother*)

Whilst I was still sitting the disrespectful man walked in uninvitedly, Xo's father I got up.

Me: Your son he's not around.

He took a seat uninvitedly.

Me: Williams what is it.

Kingsley: I'm here to find out the truth about my cousin's daughter.

Me: I'm still searching for her.

Kingsley: Zandi I'm not here to play games with you, I want know where is Elias's daughter?

I looked at him. He took out his phone and called someone. He put it on loud speaker. The person didn't answer the phone. He called again finally the person answered after the 3rd rings.

Voice: Pa ek sal jou bel, Malwande het my motor gevat. (Dad I'll call you, Malwande took my car)

Kingsley: Don't tell me she disappeared again?

Xolani: Max where else would she go?

He placed his phone on the table.

Voice: Xolani let me focus please.

Xo: Don't tell that Max my sister she's...

He stopped talking.

Kingsley: Son!

Xo: Dad I'm sorry.

Kingsley: What is going on there?

Xo: I will call you.

He hung up.

Me: Did you find my daughter?

Kingsley: Malwande didn't just left Zandi, you and your boyfriend you are the reason why she left, now I'm giving you a chance to talk to me before Xo comes back.

He roared with uncontrollable fury. That tone made me to realise that I had more explanation to do before my son gets back.

Me: You took my daughter away from me?

Kingsley: She's not your daughter Zandi.

MALWANDE ZULU

My parents, however, were happily married, they never even fought. I considered myself to be one of the lucky ones. Why would they divorced after 30 years of marriage? I was driving to Max's house, I needed sometime alone. I found myself in a strangely unequipped to handle my parents splitting up. What went wrong? I was left feeling completely disoriented by the news.

MALWANDE ZULU

Having his keys was a blessing in disguise. I opened the door and got in. I don't understand why I was affected by their divorce, I was stressed, anxiety, and frustration caught me. That was unnecessary right?

The naked truth is that I never imagined them separated. I know that my mother can be on her own world but she loved her husband, her Ntokozo.

I was feeling guilty about that, I wished I could've prevented whatever that led them to take that huge step. Honestly separation or divorce are a result of a couple's problems with each other, not me right? Their decisions not mine right? I've been in and out relationship with their support due to I was not happy with those relationship I ended those relationships. So why I was stressed?

SNETHEMBA TSHABALALA

Lwande's reaction got everyone worried. My brother, Max and Xolani they followed her. I don't think they caught her because they decided to follow her after twenty minutes.

Her mother was more worried than everyone. She believed that she might hurt herself judging by how she destroyed the potato her words not mine.

Lwande's mother: I need to find my daughter.

The man who introduced himself as Dr Lucas was trying by all means to calm her.

Dr Lucas: I understand that you are stressed about her.

She looked at him.

Lwande's mother: Lucas don't tell to calm down, my daughter she's out there the is the possibility of her hurting herself.

Thando: Mr Zulu he's here.

We all looked at the entrance, he walked to us as he saw us or better say Lwande's mother.

Lwande's mom: Now I have to face an angry man.

Thando: Sne let's give them a space.

Lwande's mom: Thando please stay.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's biological mother*)

Kingsley lightened his cigarette, he had the audacity to show up to smoke inside the house, despite the fact that he was not welcome in my house, and he had lots of explain attention to do.

Gift walked to us, Kingsley immediately stepped on his cigarette.

Gift: My eyes are deceiving me.

He forced a smiled.

Kingsley: Wake up my boy, uncle K he's here.

They performed a handshake. That colored man had the guts to smile knowing very well that he's not welcome.

Gift: My brother he's not here.

Kingsley: I know I'm here to see your parents.

Gift looked at me, I couldn't tell that he wanted nothing to do with me, so did I?

Kingsley: Any way how are you?

My son sat down.

Gift: I'm fine.

Kingsley: And the job hunting line?

Job hunting line?

Gift: I'm still looking.

Kingsley: Child you should launch your own venture in order for job hunting. Anything is possible, you just need to work hard and believe in yourself. When things go wrong you need to break it down into bite size pieces and push ahead, taking on each piece one at a time until the issue is resolved. As a result, no problem is insurmountable and no goal out of reach.

He's a father of my son, on that speech of his he was sending me a message. What is it with when things go wrong break it down into bite size.

Me: Williams, jou seun

is nie hier nie. (*Williams your son isn't here*)

Kingsley: I'm much aware of that.

Gift: Uncle do you believe that I should launch my own business?

Kingsley: You should believe in yourself.

Gift: Thanks for passing by.

Gift looked at me then walked out.

Kingsley: Such a good boy. It's a pity that his parents are both crazy.

BUHLE ZULU (*Malwande's adoption mother*)

My big mouth led me to say things that I shouldn't have said.
Ntokozo tried to call her she wasn't answering.

Ntokozo: Buhle what makes you think that I will sign the danm
thing after this?

Me: You don't want to see the bad side of me Mageba.

He threw the unsigned papers on my face.

Me: Baby let's find another table.

I said that purposely, that's what he was doing to me when I
decided to take my head and visited him in Mexico.

Sne: What about we call Pretty maybe she might led us where
Lwande went.

Me: The don't get along.

MALWANDE ZULU

Whilst I was sitting on the couch Max, Xo and Sbu walked in.

Me: Xo here is your car keys.

Max: Baby you don't have to act like this.

Me: My parents are getting divorce and my boyfriend he's expecting me to be okay with that.

Max: I know how you feel.

Me: You know how does it feel? Maja I will have to choose between them.

Xo: You don't have to choose between them, uncle Ntokozo in another country, you see him after a while, there is nothing that will change.

I looked at him.

Me: You know nothing.

Xo: My father called don't you want to talk to him?

I looked at him.

Me: Not today.

Max walked up to me, he sat on the couch next to me. Xo walked out he was trying to reach out to his father.

Max: As a student teacher what are your strengths?

Really now?

Me: Some qualities of a good teacher include skills in communication, listening, collaboration, adaptability, empathy and patience. Maxwell what does teaching has to do with my parents breaking up.

Max: My love if you can't face difficulties how can you deal with difficult things in a simple way. You need the ability to connect with pupils on a personal level, whilst you unable to handle your own personal level.

I looked at my phone, it was ringing. My father won't give up unless I switched my phone off.

Max: Aren't you going to answer him.

I switched it off.

Max: Qualities of a good teacher are communication, listening, collaboration, adaptability, empathy and patience. You said.

Me: What does the quantities have to do with this again?

Max: You need to practice those qualities before you enter in the classroom. What I'm trying to say is that it's important that your parents know how this is affecting you, so speak openly about this during your talk. Talk about your concerns, fears, or anything else that worries you. Again, stay calm throughout talking to your parents.

That's what I love about him, he's so supportive.

Me: I'm not ready to face them.

Max: You are an adult and their are old too they don't need your permission to get a divorce. It's their decision they made. Communication is best when used well and honestly and often. It's not necessary for them to deliver into the details about everything they went through.

They didn't give me a choice. They didn't see a need to tell me that they are divorcing.

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MALWANDE ZULU

WEEK LATER

Things were difficult but I was taking everything slowly especially with my parents divorcing, my father was the one who was struggling, he failed to sign the divorce, mom had a to show the court her process of server certificate to prove that my father knew about the divorce and he was served with the divorce papers, which he failed to sign. They divorce was recognized as a default divorce because of uncontested divorce. The court summoned him because he did not respond within the allocatted time period, mom approached the court to have the matter set down for trial.

Today was the court day for their default divorce, my dad and I went to my late grandmother's house from Mr Zulu's side in **Kwa-Nongoma**. I don't like KZN but I had to be there for them. Mom assured me that the divorce won't affect our relationship, she will be always my mother I will be always her daughter.

I gave him his coffee.

Dad: Thank you.

I sat down.

Me: Dad you love her, and she loves you too, be loyal with your feelings, let her go no matter what the cost. Respect her the way you used to believe in her as you used to, expect the best for her and her new founded relationship.

He nodded.

Ntokozo: She seems happy without me.

Me: Uhm yeah she look happy.

Ntokozo: Maybe you right.

He drank his coffee.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

When I got home last night, I did not get a chance to see my mother because she was asleep. When they say the are people who jump for every opportunity coming their way, they were referring that to me.

When Mr Zulu and Lwande told me about their trip to Kwa-Nongoma I asked if I could go with them. They agreed. I was preparing for breakfast just for me, mom and uncle.

BUHLE ZULU (*Malwande's adoptive mother*)

I received Ntokozo's SMS asking me that we should meet before we go to the court, he stated that I should come with Lucas. I was nervous, anxious, stressed, tense because that SMS.

I placed my phone on the pocket then looked at my last patient's file.

Me: When was the last time you tested for HIV?

Patient: After giving birth.

How was I supposed to know when was that. We shout them we get verbal warning or dismissed.

Me: How old is your child?

Patient: Five years old.

Me: It is important to test for HIV to prevent HIV Infection. Or spreading it.

Patient: Are you forcing me to get tested?

I shook my head.

Me: Not at all but it's important to know your status.

She was not taking any of my shit, I had to trick her so that I can get her blood samples.

Me: Let's forget about HIV and focus on you getting better

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I will run some tests to determine what is wrong with you.

She nodded, I gave her the consent form she signed, I took her blood.

Me: Please come back on the next coming day.

Her: Where are you taking my blood to?

I explained to her she nodded.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

I was stucked with my cruel inhuman mother and her boyfriend. If life is sacrifice, living somewhere you don't like to save money just for your future plans so be it. I couldn't get a place to rent. With the money that I was going to rent with I decided to save it. So that I can get a place of my own.

It's usually possible just to avoid people you don't get along with. However, at some point you may have to see that someone you dislike. That was tough for me. I joined Gift on cooking my own food in my room, how fair is that?

I walked to get water, to find my little brother busy with the business plan. I trust my father with encouraging the youth to stand for themselves, especially his kids, my step sisters are

both self employed just me who chose to work for someone I never met, but helping that person to build his or her empire.

Me: How far with the business plan?

He sigh.

Gift: I never thought it was this hard to create your own business.

I nodded.

Gift: Have you seen how unforgivable is the universe if you don't listen?

I walked to drink water avoiding his question. He walked to me.

Gift: Come on Xo I'm no longer a child I can see that you don't want to be in the same room as mom and dad.

That boy loves his father.

Gift: Xo talk to me.

I looked at him and thought about his question, meaning I will get punished for what I don't know.

Me: I've found our sister, few months ago.

He got up and walked to me.

Gift: Are you being for real now.

I nodded

Me: The girl you met the other day with Thando and Sne is our sister.

He laughed and looked at me.

Gift: No Xo, just say you missed her and you see her in your wife's friend.

Me: I'm telling you.

Gift: Why didn't you bring her home?

Me: She has a new family, new mother that will never risk her life, a mother who will protect her.

I found myself saying those words. I added by "***A mother who can notice that something is wrong with her daughter***" Zandi doesn't believe that her boyfriend raped Lwande.

SNETHEMBA TSHABALALA

My next plot was to get rid of Max poison was going to be traced so car accident was the only thing that was going to work for me. I looked at the man.

Me: Make sure that he doesn't survive.

He nodded. We're all human, after all.

We all have our faults.

We all have dreams and goals for the future that require sacrifices.

MAXWELL MAJA

Sbu volunteered to work with my cousin, to catch the hypocrite that is trying to hurt Lwande.

Me: I'm off to the store can I get you anything.

Sbu: I will come with you.

Lwande went to KZN with her father and sister in law, which makes it easier for this two to work, Sbu took the unpaid leave just to help me. Calmness is the rarest quality in human life. It is the poise of a great nature, in harmony with itself and its ideals

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MAXWELL MAJA

Me and Sbu got things that we needed then we hit the road. While I was driving my car went fast on a wide turn and started loosing control of my car, it was swerving side to side.

Sbu: Be carefully.

The car was swerving uncontrollable. Fear fall upon me. The next thing I saw red traffic lights and I heard hooters. Within a seconds my head hit the windshield, I saw the scariest slow motion I had ever seen, my car went into the air and hit the road.

“Ahh!!!“

MALWANDE ZULU

My mother agreed to meet with my father. We met her at the restaurant near the hospital she's working at. She was with her new boyfriend.

Dad: Thanks for coming.

She nodded.

Dad: Buhle I'm sorry, I've come to realise that I was not the husband I was supposed to be.

She cut him.

Mom: Ntokozo you are wasting my time, we supposed to meet at the courtroom in thirty minutes from now.

He checked his watch.

Me: Ma please listen to him.

She nodded, I had a terrible feeling that something awful was about to happen. It was a feeling that I had never experienced before.

Dad: I'm sorry again, with all the troubles I've cost you. I will sign those papers.

He looked at her boyfriend.

Dad: Please take care of her.

We headed to the court, I carried that feeling with me for hours and I just couldn't seem to shake this unsettling anxious feeling no matter how hard I tried.

Their divorce was finalized. My father was sad.

Me: It's okay dad.

He nodded, I could tell that he was keeping it together for the sake of love.

Dad: My heart is broken, I still love her.

That's what he wanted. My mother walked to us.

Buhle: Lwande may this not affect our relationship.

I nodded and went for a hug. The mood, wasn't that chipper at all.

Me: I need both of you in my life. Since I can't choose between you, it will be fair for me if you too become friends.

We broke the hug. They looked at each other.

Ntokozo: We will be friends Nana.

Me: What about we throw a finally free divorce party?

Buhle: I will think about that.

Me: Maybe I can get a chance to know my step dad.

She glanced down, she was weeping.

Me: Mom!

She wiped her tears. She's a master of hiding her emotions.

SNETHENBA

I was sitting with my two boring brother Nicolas and Samuel. When Nico's phone started ringing. He walked away from us to answer his phone. Sibusiso decided to be closer to Max's cousin to make sure that he doesn't get anything that will link back to me.

Few minutes later, Nico walked back to us he shook his head then took a seat.

Nico: Not my brother.

We looked at him.

Sam: Nico what happened.

He shook his head.

Nico: USbu ube sengozeni yemoto. (Sbu have been in a car accident)

Me: Where?

Nico: Cops found my cellphone number on his ID booklet.

Me: In which hospital...

He cut me.

Nico: Themba and Samuel.

I got up. My body started aching as if I was reacting sort of an energy, I had a terrible chest pain and headaches.

Nico: I'm sorry he was pronounced dead on the scene.

Me: No!! Not Sibusiso

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not my brother.

Nico: Dad he's on his way there.

BUHLE ZULU (*Malwande's adoptive mother*)

We had to head back to the hospital. Lucas was the one who was driving. I thought it was going to be easy, it felt like I lost part of me. I closed my eyes. All the memories of my wedding day with Ntokozo. Flashbacks tricked into my mind

Guests cheered for me. Some clapped, others whistled, as I walked down the aisle, newly pronounced, music playing for me to meet my prince charm. We were pronounced as "Husband and wife" all that was gone. The memory from a lifetime ago.

Lucus: That's it I'm taking you home.

Me: I'm on duty.

It felt like I was using all my energy to climb out of hell. My marriage ended just like that. One minute, I was happy, that I was finally free. The next my heart was broken, and I couldn't hold back the sobs.

Me: All those years are gone.

SINETHEMBA TSHABALALA

Later on. My father confirmed that Sibusiso was indeed dead.
He was in the same car as Max.

I killed them, I killed my own brother and my best friend, just
for a girl who never looked at me as I looked at her. I will never
forgive myself. I should've let go.

MALWANDE ZULU

I received a call from Max's mother.

Me: How are you Ma.

Max's mother: Where are you my baby girl?

Me: KZN visiting the family.

Max's mother: Baby girl I hope you not driving.

I nodded as if she was in the same house as I was.

Max's mother: Malwande.

Me: I'm not driving Ma.

She started crying.

Voice: Kgomotso here whom I'm speaking to?

For a moment I questioned myself what is going on?

Me: What is happening there, where is Max?

She cried too.

Kgomotso: My cousin is gone.

I heard her, but I kept on asking her to repeat what she said. She did. I ended the call and called Max his phone was answered by the police officer.

I hung up and cried. It was too much to take. My father walked up to me.

Dad: What happened?

Me: Not my Max dad, not the love of my life. (Crying)

He hugged me.

Me: Dad tell me that he's not dead, they are making up stories.

Modernity has prolonged our lives yet it has also taken away the only person who understood me. I wept. It wasn't a few tears escaping my eyes kind of cry either. It was the uncontrollable, snuffling snot, quivering lip kind of cry. Dad looked at me likely not sure what he should or shouldn't do.

MALWANDE ZULU

The following morning. I had a sleepless night. It was hard to accept, that's when I realised life is different. Max took some of me with him. He left a large part of who they was inside of me, just like he parts of me, you have kept parts of them. My phone rang, it was my mother, I couldn't answer her, the only call I was looking forward to was Max's call. I was plunged into grief.

It's been 12 hours since I heard from him. He's dead!!!

Me: He can't be.

That was the voice in my head. He was really gone. It feels erratic to think that way. I had the feeling in my gut got worse. I felt nauseous and dark-headed. I tried to braced myself as I sat down on my bed but I started shaking, and I knew I needed to

do something. It all felt unreal, I had messy blur of tears, heavy conversations within myself. I went to the fridge and took out half a pound of ice cream.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

Waking up with the sad news. I couldn't believe that my only friend was gone. I tried to overcome the panic but I was failing. I heard a knock. I walked to get it. It was Thando, she made it clear that she won't step her foot in Zandile's house. But since we were woken up with sad news I guess she wanted to check on me. We shared a hugged.

Thando: They gone.

Me: He's....

Words deserted me. Sbu was more like my brother.

We broke the hug.

Thando: What do we do now?

There was a mother who lost her son and a girl who lost her boyfriend. I had to check on them. What do we do now? There was nothing I could do.

Thando: I saw them two days ago.

She cried. Lwande has been through a lot. She doesn't deserve that. Nobody deserves this, being abused at the young age, and Sibusiso was his mother's son. How they were going to deal with heartbreak. Whilst we were talking Zandi walked to my room.

Me: Zandi not today.

Zandi: What is she doing in my house?

Me: She's my wife remember? And I live here unless I'm not welcome here.

Thando: I have to go.

Me: You are not going anywhere, you are my wife, if she's not happy about it then I don't know.

What kind of a mother, who doesn't want to see her child happy. I was mourning for my friend. There she was giving me headache.

Thando: Baby not today, your sister needs us to be strong for her, and Mrs Thabethe would want us to be.

For a moment I was brought back to unreality world. My friend was gone, Sbu would joke about everything.

Me: He's gone?

She nodded. Zandi looked at Thando.

Zandi: You poisoned my son against me.

Me: She's not different from you. You used your own daughter as a love weapon Zandi. I hate you Zandi I hate you.

She shook her head.

Zandi: Williams I'm your...

Me: Thando let's go.

I couldn't be in the same room as her.

I almost lost my own wife. Because of her, my sister been living a lie because of her. So looking at her it felt like.

MALWANDE ZULU

My father went to visit his cousin. I couldn't eat more than two spoon of that ice cream.

Being alone in my grandmother's house was as if I was adding more loneliness had trouble of thinking about anything other than Max's death.

I had lasting longing for him, it was difficult accepting that he's gone. I was confronted with his death I had additional mixed emotions. I needed my mother the taxi that I ordered was taking me to my mother's work place.

I cried continuously for hours and reran the events of the relationship over and over again in my mind, I was searching for what went wrong and what I couldn't do to save him.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

Me: Can somebody wake me up.

Dad: It's unbelievable Sne.

I was sitting on the mattress. People were coming in and out. To pay their respects, I wish I could do things differently.

Sam: I just don't understand. Max never drive when he's drunk

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he used to check his car before he gets into the car.

The pain of loss was overwhelming. I was experiencing all kinds of difficulties and unexpected emotions, from shock, anger to disbelief, guilt, and profound sadness.

BUHLE ZULU (Malwande's adoptive mother)

I was placed in labour ward today. The was this young woman who lost her baby after giving birth.

Me: I'm sorry for your loss.

Her: I wanted to hold her, feed her, sing for her and get mad at her.

Me: I'm sorry that you are going through a heartbreak.

I hugged her, she cried on my arms.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

My husband was angry by his mother's behaviour, he drove to Sbu's house. When we got there the poor woman was sleeping on the mattress, there were two old women sitting next to her.

The pain of grief can also disrupt our physical health, making it difficult to sleep, eat, or even think straight.

Xo: Sanibonani.

We exchanged greetings with them.

Old woman: My nephew is gone Xolani. (Crying)

That's when Mrs Tshabalala woke up, she looked at us.

Mrs Tshabalala: Xolani did you come with my son?

Xo glanced down.

Mrs Tshabalala: AHH, awww Ma, where is my son? (Crying)

I walked to her.

Mrs Tshabalala: Umfana wam. (My son)

I didn't know what to say, I just cried too.

BUHLE ZULU (*MALWANDE'S ADOPTIVE MOTHER*)

During my lunch time, I didn't have much to do. I received a call from the reception.

Receptionist: Nurse Zulu, you have a patient.

I never had special patient.

Me: I'm coming.

I hung up, then walked to the reception. To my surprise the patient was my daughter.

Me: Baby are you okay.

She got up hugged me so tight

Me: Okay...

She cried.

Lwande: He's gone Ma. (*Crying*)

I felt the heaviness in my heart.

Me: Who's gone.

She broke the hug.

Malwande: UMax ungishiyile mama. (Max left me)

Me: He's not the first boy to leave you.

She shook her head.

Lwande: He's not the first boy to leave me mom, he's gone, I will never see him again.

That's when I paid more attention to her.

Me: What do you mean you will never see him.

She explained what happened. It was breaking. Maxwell was a great boy. He never gave me the reason to hate him. He was humble.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

People were coming in numbers. Nicolas's girlfriend was helping around. Maja's family and my father's were, busy with the funeral arrangements. Fortunately Sbu and Max will be buried next to each other. Their service was going to be held at KZN. It felt like I was in dream.

MALWANDE ZULU

Days later Funeral arrangements were made, Max was going to be laid next to Sibusiso in KZN, my father left me behind. Their service will be held tomorrow at church.

I was grieving the loss of someone significant. He was the love of my life, and I was smitten with him from the day we started dating. I'm missing his touch, the way he kissed me, his jokes, and how he used to look at me deeply and intently especially in class.

I was also grieving for our future. I wish I was in the same car as them. I was driving to the Thabethe's house. I felt trapped, depressed, angry, and very unhappy. Everything was unreal.

When I got there I parked next to Xolani's car. I said my little prayer hoping that I don't pump into Zandi. I got out of the car, then walked to the house, Sne's aunt was the one who welcomed me.

Aunt: Ngena. (*Enter*)

She led me where everyone was sitting. I greeted them, then sat down.

Mrs Tshabalala: Hawu Malwande, woza uzohlala nami. (*Oh Malwande, come sit with me*)

I went to sit with her.

Mrs Tshabalala: unjani sisi? (*How are you holding up*)

Me: I don't know Ma, Max took a part of me away with him.

She cried, I find it too hard for me to cry next to people. But that pain of losing the love of my life made me cry.

I cried

Mrs Tshabalala: They are gone Ntombi. *(Crying)*

Every part of me was hurting tremendously. I couldn't get enough air into my lungs. My heart felt as if it were going to explode. My life feels like it has stopped completely. I didn't want to do anything anymore. It was a sudden death. The day he passed away my parents were official divorced, and I felt that something was wrong, I just didn't know what it was. I had to save him but I couldn't, because of my ignorance.

Me: I feel like he's gonna pop up and say baby it was all a joke I'm still here.

She hugged me. He was the guy I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life with, build a home together. He made me feel wanted.

Me: The morning before he passed away he told me he wanted to marry me and be a good teacher now he's gone who will marry a damaged girl like me?

I was asking the same person, who also lost her son.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

"When the hand of Death touches the us we hold dearest, paralyzes our energy, and eclipses the sun of our life, the calmness that has been accumulating in long years becomes in a moment our refuge, our reserve strength."

I couldn't focus knowing very well what I did. Sam was driving, we were heading to KZN.

Me: I'm sorry. *(Crying)*

I couldn't get over the passing of my brother and my dearest friend.

Nico: It's not your fault Themba.

Me: It is my fault Nicolas, I killed them.

Dad: It's hard to believe my baby.

Nico: It's normal to feel this way.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's Biological mother*)

I had to be the one to support my son, during this period. I needed to work my relationship with my sons. I already lost my daughter to strangers, I can't lose my sons.

Gift: I'm going to the Tshabalala.

We looked at him

Me: I'm coming with.

Gift: My brother doesn't need you. Get it into your head we hate you.

Me: What is it with the hate life is too short to hate your parents.

Gift: Indeed I hate you, and trust me if I had options to choose parents I was going to choose you.

His father banged the table in frustration.

Aron: Gift if you are a man now not here child, I'm the only man in this house.

He aggressively laughed at his father.

Gift: Only man in this house, dad you don't have a word in this house, you are nothing in this house, as for you mom you are a poison what kind of a mother are you. You are sharing a bed with the same man who raped your daughter, Zandi you can do better than this.

Aron: Shut up!!!

It's their words against his, Malwande has been always a trouble since she was a child. If he did raped her she would've told me.

Me: So you believe a stranger than your mother?

Gift: What did he feed you?

Aron got up from the chair

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he started beating him.

Me: You will kill my child.

Within no time he was on top of my child.

Aron: I will kill you.

Gift managed to overpower his father. This is getting out of control

Me: You two need to stop.

I looked at them, Zucchini was the one attacking Aron. My mind again was tricking me, how can I see a dead person in my son? That man was a headache even on his dead.

Me: You need to stop and get the hell off my son.

He stopped then looked at me. I shook my head.

Me: You.... You dead.

He got up and walked to me.

Me: Stay away from me.

He wasn't talking. I took a step back, he just stood there.

Me: Hawu nkosi yami, get out of my son's body in Jesus' name.
(Oh my goodness)

He clapped his hands. Aron looked at me as a mad woman.

XOLANI WILLIAMS

Lwande she was really broken, she was sleeping on the mattress, next to Mrs Tshabalala. Those two women were sharing the same pain. Her phone rang.

With Thando being away was hard. She went back to Jo'burg because of her Learnerships. Lwande's phone rang.

Me: Aunt please pass me that.

Sbu's aunt: You can't answer her phone.

Me: We can't disturb her from her sleep.

My colleague looked at me.

Aunt: Okay.

She handed me the phone, it was her mother. I answered.

Me: Mrs Zulu.

Mrs Zulu: Who's this, where is my daughter?

Me: Relax aunt, she's fine.

Mrs Zulu: Don't tell me to relax, give her the phone.

Me: You are speaking with Xolani.

Mrs Zulu: Oh I'm sorry son, where is my daughter?

Me: She's exhausted aunt, she's taking a nap.

Mrs Zulu: Okay, I'm getting lost, I'm on way to the Tshabalalas, please direct me.

Me: Where are you now.

Mrs Zulu: Mkhonazi supermarket.

Me: Don't move I'm coming.

Mrs Zulu: Okay.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's biological mother*)

I looked at him again, now my son was back, but Aron was still lying there defeated.

Me: Gift!!!

Gift: I'm out of here.

Me: Help me lift up your father.

Gift: He's your boyfriend not mine.

He said that walking out.

BUHLE ZULU (*Malwande's adoptive mother*)

[FIVE HOURS LATER]

I was helping the club ladies.

Lady 1: I don't think Ma Tshabalala will heal.

Lady 2: It's hard.

Lwande made her way to us.

Me: Baby.

Lwande: When did you get here?

Me: Hours ago.

Lwande: You didn't get lost?

That's my daughter trying to pull herself together.

Me: Excuse me ladies.

Lady 3: Thanks sister Zulu.

We walked to Xo's car.

Me: I did get lost

Lwande: I'm sorry.

Me: All right, Xo picked me up.

She nodded.

Me: I'm sorry that you are going through this alone.

She let tears out.

Lwande: But why Maxwell Ma?

Me: Baby we cannot question God's will, yes it's breaking and unbelievable.

Lwande: Did God ever love me?

Me: Yes Lwande.

Lwande: If God loves me, why has he allowed so much pain in my life?

I hesitated a bit before answering her. When it comes to God's love, there are times when I doubt, big time.

Me: God loves you baby, When we doubt God's love for us, it's inevitably because we're taking our eyes off him and focusing on ourselves our insecurities, shortcomings, sins and insignificance.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

My tears wouldn't stop. I regret that loving Lwande, I regret not grabbing my brother and looking at him deep into his soul, and tell him how much I admired him. How he was inspiration, and a protective brother and of course, how much I love him.

We were few kilometres away to get home. I took a nap on father's shoulder. It was relentlessly wheedling, my only understanding friend, childhood friend, was gone..

Max was like a my brother, he used to control his fear of losing his girlfriend. When the say guilt goes hand in hand with punishment. What destroyed me the most is that I had a hand on their dead.

I was woken up by my father, final we home, I stepped out of the car. I walked to the room where everyone was gathered. Seeing my mother sob killed me. I will never forgive myself.

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MALWANDE ZULU

[SATURDAY]

That day was nothing like any other days. As it creeps closer and emotions running wild. Anxiety in the pit of my stomach was getting heavier. It was the day to lay my boyfriend to his final home.

I had that small amount of closure, that sense of reality. I was surrounded with people who loved him, and who believed in him. I was pretty gazed and dissociated. I didn't feel like greeting everyone. It was draining.

Phind: I still can't believe that he's gone.

She's our classmates. Half of them went to the Tshabalalas and others were at here, we will meet at church, so basically Max was using his mother's surname. He was a half Zulu.

I lost the love of my life the pain wasn't getting any easier.

SNETHEMBA

Me: Mom do I have to wear this?

Mom: Sne you need to wear respectfully, like a woman.

Me: But I'm not comfortable with this.

She nodded

Mom: I know Themba.

The only thing I hate is to pretend to be something I'm not.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's biological mother*)

My uterus is rotten and I swear. All my children are ungrateful. Especially Gift he shouldn't act like Xo, Xolani has everything he needs. He has a job and a father who can make anything for his son.

Xo and Gift made their way.

Xo: The service will start at nine.

Gift: We still have Two hours?

He nodded

Xo: Broer I can't believe that they are gone. (Brother)

I looked at him I could tell that he was broken. He wanted a mother but his pride wasn't allowing him.

Gift: Yeah....

His mood changed as he saw his father.

Gift: Let's go.

Xo: I lost my appetite too.

I looked at the time, there was no way I was going to let my son go through grieve alone. I went to take a quick shower. He lost his only friend. My job as a mother is to be supportive.

THANDOLWETHU WILLIAMS

I couldn't go there to attend the funeral. My first priority was my assessment. I needed that experience, I needed that qualifications. I believe Xolani and Lwande will understand.

SNETHEMBA TSHABALALAS

[LATER]

The church was full of people who were there to pay their last respect for Sbu and Max.

Their pictures were displayed next to their coffins. I wish they can walk out of those pictures, so that I could do the right thing.

The service started, teachers from Max's workplace were there. Sibusiso's colleagues were also there. Everyone said what they had to say, I didn't see the need to give my speech, guilt was eating me. Our lecturer was the one who was giving his speech.

Lecturer: Oh I can't believe that I'm standing here today saying goodbye to Maxwell Maja.

He looked at his picture.

Lecturer: One of the best student I ever had, I was his lecturer but I learned a lot from him. He was the young man who believed in himself. He taught me to be true to myself too.

He spoke on the behalf of the school. He then said his last words.

Lecture: The only thing he wanted was to get his Bachelor of Education degree.

He sat down then Lwande stood there. She looked at Sbu's picture.

Lwande: Sbu mara.

She laughed a little.

Lwande: I'm so broken I won't lie, Sbu and Max liked to call me teacher. They both gone, they gone, I will never see them.

It seems like she was avoiding to look at Max's picture or something.

Lwande: Ma'Tshabalala you lost an entertainer. Sbu used to make everything a joke, we are here today crying, but if he was here the only tears we would let fall like this were going to be tears of laughter. He's gone. Our entertainer, friend, brother,

son and technique, he is gone, he left a gap and a mark,
Tshabalala brothers, Sne and Xolani

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Sbu would wanted us to be happy and strong, we lost them but
heavenly gained two Angeles.

She walked to Max's picture.

There was one moment when I just saw the Max smiling. I don't
know whether that's what he was doing, but it felt to me a little
moment us having our drinks and conversation.

Lwande: Soka lami.(*my boyfriend*) I can't believe this, Max you
really gone?

She turned and looked at everyone.

Lwande: I'm broken beyond repair Maxwell Maja, lerato la
bophelo baka, where I 'm I standing right now, I don't know
how to express how I feel, unless someone could tore my chest
and reveal the pain I'm feeling right now. Mr Maja I always

knew that one day, you will to break my heart like every guy do, but the little did I know is that the heart break came as a shoke of my life. You really broke my heart. I won't lie. (My love)

She kept quiet.

Lwande: I promised myself that today, I won't cry but I will celebrate your life, with your family, collogues, our friends, class mates obviously from my family, that's my mother, our Nurse.

She smiled at the our Nurse part.

Lwande: I'm saying goodbye to him today, not only him, he took a part of me with, so I'm saying goodbye to that part. All he was looking forward to was our graduation day. He had plans for that day, but he's gone now he left me to complete my studies alone. He might be gone but he will be always here.

She pointed her own chest. Our class mate cried, his mother cried too.

Lwande: No parent is prepared for a child's death. Parents are simply not supposed to outlive their children. Mommies I miss Zulu standing here, sharing the same pain of lose, let's be strong for our beloved.

My mother and Max's mother cried. She looked at his picture again.

Lwande: Max I'm going to get that Bachelor of Education degree. To honour our wishes. I love you and you did the same. Our future together was short livid. Rest in easy my love until we meet again. You too Sbuda, rest easy ntwana.

She than sang. I

Lwande: ***Angiwanaki ngamanxeba ami ubaba uzowapholisa.*** (I don't care about my wounds, my father will heal them)

Xolani's mother walked to her.

Lwande: ***Uzowapholisa ubaba.*** (Lord father will heal them)

We sang along, she walked to her mother leaving the poor woman standing there.

MC: Ma'am are you alright.

She looked at Lwande as if she saw a ghost. Their relationship is so strange. I don't understand it. Her son Xolani walked to take her.

Xo: Mom lets have a sit and show Sibusiso his last respect.

She looked at him then rubbed her chest

MALWANDE ZULU

Later on. Max and Sbu were laid on their final home. They were really gone. Just like that he left me, without saying goodbye, unlike him. It was clear that I will never see him again he was gone for good.

I didn't want to cry I wanted to celebrate my boyfriend, but I was failing to keep it together as I promised we headed back to the church, it was emotional, no one was saying anything to anyone.

I walked to check on our class mates. Honestly I was looking for my mother. I wanted her warm motherly hug.

I walked to my classmate.

Me: I hope you all doing well.

Phindi: We good thank you.

Me: Did you all eat?

The all nodded.

My eyes where looming for my mother. Not Zandi that woman she's nothing to me.

Me: I'm around if I'm needed.

They nodded still.

When they say people change they were referring that to Buhle Zulu my mother. She changed she's no longer that woman who used to be a boring mother.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's biological mother*)

Kingsley was talking to that woman, my daughter called mother. I walked to them.

Woman: Mr Williams stop telling me fairy tales. Between me and you we know that long distance relationship doesn't work.

They were talking like they have known each other for ages.

Kingsley: Mr Zulu on a serious note though, thanks for welcoming my daughter in law into your home.

Woman: Don't be silly, Thando she's my daughter's friend, she's welcome to my daughter's house, as long as she won't hurt her.

Kingsley: What a protective mother.

Woman: That's my job as a mother isn't it?

He nodded

Kingsley: She's lucky to have a mother like you.

Woman: Aren't I'm lucky to have a daughter like her?

Me: My daughter.

They both looked at me.

Kingsley: Zandi not today and not here.

Woman: Mr Williams, let me go check my daughter.

I roughly grabbed her hand. She looked at my hand, I withdraw her hand.

Woman: Thank you.

Xo walked to us.

Xo: Mom I think we should go.

Me: I'm busy can't you see that?

Xo: You came support me, not to cause trouble.

Me: Lwande need her mother.

Xo: Aunt Buhle she's here and she is her mother.

Me: I don't remember having a sister called Buhle.

Lwande walked to us.

Lwande: Mom I've been looking for you.

Buhle: Sorry baby, Mr sinour Williams was keeping me company.

She looked at him.

Lwande: Oh I see Uncle K.

He smiled, and opened her arms for a hug. She went to hug him.

Buhle: Let me leave you.

They broke the hug.

Kingsley: Lwande did you say mommy should go?

Lwande: No actually I'm looking for her. I need her.

Buhle: Are you alright?

Lwande: Ma what brought me here is done, I need to go back home. Mom, I'm totally out of my depth, I haven't experienced this significant of lossing my own.

That Buhle women hugged her.

Buhle: Oh my baby, I'm sorry you going through this.

Lwande cried

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they broke the hug.

Buhle: Mr Williams we will keep in touch, my baby want to talk to me.

Kingsley: Okay... and thank you again for your kindness.

Xo: Lwande are you alright?

Lwande: I'm drained, defeated, empty, Xo my only boyfriend he's gone.

Xo: I'm sorry for your loss remember that I'm here.

They hugged each other. I looked at that women. She had tears on her face.

Lwande: You won't understand how broken I am Xolani. I still cannot decipher that he's been called by the heaven.

She cried, they broke the hug.

Lwande: I'm sorry Xolani, I know that Sbu was like a brother to you. And I'm here crying to you.

Xo: I'm sorry too for being distance lately.

She nodded then went to the that women, she wrapped her hand on her waist.

Lwande: Sorry for stealing this wonderful mother of mine guys.
(Sobbing)

They walked away from us. My heart almost stopped as she mentioned mother.

I'm going to have that women arrested for kidnapping my daughter and denying me for custody I swear.

Xo: Zandi this is unacceptable. You need to get it to your head she's not your daughter.

Kingsley: Son we need to talk.

Xo: Okay father.

They both looked at me.

Xo: Zandi what are you trying to do?

Me: Thats my daughter.

He laughed

Xo: Zandi you are insane. Malwande Zulu she's not your daughter, your daughter was abused under your roof and you forced her to circumcised, and you are standing here telling me that she's your daughter, you saw the really mother noticed that her daughter wasn't needed her.

Aaron didn't rape Lwande she's just angry that she got circumcised.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

It was very hard and emotional. Lwande and her mother walked to Max's family members. She didn't even ask me how I feel, I lost two people.

I couldn't cry.

I just wanted to go back in time. I couldn't take this new reality of mine.

Mom: Poor child.

She was looking at Lwande.

Nico: I don't think she will be the same Lwande again, Max was everything to her.

Me: I feel for her.

Mom: That child loved her boyfriend.

Dad: I don't know how will she copy.

Me: When are we leaving?

I was really uncomfortable with the dress I was wearing.

Ma: Sneh you need to be here with me you are the only girl child.

Me: For how long?

Aunt: Seven or ten days.

Me: Pardon ten what?

Aunt: Sneh you heard me.

Me: Are you aware that I'm doing my practicals and my log book need to be filled everyday.

Mom: I will talk to your lecture.

Me: I'm not in high school.

I was broken, I hated myself I hated everyone that were telling me what to do. Everything was a mess.

MALWANDE ZULU

[LATER ON]

I bid them farewell, Max's mother didn't want me to leave.

Me: Ma I promise I will call you everyday.

She looked at my mother.

Max's mother: Please do allow her to visit me.

Mom: I won't stand on her way.

Max's mother: Take care of yourself baby.

If I had to receive that love from my biological mother I was going on be the happiest child in the world. We said our

goodbyes. Just when I was about to leave I saw Sne sitting alone, I walked to her.

Me: Snethenba.

Sne: I said I want to be alone.

Of course she needed her own space.

Me: I was just saying goodbye.

She turned and looked at me.

Sne: Uhm I'm sorry, I'm just having a bad day.

Me: It's okay don't apologize.

She nodded.

Sne: Max was only friend that I had, now that he's...

She cried. Death is cruel theft of life.

Sne: I'm sorry for everything Lwande.

Me: It's all in the past, lets honour Maxwell.

She nodded. We shared a hug.

Voice: Sis Malwande!

We broke the hug I looked at him.

Me: Umm Gift!

He nodded. Thando always says the good things about him.

Gift: I'm sorry about Zandi's behaviour.

Me: You didn't do anything.

He nodded.

Gift: I would like to know you better if you don't mind.

Me: I don't mind if your parents don't come closer to me.

He nodded

Gift; Xo he's working on buying a house, I will move with him.

Me: Finally.

I looked at Sne

Me: What's wrong with your dress?

Sne: It's annoying me.

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ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*MALWANDE'S BIOLOGICAL MOTHER*)

Do you know the pain of denial? The pain of watching your own child calling another woman mom?

I had a new open wound, I couldn't believe that I saw my own daughter calling another woman mother.

Me: Xolani I would like to meet Buhle.

Xo: You will stay away from her and my sister.

Me: Isn't Malwande my daughter?

I was devastated, angry, terrified. All kinds of sadness emotions were on me

I'd feel all of those those

Xo: Now you know that you have a daughter?

Me: Xolani I'm your mother.

He laughed aggressively looking at me.

Me: That woman kidnapped my daughter.

He laughed at me like I'm crazy.

Xo: Shame my poor mother. You just realised that your daughter went missing yesterday.

He sounded like he was crazy.

Xo: You realised that your daughter is missing after 15 years.
No Zandi the is something missing in your head. You need a specialist.

Me: Xolani, You don't want see me naked.

He got up and walked away from me.

MALWANDE ZULU

I didn't know whether I where I was going. My mother picked me up, she volunteered to take me to the airport. I was experiencing the sad, despair. I was mourning for the love of my life, I had low energy, tears was flowing like a rain, I didn't have appetite and it was hard to sleep.

Buhle: Baby just make sure you call me every day.

I nodded

Me: I don't know your availability.

Buhle: My daughter knows my working schedule.

Me: Sorry mom, I used to but since you are living on another province it's hard for me to know your availability.

She looked at me then focus on the road.

Buhle: I will call you baby, you need to be strong, that's what he would wanted you to do.

Me: How will I move on from here? He's gone Ma. (Crying)

She held my hand.

Buhle: He might be gone yes but he is watching over the love of his life.

Me: Love of his life

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why did he leave me and choose Sbu.?

She packed the car beside the road. Asking the wrong question to the wrong person.

Buhle: Nothing is permanent in life my baby, life has never fair to anyone. But what nature takes ,it returns back seven fold, acceptance of the fact. Me and dad will be always there for you, distance is nothing, we vowed to love you unconditionally. I'm so very sorry for for your loss. I know that It feels like your world has been turned upside down and inside out, but it will right itself again, in time.

Me: Thanks mom, thank you for being a great mother to me.

She wiped off those tears on my face.

Buhle: You will miss your flight baby.

Me: Then you will take me to your house.

She smiled.

Buhle: With my crazy boyfriend?

I didn't mean to laugh but she got me where I was so tiny. I just laughed unexpectedly.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

I walked to Sbu's room, the scent of his colony. Made me cry. My heart was shattered into tiny pieces it felt like I was being stabbed deep into my heart.

I took his picture then sat on the floor

Me: I'm sorry brother, I'm really sorry. (Crying)

I felt so angry and I was so frustrated that my dearest brother was taken away from me at such a young age. I had so many things that I wanted to share with him.

Me: You were trying to protect me, but I killed you.

Voice: You did what?

I gasped then turned and looked at my big brother Nicolas.

Nico: You did what?

I wiped off my tears and looked at him, he was waiting for me to say something. I have no idea how long he was there.

Nico: Themba what did you do?

Me: I killed them.

I was unaware what was coming out of my mouth until I confesed

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

Life was shattering me, life altering and indescribably it was heartbreaking. Nico was still standing there, he closed the door behind him. It was said Sbu's room shouldn't be closed until his things were out of that room.

Nico: I'm all ears.

I shook my head as I realised it was already late to plot some lies, I already sold my soul.

Nicolas was standing there like he was some statue or something, I said that I killed them just a second ago. I was aware that I have committed venial sins

Nico: He was trying to protect you and you killed him?

I nodded and he walked to me. I shook my head whilst tears were streaming, I hardly cry.

Me: Only Maxwell was supposed to die on that accident, not my brother, Sbu was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Nico: Themba what did you do?

Me: I hired someone to kill Max.

Nico: Why I thought Max was your friend?

I nodded

Me: I don't know, I was jelouse of him, I was jelouse because he had a girlfriend and I didn't have one.

Nico: How come your jelouse involved my brother-

I cut him.

Me: I wanted Max and his girlfriend to break up, I tried everything to end their relationship, but I was failing decimally, I'm the one who created stories about Lwande, I thought it was going to break their relationship, Sbu find out what I did, he tried everything to spoliage the evidence, I was dumb, my actions killed my own brother and my best friend.

He punched me on the face.

Nico: Uyanginyanyisa. (You disgust me)

MALWANDE ZULU

I don't know if I will ever heal. I don't know whether I was moving forward or backward everything was spinning like a spinning wheel. I was designed to suffer. As soon as we landed. My stomach turned out icy. I sat inside the flight not knowing what to do.

Voice: Ma'am are you okay?

Do I look okay?

I needed my own space. I needed to be alone. My life was designed to suffer that's the fact.

Voice: You have reached your destination.

I could hear that he was talking, but I was on my own imagination. In my own boring world.

I was brought back to reality when I was surrounded by flight navigators. The man who was sitting next to me, was holding my passport.

Me: What is going on here gentlemen?

Man: Ms Zulu can I take you home?

For a moment I wanted to shut down the offer, but he was insisting to take me home.

Man 2: Let him help you.

SNETHEMBA TSHABALALA

He was so disappointed in me, I found myself telling him everything. He called our older brother Calvin then little

brother Samuel so that they can be his witness. My brothers share everything. He told them what I told I told him.

Calvin: How could you Snethemba?

Me: I'm sorry guys.

Nico: You are sorry, will your sorry undo what you did?

Me: I'm sorry!

Calvin: Give me one reason not to hand you in.

I kept quiet, Calvin he doesn't say much, he sticks to his word. I won't be surprise if he does that.

An hour later, we sat on sitting room. My mother was still sitting on the mattress with my aunt.

Me: Sam please pass me the sauce.

He just looked at me. My father looked at us.

Dad: Samuel your sister she's talking to you.

Sam: Ngokwazi kwami unezandla. (*As far as I know she has hands*)

Dad: Excuse me, as far as I know she's older than you, therefore you will respect her.

They both got up, Nico spat on my face.

Nico: You disgust me.

They walked out of the living room. I never thought I will see this day

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my own brothers turning against me, it felt like the entire universe was turning against me too.

Dad: What is going on here, what did you do Sne?

Already my brothers hate me. I looked at my mother if I split the beans again she won't survive the storm.

Me: Excuse me.

MALWANDE ZULU

He drove me home.

I told him about my loss.

We exchanged contact.

Him: I'm sorry that you go through this.

Me: Thank you.

He nodded. I got out of his car he did the same.

Him: Whenever you need a friend to talk to I'm a call away.

I nodded

Him: If you can't reach me, don't worry I will get back to you.

I nodded

Me: Thank you, what is your name again?

Him: Don't tell me you have forgotten my name.

He told me but I forgotten his name. I had a lot to take in.

Him: Thabo Malisela that's my name.

Phedi guy again. We shared a hug then walked to the house.

SNETHEMBA TSHABALALA

[23: 35]

My brothers made it clear that I'm on my own.

Voice: If I was you I was going to take my things.

I rose and looked at him. Nico was making my life miserable.

Nico: I want you out of my father's house now.

Me: Come on brother where should I go this time.

Nico: I'm not the killer's brother and I want you out of my parents' house, from today on you're dead to me. Snethemba.

I excepted that kind of a behavior from Calvin not him and Sam. I looked at him thinking that he was joking, but no he wasn't.

Nico: You disgraced my father's name. Go Snethemba and never return.

Me: Where to?

Nico: Just go!!!

He could no longer control his voice and hands. I was shaken too.

MALWANDE ZULU

The night was long from ending. It felt like I was clawing myself out of a deep pit, choking, lonely, dying. I couldn't sleep. I was existing in a space where panic attacks were frequent and unpredictable. I looked at my phone hoping to receive his call. I didn't know what to do. I ended up cleaning the house. Thando walked to me whilst I was scrubbing the carpet.

Me: It will be fine. *(Crying)*

It felt like I was losing my mind.

Thando: Lwande what are you doing?

Me: I'm trying to remove this stain. *(Crying)*

Thando: There is no stain there Lwande, it is nighttime let's go to sleep.

Me: Go to sleep, doesn't make any difference, I miss him, I want him to call me.

She sat down.

Thando: He won't call you, he's no more sis, you need to accept that, you are hurting yourself, you are hurting him too. Let him rest in peace.

Me: Rest in peace? Will I live in peace?

She nodded

Me: No Thando I won't.

SNETHEMBA TSHABALALA

I found myself walking into a remote area. Cold night all by myself. Sometimes life is unfair, my own brother kicked me out of my father's house.

Whilst I was walking a group of boys approached me and their body language was markedly more aggressively. I realised that I was the only female on the street.

They dragged me to a filthy place. I tried to fight them. But I was trying to fool myself there was no way I could fight five guys.

Me: No, no, no!!!

They did not stop. Everything happened so fast, I was laying down, crying, and shaking uncontrollably...

They started tearing my clothes. I was consumed inside out. I was left with nothing.

I became nothing the moment my brothers kicked me out. I was completely helpless, they choked, beat me and raped. Karma has no friend, no room to hide, it doesn't make an appointment, karma just strikes.

SNETHEMBA TSHABALALA

[YEAR LATER]

Life is something else that I cannot describe, I became homeless, my dream of becoming a teacher was hiding somewhere. Actually my dream faded. I looked at my big stomach, the sign of what happening to my life. How the hell I'm I going to be a mother to this child, I mean I don't love the pregnancy and I never dreamed of being a mother.

I don't know how I'm pulling through but it's God's control. Ever since I was shown the door by my brother, I never saw how good is life. My body has turned to be men play ground, I never thought that one day I will be homeless.

When I see someone who might recognize me I hide myself, that has come to be a habit, I hide myself, I feel ashamed. A little girl walked to me, I share the bridge with her, she's my responsibility, after all.

Girl: Mom I got this.

She gave me fish and chips plastic

Girl: Aunt Pretty got that for you.

Me: Don't trust people like her, she doesn't care, get rid of this.

She nodded. Can a human be pregnant for a year? Believe it or not I was on my *13th months dragging the pregnancy*, Doctors opted for a C Section, next week

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's biological mother*)

Xolani and Gift moved out of my house, my house became colder without them. Home became homeless without my children.

I was at the hospital for my check up. It's funny that I was back to square one. Xolani cut ties with me, he used to pay my hospital bills at the private hospital. Now because he doesn't want anything to do with me I'm taking my medication to the public hospital.

Nurse: Zandile Zucchini!

I looked at her. She can't be serious, the same woman who took my daughter. She can't be my Nurse.

Nurse: Ma'am we don't have the whole day.

I got up and entered the consultation ward. I looked at her then the doctor before I greeted them.

Nurse: Ms Zucchini how are you feeling today?

Me: Mrs Zucchini.

She gasped!!!

Nurse: I'm at work here

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I'm not in the mood for One of craziest stuns.

The doctor calm her down.

Doc: Nurse Buhle you can take a break thank you.

She looked at him then smiled.

Nurse: Thank you.

She got up.

Me: While still at it, I want my daughter.

She nodded then smiled

Nurse: My love let me go prepare for my trip.

Doc: We have a surgery remember?

Nurse: I'm not aware of that.

They laughed

Me: I think I should lodge a complain, about this woman.

Nurse: You more than welcome to do that.

Doc: Just go Buhle before I lose my job.

MALWANDE ZULU

Only few hours for my graduation day It was one of the most exciting and nerve racking days of my life. I can't believe that I made it, even though it was tough I made it, the only one goal that I set was about to be filled.

The feeling of being unsure was there but I was proud of myself. My father was also proud of his princess.

Dad: I couldn't be more prouder for you but today you made me the greatest dad in the world. My daughter have accomplish her, goal imagine teacher Zulu.

Me: You are the greatest dad father indeed.

Dad: From now on you no longer Lwande Zulu, you are teacher Zulu.

Thando: Teacher Zulu.

We laughed. We heard a knock, my father went to attend the door. I thought I was going to fail, I thought I wouldn't make it. It was hard for me, but I managed, with my parents support, brother and Thando.

Oh let me not forget Thabo the flight navigator. We recently became friends. I grappled with the devastating grief, but I pulled through. Sne disappeared after we laid Max and her late brother, no one knows what happened to her, her parents are worried about her, her brother made it clear that the don't care about her. That's life she was too close with her brothers

Me: Do you think Max he's proud of me.

Thando nodded. My father walked to us with Xo and Gift.

Me: Brothers you welcome.

Xo: Thank you sis.

I looked at Gift I could tell that he was unbelievable.

Me: Feel at home.

Thando got up, I did the same, we went to prepare dinner for our guests.

BUHLE ZULU (*Malwande's adoption mother*)

I never been happy like I was, I still can't believe that my own daughter she will be graduating tomorrow. She worked very hard, she deserves to be happy. Lucas walked to me.

Me: Baby just save your sorry.

Lucus: What is your story with that woman.

Me: Don't mind her she's crazy.

Lucus: I see, you ready?

I never been ready like I was.

Me: For my daughter I'm ready.

He kissed me.

FINAL Chapter

MALWANDE ZULU

Today is the the where my graduation day was taking place. I must say thanks to the person who thought that destroying my name was a solution. That person had no idea, what he/she was preparing for me. The school where I was placed to as a student teacher, will be employing me.

During the teaching course of four years I went from an anxious, uncertain, and frustrated to confident, happy, and hardworking. The course was very tough.

My mother and her new founded boyfriend made their way, Gift was the one who opened the door for them.

Me: Ma you came?

Buhle: There was no way I was going to miss my baby's special day.

Special day, indeed it was special. With all being said, it was not only special, it was one of the more important days my life. We shared a hug.

Thando: The venue will be full.

We broke the hug and looked at her. Then laughed. My mother looked at her ex husband.

Buhle: Ntokozo!

Ntokozo: Buhle!

She looked at her boyfriend then went to hug my father.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's biological mother*)

I organized a gun, to kill that nurse, who stole my daughter.
Today it's her last day.

If she want a child she must open her legs wider. I got the
address of the venue where the ceremony will be taking place.

SNETHEMBA TSHABALALA

Life was never good to me. I had no money and I was surviving
under the bridge, during rainy days I struggle because I and my
little girl we don't have the place to hide ourselves.

To see that life doesn't have a friend she's only 16 but she's homeless, her name is Thembisile. I messed up to a point, I sometimes asked myself, did my parents give up on me.

Thembisile: Mom I'm going to get food.

I nodded. It's hard out there, nobody chooses to be homeless, I was not enjoying the pregnancy either *13 months pregnant, that's feels like life sentence. Not nine months but 13 months!!!*

Honestly I lost myself with every ambition, every hope and dream, every enjoyment and passion, every possibility of happiness, and in short, everything that defined me as a person.

My body died the day I decided to be grumpy. That taught me that life is unpredictable. Sometimes things will turn out in our favor. But when they don't, we need all we have to go is to roll with it. Our life will not turn out as perfectly as we imagined.

MALWANDE ZULU

When we got to the venue we seated. Each graduate had to come with two people, but Malwande Zulu went with more than two people, Xo and my father paid for extra guests, I felt so loved. My mother's boyfriend came too, I'm so loved.

We waited patiently, the program started. We listened to the our superintendent making her speech then listening, to our tutor .

Lecture: What an amazing journey. Arriving here today represents a significant achievement for a number of young people. Firstly I would like to thank everyone here and thank our future teachers for your dedication and commitment. It wasn't an amazing journey at all when my class started I had 270 students, and 20 left on the middle of the journey, it was

sad because I wanted to break the record and have this hall full, but unfortunately that was a dream that never happened. My student kept on pulling out until I was left with 37 on that 37 I had hoped that they will be all in this hall but still that was a dream, one of my student passed on. Then his friend pulled out so today I have 20 that made it. Due to the very strict time limit that has been imposed upon me today I will try and keep this brief. We faced different challenges

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climbed to reach out our goals. From today you no longer students but graduates and teachers. Some of this graduate are now teachers because of their dedications. I am very proud what their have achieved and am honoured to be here today to celebrate their success. Congratulations future teaches.

ZANDILE ZUCCHINI (*Malwande's biological mother*)

Whilst we were heading to the venue, the driver was distracted by a taxi that ran a red light at a busy intersection. I was sitting on the front passenger seat without putting on the seat belt.

Everything happened so fast in just five second I saw my body slamming the windshield, launched ten feet into the air and crashed into the pavement. With that it was the end of my life, take care of your loved ones, always open a room for your children.

MALWANDE ZULU

I was getting frustrated, because my name wasn't called. Max's name was called, I wish he was there.

I got up as my name was next called., I walked across the stage, smiled, shook a bunch of hands, and got my diploma. I got

cheered on by my family, my social worker, Max's mother and cousin. I was given a mic.

Me: Finally I'm done!

Everyone laughed then applauded.

Me: Thank you, sir, mom, Dad and everyone who stood by me. As sir said earlier, it wasn't an amazing journey. It was tough. But we didn't fall we made it, I made a promise to my late boyfriend that I will get my diploma and today I just got it. And I'm proud of myself. Mam and you, dad, I see it all.

I said my appreciation then went to join my family. They hugged and congratulated me and were so proud of me.

SNETHENBA TSHABALALA

A person who is filled with pride fails to get justice. This was my story from warm home with four brothers, one killed by me to a homeless 13 months pregnant woman, I never chose to be homeless but life did.

I Snethenba Tshabalala, this was my journey. Not everyone who is homeless is a drug addict life can be a game of chess sometimes. With everything you do, make sure that you don't push people away from you, love and care, don't allow jelouse

to overcome you. Karma is form of anger, greed, jealousy, selfishness, desire, bad ego, pride, bad manners, harbouring ill-feelings towards fellow mankind, causing harm in whatever form to others including other life forms when accumulates leads to self-destruction and a downward spiral in ones' life. Mina intombi Ka'Tshabalala nginishiya nothando, stay blessed and be kind.

.....**THE END**.....

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