



For more African books please make direct search on Google  
<https://novelsguru.com/>

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you guys for downloading this book from my site please keep visiting <https://novelsguru.com/> for supporting me and also don't forget to share it with your friends.

Dear Friends please download these books direct from <https://novelsguru.com/> bookmark this site for latest African books, and also supporting me Thanks.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **PROLOGUE**

I open my eyes and breathe in deeply. It's a new day! I switch off my morning alarm and get out of bed. I quickly look back when I notice something move on the bed. I smile looking at the chocolate snack in my bed. I think I believe Ariana when she said God is a woman because, without a woman, men would not exist. It would have all ended with Adam – I guess.

I think twice about whether to go back to bed and devour this sexy looking mini-god. I snap out of it – my bills won't pay themselves. I put on my morning gown and shoes. I make my way to my bathroom. I stand in front of the mirror and look at my reflection.

‘How can one be so beautiful?’ the little voice in my head whispers. I am strong, I am bold and I am beautiful – that’s my mantra. I brush my teeth, take my contraceptives then jump into the shower.

About twenty-five minutes later, I am out of the bathroom and getting dressed. I look at the man in my bed and shake my head. The cute ones are always the unemployed ones with no directions of their lives whatsoever. To them, soft life is watching videos on tik tok and partying in hopes to get laid at the end of the day. Real men are the ones with the fat stomachs and a nine to five. But, that doesn’t mean some of us are not allowed to fool around. I mean life is too short not to have fun. What if you die?

I apply some makeup on my face and tie my braids up into a pony. I put on my grey slack with a white blouse and add white red bottoms stilettoes. I add some jewellery and pick out a bag that matches my outfit.

I stand in front of the mirror and smile looking at my thick self. My parents did a great job. I’m sure the day I was conceived, they sat down and planned their lovemaking. I look like a goddess.

I pick up everything I would need at work and wake up the dark chocolate in my bed. Such a waste of resources – he couldn't even do the job properly. How can one be so sexy yet their D game sucks?

"Five more minutes," he mumbles with his eyes still closed.

"No, buddy you have to leave. Unlike you some of us have companies to run so please get your arse up."

He sits up and rubs his eyes, "Good morning!"

"Leave!"

"Come on I thought we had a great time last night," he bites his lower lips and wiggles his eyebrows.

"Last night was last night. I can't leave you in my house so get dressed."

He groans and gets out of bed. I hand him his clothes and watch him get dressed. He's such a fine-looking lad.

"You look great by the way," he compliments.

"I know!"

"So am I going to see you again?" he asks following me out of my bedroom. The helper has already laid out breakfast for me on the table.

“You will never see me and please see yourself out,” I sit down and pour myself some juice.

He chuckles and utters, “Am I not getting breakfast?”

“Is this your house?”

“Did I maybe do something? I thought we were getting along fine,” he states.

“I’d appreciate it if you left.”

“You’re cold,” he mumbles.

“So I have been told now if you’d excuse me. Or maybe you need some transport money before your go?”

He clicks his tongue, “You know what? Fuck you, lady.”

“You call that an insult?”

He clicks his tongue and mumbles, “Your cunt ain’t even it.”

I chuckle and start eating my breakfast. About five minutes later the young man joins me again. He clears his throat, “Can you open the gate for me?”

“What is the magic word?”

He raises his voice

Advertisement

“I just want to go, please!”

“It’s open.”

“Lady, do I look stupid to you?” he asks.

“Honestly, you do!”

In breaths in and out, “Can you please open the gate for me.”

“I told you it’s now open.”

“You know now I think I understand why you’re single,” he turns and leaves. I roll my eyes and continue eating, He knows nothing about me.

“Good morning!” tiny hands hug me from behind. He kisses me on my cheek and holds me tight.

“Hey, baby!”

“Hey mama!” that’s my bundle of joy, Quinton. He turned ten years old a month ago. Where is Quinton’s father? I know you’d like to know where Joey (Quinton’s father) is.

I met him at the supermarket. He wanted to buy sanitary pads for his sister who had just received her first period. He didn't know what to get or what size so the nice gentleman asked me for help. He was tall, handsome and had broad shoulders – Joey was fair who am I kidding he was ugly asf. I was just blinded by love.

Joey is short for Joseph, yeah I also liked it shortened. Joseph asked for my number and called me later that day. He started by thanking me for saving him back at the Supermarket. He was very charming and knew exactly what to say – I was a gone girl.

Joseph asked to see me that very night and stupid me agreed. He took me out to a very fancy restaurant that had a menu I couldn't read. I was saved by ordering the same thing he ordered and man did I regret it because he had ordered fish. I am allergic so not to make a fool of myself I ate the fish and prepared to have fish skin for the rest of the week.

Joseph was sweet, he kept eye contact during our date. He held my hand and tossed compliments left, right and centre.

"I know I only met you a couple of hours ago but you complete me Lerato," he had told me, "I need you by my side."

Blushing, I had answered, “Are you sure you’re going to feel like this in the next week or month?”

He then answered, “Does this mean you’re letting me be the man in your life.”

I nodded and we sealed it with a kiss. After dinner, Joseph took us to watch a movie. I had told him during dinner that I loved watching horror movies. He bought us tickets to Final Destination. The poor man was scared throughout the whole movie I had to hold his hand. He couldn’t even eat his popcorn. I found it cute though. After the movie, it was getting chilly outside so he lend me his jacket. He was such a gentleman.

He invited me to his place for a nightcap. I was expecting him to take me to his home but instead, he took me to a hotel. Scared to ruin the night I just went with it. He ordered some wine for us and we just talked about life in general. Joseph was a good listener and it made talking to him fun.

He leaned over and kissed my lips. He wasn’t rushing and he wasn’t grabbing my ass hard like those boys I'd always fall for. He carried me to the bed and go in between my thighs. He kissed me until I was ready. He stripped off my clothes and



asked me if I was sure I wanted to sleep with him. Duh! I was dripping wet.

His thrusts were slow and deep. He took me to cloud nine and back. He stared into my eyes and told me that he loved me – for sure I felt loved. He made me orgasm countless times and let me lie on his hairy chest afterwards. In the morning he ordered breakfast for me and fed me. He took me to the shower and bathed me. I felt like screaming, ‘Mama ngiyajola!’

No man had ever shown me so much love – maybe my father did but Joseph was just a God sent. He called an uber for me and gave me some money for goodies. Mind you I was just twenty years old and he was twenty-five. I was sure I had found iphakade lami (the one) He kissed my forehead and asked the uber driver to take good care of his wife. I was smiling like a retard. I got home and hugged my teddy bear until I drifted to sleep.

And that was the last time I saw and talked to Joseph. He blocked me after that day – after God fear men! So in other words what I am trying to say is that I don’t know where Quinton’s father is.

## Chapter 1

ZARA

“Lucifer is the building people!” Melusi yells and people start running around, going to their respective places. I look at my wristwatch and it is ten minutes to eight. Work starts at eight am but being a minute late gets you fired where I work.

“You look amazing, baby!” Bonginkosi kisses my lips and rushes to his workstation. We work at a Fashion Company and he’s our photographer. I am the boss’s secretary – more like a personal assistant.

“Coffee for the pretty lady,” Melusi hands me a cup of coffee. He makes coffee for every lady in the office except for the boss lady.

“Thanks, Melusi and I’d suggest you get back to designing before you find yourself unemployed like him,” I point at Jeremy who is packing away his stuff. The boss lady fired him for eating a mint during a meeting.

Honestly, how does one see that someone is eating a mint? Or maybe he did something else. Anyways that's what happens when one doesn't have a lawyer or should I say not able to afford one because he could have sued her for unfair dismissal.

Suddenly the office goes quiet and everyone holds their breath. The only sound we can hear is Mrs Montsho's heels hitting on the floor. I smile and hold the door to her office open for her.

"I don't pay you to stand around the whole day, Zara!"

"Good morning! And may I say you look fabulous today," I close the door behind us and walk up to her table holding on to my diary.

"I always look good now if you don't have anything to say please leave my office."

"Okay, ma'am!"

I walk out of the office and give her the middle finger. This woman thinks she's made it in life – well she has but no need to be so rude. I give another middle finger.

"Zara I can see you!" she yells from the inside.

“Sorry boss!” I rush to my desk. I didn’t notice that the blinds are now open. Working at L&Q Fashions is a nightmare but at least the boss lady pays us good money.

She might be the devil but at least she pays us on time. I check the time and it’s just after nine am. Whoever said people must start their week on Monday must be of the devil. Probably the same person that suggested the weekend should be two days. I sigh and stand up from my desk to go to the kitchen to make myself some coffee. I didn’t even get the chance to eat breakfast in fear of being late to work. Plus no one still eats three times a day – it’s just stress and coffee the whole day.

“Hey!” Bonginkosi hugs me from behind.

“Make sure your boss doesn’t see us – we might both end up like Jeremy.”

“We would sue her – she shouldn’t try that shit with us,” he kisses my cheek.

“That would be lovely don’t you think?” a female voice utters and Nkosi quickly lets go of me.

“Mrs Montsho I...”

She interrupts me, “The phone is ringing and I’m disappointed that you would date a man that earns less money than you.”

With that, she turns around and leaves. I silently curse at her and she yells, “I heard that!”

“You should get back to work,” Nkosi pecks my lips.

“Hey, don’t let her get to you. I love you for you.”

“I know, baby!” he kisses my lips once more and walks out first. I didn’t know that Bonginkosi earns less money than me. But it doesn’t matter

Advertisement

right?

I hold on to my coffee mug and head back to my desk. I shouldn’t push my luck because Mrs Montsho will eventually get tired of me and lets me go.

The time seems to be moving slow today because I feel like have spent the whole month in this chair yet it’s not even lunch.

“Good afternoon!” a deep male voice greets me. I lift my face to see who it is and a fine lad stands before me. For the record having a boyfriend doesn’t mean I can’t drool over fine gods. I want to check my wristwatch to see if it’s lunchtime but my eyes are glued to this fine figure in front of me.

He is wearing a black and white suit which looks like it was carved to his body. Lord he smells like heaven and his nicely trimmed beard makes me want to jump him.

“Good afternoon sir and welcome to L&Q fashions.” L& Q means Lerato and Quinton.

“Is Lerato in?” he asks calmly and he has a Nigerian accent. Did he have to ruin our nice time by mentioning that devil? Get a grip Zara – I quickly compose myself.

“This way sir!” I get off my chair and lead the nice gentleman into the devil’s den. How does she get all these fine-looking men? He even brought her flowers – I have never received flowers in my life. Bonginkosi and I have been dating for two months and he has never taken me on a date. Not that I am complaining but just like any other girl I’d love it.

“Mrs Montsho you have a visitor,” I walk into the boss’s office. I love that she’s hard-working – she may be many things but she works hard and makes sure the company runs smoothly.

“Hey, baby!” the man walks up to Lerato and kisses her lips. She’s shorter than him making the whole scene nice to watch. She’s thick but he’s making her look tiny with his broad shoulders. Bonginkosi is the same height as me. I should stop doing that – Bonginkosi is a good boyfriend.

The problem is that I want more than just his love. I want him to take care of me, financially to be precise. You know when Kanyi Mbau said, ‘Men are there to serve and protect.’ That’s what I want. I am a good girl – God knows I pay tithe every month but lutho a seventy-year-old blesser that would die and leave all his wealth to me.

“Zara get out!” Mrs Montsho snaps me out of my thoughts. Oh, they are still kissing.

“Sorry, ma’am!” I quickly rush to my desk. It’s lunchtime so I take my bag and see the blinds to the boss lady’s office being closed. It must be nice being her.

When I come back from lunch, the blinds are still down. I wonder if Nigerian men are good in... oh I am doing it again. Why am I thinking about that man? I was just with my man not

so long ago but unfortunately, unlike the boss lady, we cannot shag at work.

I quickly look up when I hear the door opening. The gentleman looks well fed – he is smiling from ear to ear. They stand by the door and he kisses his lady. Not just a kiss but a... oh lord Zara stop staring. I focus on my laptop but my eyes go back to them. He whispers something in her ear and she giggles. He reaches for his wallet and takes out his bank card handing it to her but she shakes her head.

‘Please give it to me kind sir!’ my inner voice screams.

He shoves the card in the pocket of her slack and kisses her forehead before walking away. He waves me goodbye and I just smile weirdly.

“Zara!”

“Coming ma’am!” I almost fall out of my chair and follow her into her office.

“Do you want flowers?”

“Who? Me?” I look behind me and she rolls her eyes, “Yes ma’am that would be lovely.”

She hands me the flowers her mini-god gave her, “For me? Thank you!”

“You can go!”



I smile and smell the flowers. I am going to take lots of photos and post them on every social media platform. I stop by the door and ask, “How do you do it? How do you get any man you want?”

She sighs heavily, “I don’t settle – I know my worth and don’t settle for less. I don’t lower my standards for men. If he cannot handle me then he’s not for me. Plus men hate desperate – they can feel it from afar.”

“I never get any man I want.”

“Maybe if you knew your correct size, you would. That dress you’re wearing is twice your size and it looks like you found it in one of your grandmother’s old clothes from the 30s. I have nothing against short hair but if you’re going to cut your hair then keep it neat. You look like a boy in a dress,” she says.

I breathe out heavily and leave her office. She doesn’t have to be mean. I give her the middle finger again.

“I can see you, Zara!”

2

LERATO

“Goodbye, ma’am!” Zara announces standing by my office door.

“Bye, Zara!”

It’s five pm and everyone is leaving for their homes. I am always the last one to knock off. I have to make sure everything is ready and set for the next day. The workers only care about gossiping and they just want to work and go back to their homes. They don’t care what happens to who or what. I have to make sure money is coming in, I have to make sure we are making sales, I have to make sure everyone is paid on time. No one sees what I do – they call me names and gossip behind my back but I am used to it. No one loves their boss anyways.

Quinton’s teacher called me telling me that the helper picked him up from school. She calls me every day that way I know who exactly is with my child. One can never know these days—people pretend to be related to children only to kidnap them.

“Mrs Montsho!” it’s Zara again. I thought she had left. Everyone calls me Mrs and I don’t know where they got that from. Maybe it’s because the society we live in thinks that every successful woman has a man behind her. I close my laptop and give Zara my attention.

“What is it?”

She walks up to my table and sits opposite me, “Do I look like a boy?”

“Why do you ask?”

“Ma’am you said I look like a boy in a dress and this is my best dress,” she retorts.

“Zara this is a fashion company – don’t you see our models?”

She exhales heavily, “But those clothes are expensive and I cannot afford them.”

“It’s not about wearing expensive things it’s about knowing how to wear them. How much do you think the blouse I am wearing costs?”

“I don’t know but it probably costs a lot of money,” she says.

“It’s an R150 blouse. Just R150 and how I wear it makes it look expensive. And what do you care what I think? That’s the

problem with you guys – you value other people’s opinions. If you like how you look then what do you care what I think?”

She mumbles, “But boss you said I look like a boy in a dress.”

“Because you do – I’m just honest enough to say it. You know you’re not a boy so what’s the problem?”

“You’re the most stylish person I know and you saying that ruined my day,” she replies.

“I’m sorry if I ruined your day and Zara you’re pretty. Don’t listen to me I’m used to gorgeous people anyways.”

“You’re blunt!” she stands up from her chair, “You should rest Mrs Montsho – rest the temple.”

“So you guys can have something to gossip about when the company goes bankrupt.”

“See you tomorrow Mrs Montsho,” she quickly leaves the room.

They think I don’t know what they call me behind my back. They should thank God that they are hard workers otherwise I would have long fired them. My phone rings and it's Shade – some Nigerian man that doesn’t understand that I want

nothing more than being friends. Shade is a good man but for some reason, I don't like him more than just a friend. Sometimes we end up in each other's pants but I don't want anything more. By the way, his name is pronounced Sha-de!

Me: Hey, Shade!

Shade: My lov! Are you on your way home?

Me: I still have some stuff to take care of at the office so I might be working late.

Shade: You need to rest – I also noticed that you didn't use my card.

Me: I make my own money – I don't need yours.

Shade: Please let me spoil you – a queen like you needs to be spoiled. Please use it before I buy you stuff and send it to your house.

Me: Fine I will go shopping tomorrow. Thanks, Shade!

Shade: Take care of yourself, my queen!

I hang up and open my laptop but suddenly I feel lazy. I miss being in love. It's been years since I got into a relationship. I haven't found a man I love. I always lose interest after sleeping with them. Shade is fine but for some reason, I don't love him. He's rich and looks like he can take good care of me but I just don't have feelings for him. I haven't loved any man since Joseph. He ruined me and if I were to see him again I will punch his teeth out.

I organize my stuff and get ready to leave the office. I could use a drink before I leave for home. I hear some noise coming out of the board room. I check the time and it's ten minutes to six pm. I thought everyone had left. I find Melusi watching porn on his laptop.

"Ma'am!" he quickly jumps up.

“Just... don’t say anything

” I see myself out. I can’t with men. They would do anything to ejaculate. He’s also using the work WIFI – maybe he thought everyone had left.

I drive to the nearest bar, I could use a drink before I go back to Quinton’s loudness. He’s so full of energy sometimes I fail to keep up.

“Blood and sand, straight up without ice,” I tell the bartender. We have become close over the years since I pass by this place almost every day. I do a side business with Romeo but it’s a story for another day

“Hey, Lee! How was your day?” – Romeo.

“I walked in on one of my workers watching porn – I can’t unsee that,” I retort.

“A man has to do what a man has to do since women don’t need us anymore.”

I shake my head, “He should have at least checked if no one was still around.”

“I hope you won’t fire him?”

“He’s one of the best so we’d have to be awkward around each other than to fire him,” I take a sip of my cocktail as soon as he hands it to me. He goes to serve other customers and I look at the gentleman next to me.

I bite my lower lip and scan for a ring. The fine ones are always married but when has that stopped me. I shift closer to him. He seems deep in his thoughts.

“Hey there!” I beam at him. Romeo looks at me and shakes his head – he knows that I always go for what I want.

“Oh hi!” the gentleman shifts a little further away from me.

“I’m Lerato Montsho!”

He shakes my hand with the same hand that has a ring as if he wants me to see it, “Terence Jackson!”

“So what brings you here?”

“Same thing that brought you here,” he answers, icily.

“Trouble in paradise?”

“I just came here for a drink – can I have my drink in peace?” he requests.



I smile and shift closer to him, “You could have had your drink at home. Do you want to talk or even better do you want someone who will listen?”

“I am fine, thanks!”

“Come on I’m just going to listen – something is definitely wrong I mean you left your pretty wife to come to drink here.” I gulp down my drink and ask for a refill.

“All couples fight! There’s nothing new there.”

“I know and I am just lending an ear as a friend,” I smile.

He sighs heavily and asks, “Shouldn’t you be home with your husband?”

“I am single and available,” I show him my fingers causing him to chuckle.

“Why are you single? You must be trouble – men love peace.”

“One thing for sure I am a handful and men seem to only love submissives,” I answer.

“You can’t both be dominants – there can’t be two kings in one castle.”

I stand on my feet and touch his shoulder, “Is that how things work in your castle? I can play queen when I chose to.”

“Didn’t you see the ring on my finger?”

I whisper in his ear, “It can be our little secret.”

3

LERATO

I am still at the bar with this handsome snack in front of me. I know he wants me too, what man in his right senses wouldn't want me? He's just playing hard to get because he is married. They all act like saints but I know they all need a break from their nagging wives.

"What do you say, Mr Jackson? Do you want to get out of here?"

He chuckles and sips on his drink. I would do anything to me that glass in his hand. At least I get to feel his lips, "Lerato I told you I am married."

"I know that but that's not what I asked. I want to know if you want to have fun?"

He places his glass on the table and gives me his attention, "I have a brother who is single if you're horny."

"I don't want your brother, I want you."

“I am taken and I have eyes for only one woman. My wife is the only woman I want to have fun with,’ he retorts.

“So you’re telling me you’ve never cheated on her? Not even once.”

He exhales heavily, “I’d never hurt her like that – I love her too much to hurt her.”

“I don’t believe you – I believe a married man has at least cheated once on their wife.”

He shakes his head, “Not when you’re married to an amazing woman as my wife.”

“Is she pretty?”

“She’s gorgeous and you’re sitting too close to me. We wouldn’t want your cologne rubbing on me, do we?” he shifts away.

I gulp down my drink and ask Romeo for a refill. Why is this man acting whipped? What kind of a man turns me down, “Don’t tell me your wife will flip if she finds out you were sitting next to another woman. Don’t tell me she controls you like that?”

He laughs out loud, “Lerato you sound desperate and men hate desperate.”

“Okay then... do you want me to be confident and be a go-getter?”

He pushes my hand off his shoulder, “Can I please have my drink in peace?”

“Am I bothering you?”

“Yes and I would love it if you talked to someone else,” he retorts.

“What if I want to talk to you?” I run my hand up his tattooed and muscular arm.

“And you have ruined my favourite spot,” he stands up and pays for his drink then leaves.

That’s very rude! I turn my attention to Romeo who is laughing, “I see you have met Terrence!”

“Can I get something stronger and what’s up with him?”

“That’s Terence for you. He’s Mr Happily married!” Romeo replies.

“Come on Rom, no man is happily married.”

“Well, Terence is and sometimes he comes here with his wife. He is married to a very young and beautiful woman,” he adds.

“Is she younger than me?”

“Maybe she’s about four years younger than you?” he tells.

“Which makes her twenty-eight. How old is he?” I ask him and he laughs.

“Terence is about forty.”

I bite my lower lip

“He ages like fine wine but why marry someone so young?”

“I don’t know but what I do know is that you should stay away from him. When it comes to his wife he will make you disappear.”

“More reasons for me to want him,” I smile.

“Lerato you’re playing with fire – leave the Jacksons alone.”

“You know I love danger,” I gulp down my drink and take my bag, “See you around Romeo!”

“Bye!”

I drive home and I get there just after eight. Quinton is watching cartoons with the helper. They are best friends.

“Hey, team!” I take off my heels and carry them in my hand. Mazvita answers but Quinton ignores me – his eyes are glued to the television.

“It’s okay, I will heat my food,” I stop the helper when she stands up from the couch. I need to bathe first. I kiss Quinton on the cheek who warns me for the thousand time that he’s not a baby. He’ll always be my baby.

I run myself a bath and sit in the warm water for some time. I cannot believe that Terence guy rejected me. Nothing is wrong with me – why would he reject me? I have met married men before and none of them acts like him. I sip on my wine and call Miguel, my shady business partner. You didn’t think I built my company by working hard. I have a side hustle that brings in money to the fashion company.

Miguel: Hey, queen!

Me: Hey, I hope it’s not a bad time?

Miguel: It's never a bad time for you. What's up?

Me: Can you look into someone for me? His name is Terence Jackson.

Miguel: No one messes with the Jackson sweetie. What do you want to know?

Me: Everything!

Miguel: I will try but the Terence is friends with Bradley and that guy rolls with the big guys. I wouldn't want to start any beef with that team.

Me: We also roll with the big guys. I am not asking for anything illegal, I just want to know more about him.

Miguel: (sighs) fine I will get you the information but please stay away from that man.



Me: Relax, I don't want trouble.

I hang up and get out of the tub. I am like that child that is told not to touch something but touches it anyway, out of curiosity. I heat my food and eat while stalking Mr Jackson on the media. I don't know why he was exaggerating like that – his wife is not that pretty. She is fine but I am the better woman.

Mr Terence was once married to a lesbian – look at Mr Happily married playing pretend. The internet isn't giving me much information and Miguel is taking forever so I call him again.

Miguel: Rato I am sending, give me a minute.

Me: I have been waiting for an hour already.

Miguel: Keep in mind I don't work for you and we have to be careful not to raise suspicions.

Me: Just send me the information.

Miguel: Lerato stop playing with fire. This could blow up in your face.

Me: I'll be careful.

I open the portable document file Miguel just sent me. I roll my eyes when I see the pictures of Terence on his wedding day. He is married to a Nomasonto and they have three children. The firstborn is the one he had with his lesbian wife.

I check the time and it's almost ten pm. I need to rest so that I can be ready for the next day. I sleep like a princess with Terence's picture in my head. I don't care if he's married – I want a slice of what Nomasonto is getting.

\*\*\*

My alarm wakes me up. I had the wildest dream ever. I look at Terence's photo on my phone and smile. I am about to turn his life upside down. Before I leave for work I decide to call Nomasonto. Miguel provided me with their contact. She answers after forever.

Nomasonto: Hello.

Me: Nomasonto, hi!

Nomasonto: I'm sorry who is this?

Me: Oh sorry, where are my manners. My name is Lerato, can I please talk to your husband?

Nomasonto: (sounding irritated) Why didn't you call him?

Me: I can't reach him that's why I called you.

Nomasonto: He's not here.

Me: That's a bummer please tell him I called.

She hangs up. She must be pissed – well it's her husband I want and not her. I drive Quinton to school then go to work.

I am busy with work when someone barges into my office.

“I am sorry ma'am. I tried to stop him,” – Zara.

“It's okay, please leave us!” I wait for her to close the door then smile at Mr Lion Tattoo standing in front of me. I knew he would find me.

## LERATO

I look at Terence and smile. He still looks handsome even though he seems like he's going to strangle me. If looks would kill I'd be dead on the floor by now. Nomasonto is lucky to have this man in her life. I can already picture myself touching his muscular arms. For someone going on forty, he looks like he's in his late twenties.

"Mr Jackson!" I beam at him. A part of me wants to laugh badly, he looks pissed. Romeo was right about his not wanting anyone to mess with his wife. I am not anyone – I can do whatever the hell I want. I didn't make vows to anyone. I am single and available.

"Now you're crossing the line, Lerato," Terence utters sullenly. He must love Nomasonto because the way he's jaw is clenched, I am sure he wants to punch me in the face. I know he won't do anything to me. Terence might be dangerous and all but he's not an abuser – he'd never hurt a woman. I did my homework.

“Come one now, Mrs Jackson – that’s not how you greet your friend.”

“Why did you call my wife? Who do you think you are?”

I shrug, “No need to be angry, I meant to call you. I might have saved the numbers wrongly.”

“Lerato don’t test me. I will take you out by just snapping my fingers.”

“Take me out as in by a sniper or on a date?” I question and he shakes his head.

“Stay away from my wife and stop it with your madness. I don’t want you, get that to your head.”

“Why don’t you want me? What’s there not to like about me? What does your wife have that I don’t?” I ask him. He’s starting to annoy me now. Why is he not like other man? Call me loose but I saw something I like and I am going for it.

“It’s not about what you have. You are a pretty woman but I am committed to somebody else. Your beauty is useless in my eyes – even if you are prettier than my wife it means nothing to me. When one is committed to someone they don’t allow themselves to find perfecting in somebody else. My wife may

not be the prettiest in the world but in my world she is everything and you are not worth me losing her.”

I swallow the lump growing in my throat, “Don’t act as if you’ve never messed up. Don’t act all perfect.”

“I never said I was...you’re just bored that’s why you’re doing all this. You’re pushing so hard because you’re used to having men eat out of your palm. When I couldn’t look your way it bothered you, didn’t it?”

“It didn’t bother me,” I say in protest.

“They why are you calling my wife? That was very petty and you know it – even the side chicks know that the wife is a no go area.”

I don’t respond, I just stare at him. This is not how I thought things would turn out. I expected him to fight with his wife not me. I expected him to come to me for comfort – they all do that.

“What exactly do you want from me? Be honest, what do you want?” he asks me. I want him, I was a slice of what Nomasonto is getting but of course I don’t say it out loud.

Terence sits opposite me and asks, “Do you seriously think I would ruin my marriage for an orgasm?”

“I am a better woman than she could ever be – Nomasonto is weak.”

“I love her like that. You may be the better woman but she’s the love of my life and the mother of my children. If you dare pull another stunt like you did today, I won’t be so nice!” he stands up and exits the room, slamming the door behind him.

I notice Zara standing by the door. One day I’m going to go to jail for killing her.

“Zara!”

“Yes

ma’am!” she rushes into the room.

“I didn’t know you’re now interested in my conversations with my visitors? Why didn’t you just join us.”

“No! I swear I wasn’t listening... I was coming to tell you that you have a meeting after lunch with Mr Ike. I swear Mrs Montsho I would never eavesdrop on your conversations,” she defends herself.



I know very well that the whole office will know about my conversation with Terence. Who does he think he is anyways? I know about his habits of changing woman like socks and now he wants to talk about, 'you don't allow yourself to find perfection in somebody else when you're committed to another.'

So only men are supposed to not take no for an answer? I refuse to be rejected, no man has ever rejected me and it won't start now.

"Do you need anything before I go?" Zara asks.

"Can you send somebody flowers?"

"Who must I send the flowers to?" she opens her diary that she never puts down.

"Her name is Nomasonto Sereya Jackson and she's an old friend."

TERENCE

“You know it’s one thing that you cheat but having your whore send me flowers is just disrespecting me!” Nomasonto throws a bunch of flowers at me.

I’m going to kill Lerato! I stand up and follow Nomasonto to the kitchen – with the flowers. I wish we had stayed in Canada because every time we are in South Africa, something bad always happens. Last time Bradley showed up on my doorstep and we almost died in the house.

Now I have this Lerato woman. I don’t understand what her problem is – she is really acting like a loose woman. I get that she’s going after what she wants but she should just understand that no means no. Look at me sounding like a woman.

“Can you please let me explain!” I say to Nomasonto and she ignores me, “I am not cheating on you. Last night I went to the bar and she was there. I don’t know how she found your number or where we live but I will handle her.”

She mumbles, “I don’t care what you and your lover do just do it away from me.”

“I am not cheating on you!”

She yells, “So you expect me to believe that you just met a woman who happens to hit on you and now she won’t leave you alone. Am I that stupid to you?”

“As crazy as it sounds, that’s the truth.”

She shakes her head and claps, “It must be nice being you. I don’t care what you do just keep her far away from me. I won’t be stressed by your side chick or maybe I am the side chick?”

“You’re being ridiculous Nomasonto! Haven’t I proved that you’re the only woman in my life?”

She tosses a small card that reads, ‘Beautiful flowers for a beautiful lady. Tell me, does he like red or black lingerie – Yours Lerato Jackson, the second wife.’

I sigh, “It’s not what you think.”

“Then what is it? Handle her and I swear if I get another message or call from this Lerato bitch – you are going to end up a divorcee.”

“See that right there... that is the same reason men cheat. I am explaining to you the truth and you don’t believe me – you’re married to me. You should trust my word and not some woman you don’t know,” now she’s also starting to piss me off.

“How would you feel if roles were reversed? You will kill a person if another man did what Lerato is doing.”

“In my case I don’t like her – why is it hard for you to trust me? What happened to trusting each other?” I ask her.

“How do you expect me to trust you when she’s asking me what lingerie to wear for you? Did you also tell her that you hate lace?”

I reply, “Now you’re just irritating me, there’s nothing going on between me and Lerato. Can’t you see that we are doing exactly what she wants? She wants us to turn against each other.”

“What do you want me to do then? Smile and tell her what you like?”

“I want you to trust me, as your husband!” I tell her.

“So you want me to trust you while another woman makes moves on you. It’s clear you cannot handle her because if you could she’s be dead by now. Isn’t that how you roll?”

“Nomasonto didn’t I say trust me?” I yell.

“Are you going to say the same thing when you mess up or are you going to tell me that is was a moment of weakness like Canada.”

“I didn’t sleep with Chloe how many times do I have to tell you. Why do you keep doubting my love for you, you slept with Bheki and I...”

Shit!

“That is just low Terence. You know what... go to your Lerato!”

5

LERATO

Long day at work, I decide to pass by the bar for a drink. As much as I love owning a company, it can be tiring at times. Workers sometimes act like we are not human like them. I walk into the bar and as always the men are drooling over me as if their wives don't have vaginas. I sit by the bar and notice Romeo is not around today – it is his off day.

He doesn't come in on Wednesdays. I order a cocktail and do a quick scan of the room and notice my man sitting by the corner. He seems to be having a rough day so I order the whole bottle of what he's having and join him.

“Hey, honey!”

He sighs, “Lerato.”

“You remember me! It's nice to know that I have a special place in your heart.”

He shakes his head and gulps the remaining contents of whatever he's drinking then I refill, "How can I forget the name of the woman who is trying to ruin my life?"

"Come one baby, I am trying to make your life interesting."

He scoffs, "By causing problems between me and my wife?"

"I can fix it all if you want. I can call Nomasonto and tell her that I was just messing with her."

He laughs, "My wife is not stupid, Lerato! You asked her what lingerie I'd like you to wear for me. How do you think she feels right now?"

"She feels like taking off her wedding ring and leaving you."

"Tell me," he balances his elbows on the table and rests his chin on his hand, "You separate my wife and me then what?"

"You and I can love each other in peace."

He shakes his head, "Then you must be dumber than I imagined. Do you seriously think I would love you after breaking me off with the woman I love?"

"You'll get over her."

“I loved that woman since she was in school. I had to wait for her to finish school so I can marry her – do you seriously think I would throw that away for you?” he questions and I nod.

“Why not? I am prettier and the better woman.”

“Lerato being pretty doesn’t make you a good mother or wife,” he retorts.

“Does that mean Sereya is not a good wife and woman?”

“Don’t put words in my mouth,” he tells.

“You have no idea what I would love to put in your mouth.”

He sighs heavily, “Why are you not married?”

“Because you are married!”

“You need to stop this madness. My wife is mad at me because of you,” he warns.

“You seem calm for someone whose wife is mad. Shouldn’t you be begging her to forgive you and why be with a woman who doesn’t trust you?”

He looks at me in the eyes and I bite my lower lip. If we were alone in this club I would have long jumped on this man by now. He’s so fine I would drink his bathing water. Scratch that I



would bottle it and drink it daily. He's so fine, if he was to ask me to have a child for him I would spread my legs wide without thinking twice.

I stand up from my chair and go behind him then start massaging his shoulders and he lets me. I smile noticing that he's loosening up to me. I lower my lips to his ear and whisper, "I'm sorry for causing you stress. I promise I don't do it again."

"You did a background check on me, what were you hoping to find?"

I smile and continue massaging his muscular shoulders although I wish he was the one doing his to me, "I just wanted to know more about my man."

He holds my hand to stop me from massaging him, His touch on my skin is sending tingles all over my body but I maintain my breathing. He helps me go around him and get back to my seat, "Did you find anything interesting?"

"We could say that!"

"So tell me, Maka'Quinton. What exactly do you want from me?" he asks, firmly. I smile, from the looks of it he also did his homework. He's already warming up to me so I am doing great.

They say men love confident women so I boldly say, “I want you!”

“You’d have to be specific, woman. What exactly do you want?”

I take a deep breath. He’s making this harder for me, “I want to be Mrs Jackson!”

“You become Mrs Jackson then what?”

Why is he making this hard for me? I want him! Why do I have to explain why I want him? Why can’t he get that I want a little bit of what Sereya is having? I want to feel his skin on mine. I want to know how I’d feel having him trust in and out of me.

He reaches across the table and takes my hands – Lord I can feel all the blood rushing to my lower stomach. He glares into my eyes and I feel like losing my mind.

SEREYA

“Mom, can I borrow your Gucci bag?” Allyssa asks. Her mother is coming to pick her up and yes, Lana still hates me. We just tolerate each other for Allyssa’s sake. Speaking of Lana she’s married, to a man and I don’t understand how this lesbian thing works because the last time I checked Terrence left her because she is lesbian.

“You can take it!” I answer.

“Can Alex and Alicia come with me? Mom will just leave me alone the whole time...”

I sigh, “Let me talk to her first.”

“That’s why you’re my favourite mother!”

She hugs me and rushes out of the room. She’s all so grown it feels like yesterday when her father dropped her off at my house and asked me to watch her. I still remember how innocent she looked when she looked at me and said, “My mother is lesbian.”

“If it is not Mrs Author!” Lana walks into the kitchen.

“Hey, Lana! It’s nice to see you too.”

“Where is Allyssa?” she takes a seat on the kitchen chair.

“She just went to get her staff... Still on that, she asked if she can bring Alex and Alicia along with her?”

She rolls her eyes, “They are her siblings so I don’t mind. I hate you not them.”

“Thank you, Lana, for reminding me how much you hate me every time you see me.”

“You’re welcome,” she mumbles.

I ignore her and continue what I am doing. I am still writing and I am working on a very challenging piece.

“Are you okay?” – Lana.

“Yeah, why?”

“I might hate you but I can tell that your eyes are puffy and it’s either you were crying or you’re pregnant again,” she says.

“I am not pregnant.”

She gasps, “Don’t tell me he hit you?”

“No, we argued and it’s nothing.”

“If it made you cry then it’s something. What did he do? Don’t tell me he cheated on you too,” she asks and I look away, “Once a cheater, always a cheater.”

“He says he’s not cheating and that the woman is the one making moves on him. The woman is sending me flowers. We had an outburst because I think he’s lying that nothing is going on between them.”

She takes a deep breath, “Look Sereya, I hate you...”

“I know, Lana you don’t have to remind me.”

“I hate you but... Terence loves you. You’re his Nomasonto and he’d never do anything to hurt you. If he says nothing is going on then believe him before you push him to another woman. Unlike us, men get fed up easily and they love peace. You know your husband and deep down you know if he’s telling the truth or not,” she tells.

“Thanks, Lana.”

“I still hate you though. Please tell Allyssa to hurry.” She pops her gum.

LERATO

I smile and look at Terence's hand on mine. He's gently stroking my hand and it feels good.

He looks at me with those sexy eyes and asks, "Do you want us to get out here?"

"Okay!"

"First I want to ask you a question, what do think is going to happen to us after we sleep together?" he asks. So we are going to be sleeping together? Interesting!

He places his hand on my chin and makes me look at him, "I can take us to the hotel, show you a nice time and give you the best night of your life. You look portable and easy to carry around, I put you in twenty-eight positions and have you screaming my name until you lose your voice. I can go down on you and make you come until you no longer have juices to release. I can make you feel like the only woman in the world and let you feel wanted and special."

I suck in a breath of air and swallow hard waiting for him to proceed.

"Do you know that I am capable of making you feel all that and not have feelings for you? Unlike women, we can have a no

strings attached sexual encounter. I can sleep with you and still love my wife unconditionally. Lerato I am capable of making you fall in love with me and treat you like trash but you won't even have the power to leave," he takes a sip of his drink.

Then continues to say, "Do you know why I would treat you like that? It's because you don't respect yourself and your body. How do you expect someone else to love you when you don't love yourself? You know that I have the power to make you my booty call and my wife won't even know? Lerato I can turn your life around and make you my submissive. I can say jump and you ask how. Trust me you don't want to go there... stay away while I am still asking nicely. I am a married man and you should respect that. You're not worth destroying what I built with my wife."

He touches my face and wipes the tears off my face. I didn't realize I was crying, "You're a very beautiful woman and this doesn't suit you. You deserve better, respect yourself much to know your worth. You don't deserve to be someone's side dish. You opened your own Fashion house without anyone's help and raised your son on your own. You should be proud of that and stop acting like whore that sleeps with every breathing

thing. Destroying other people's relationships won't change the fact that your baby daddy left you or fill up the void."

He adds, "That man might have played you but he made you stronger. Don't give any man power over you like you gave Joseph. As for you messing with my wife, take it as a warning. If you do more like breath next to her – your son will end up an orphan."

He stands up and leaves.



6

LERATO

It has been about half an hour since Terence walked out on me. Honestly, I did not see that coming and his words hit home. I understand that he was trying to get me off his back but he did not have to be that mean. I know every word is true but for some reason, it hurts. Why does the one man I finally love have to be married?

The last time I felt like this about a man was when I was with Joseph and that was ten years ago. I finally meet the man I love and has everything I need but he does not look my way. His words cut deep, I do respect myself I just didn't realize that I was pushing too hard.

Maybe it is because this is foreign. I have never had a man reject me before and the more he rejected me – the more I want him. Why do we always love people who don't love us back? Or maybe it's karma biting me in the ass for all the bad I have done.

I gulp down my cocktail and take my bag, ready to leave when someone blocks my way. A tall figure stands in front of me and I don't bother to look at his face. I feel like the whole bar knows what Terence said to me. I have never been this embarrassed in my life. Getting pregnant at twenty and not knowing where my child's father is was less embarrassing than what Terence said to me today. I let my emotions control me and now I have made a fool out of myself.

"Hey gorgeous!" the man greets me and I lightly push him out of the way and mumble that I am not interested. I make my way to my car and drive back to the office. I don't feel like going home. As usual, it's quiet at work and only security is around.

I stay in my office and drown myself in whiskey, I brought from the bar.

"You don't respect yourself and your body," he said.

I pick up the bottle and drink directly from it. I do respect myself. Tears fall on my face as Terence's words replay in my head. Am I mad at Joey and taking it out of every man I run into? No, I am over Joseph. I don't even think about him.

When Quinton asked me about his father I told him the truth. I know he was young to understand but that was the truth. Why do Terence's words hurt me like this? It doesn't matter what he thinks, right? It hurts though, I love him. I know it's weird but the heart wants what it wants and nothing breaks like a heart. Terence rejecting me hurts.

I hear noise and quickly stand up from my chair. I am supposed to be the only one in the office. I follow the noise and cross my fingers that it's not Melusi watching porn again. It's Zara!

"Hello!"

She jumps out of the chair, "Mrs Montsho! What are you doing here?"

"I own the place, what are you doing here?"

"I....I wanted..." she scratches the back of her head.

"I don't have all day!"

"I was fixing my dress," she kneels, "Please don't fire me! I am the only one who works in my family and my siblings depend on me."

"Yet you're always giving me the middle finger."

She curses under her breath but quickly composes herself and locks her palm as a sign of pleading, "Please Mrs Montsho! I need this job."

"What are you working on?"

"I'm fixing my dress, I bought it today," she answers still kneeling.

I walk up to the machine and touch the fabric, "The dress looks twice your size, why buy something you can't fit in."

"It's a red sticker I bought at Mr Prize."

I sit where she was sitting, "And what is a red sticker?"

"It means it was on sale. The original prize is R200 but I got it at R50 meaning I saved R150."

"Still, it doesn't fit you?"

She stands on her feet, "I know but I can fix it and make it my size."

"With my machine?"

She looks down and plays with her hands. I stand up from the chair, “You can continue.”

“I’m not fired?”

“Do you want me to fire you?”

She shakes her head vigorously, “No and thank you. You have a kind heart Mrs Montsho.”

I smile, Zara is such a sweet soul. She reminds me of my old self. I used to be like her before Joseph showed up, naïve and ambitious.

“Zara how would you define me?” I stand by the door.

“You’re beautiful...”

I interrupt her

“Not my physical appearance.”

“You’re strong!”

“What makes you say that?” I’m curious.

She adds, “Mrs Montsho you run a Fashion Company while raising a child on your own. You make sure everything is running smoothly and hold your head high even though people

say bad things about you. Besides being a straighter talker, you're a great, hardworking and ambitious woman. You're an inspiration!"

TERENCE

I check the time on my phone and it is just after eight pm. I have been in the car since seven o'clock. I am not ready to go fight with Nomasonto. I know she's angry at me. I also crossed the line, I shouldn't have reminded her of Bheki. I know it was a tough time for her and my reminding her must have hurt her. I just wish she can trust me and trust that I would never cheat on her.

I have been tempted many times but when I think of how it will hurt her, I stop myself. Cheating is a choice and Nomasonto made it clear that cheating is a deal-breaker. I cannot gamble with our relationship because I know she will leave me. Nomasonto is young and the fact that she's still with me and that we haven't killed each other amazes me. Nomasonto and I

fight. I don't mean just yelling but to an extent where she throws pots at me – she still does that.

But again no one said marriage is just roses and sex. We fight and we make up but today I am just exhausted. I am not in the mood for anything – I just want to go to sleep with my wife in my arms.

Someone knocking on the window snaps me out of my thoughts. I roll down the window and Nomasonto stands, “Aren't you coming in?”

I kill the engine and get out of the car. I look at her and she's wearing my hoodie and shorts – why do I get a feeling she's not mad?

She takes my hand and kisses it, “Baba wabantwana bami!” (father of my children)

“Hey, baby!”

“How was your day?” she leads me to the house as I tell her about my day, excluding Lerato of course. I think I was a little harsh on her but I needed her to get the message.

We get into the house and she closes the door. She holds both my hands and stands on her toes kissing my lips, not just a peck but a kiss that makes me want to strip her naked. She pulls away and smiles.

She helps me take off my jacket. Why do I get a feeling she wants something? She always does this but not when we fought that very morning.

“Do you want me to bring your food or do you want to bathe first?”

“Are you okay?” I ask her and she nods, “Nomasonto you’re being too nice and it’s freaking me out.”

“What do you mean?”

I sit down and she sits next to me, “We fought in the morning and usually you’d be biting my head off.”

She takes a deep breath, “I’m sorry about this morning. I know shouldn’t doubt your love but I’m just scared to lose you to another woman. I’m scared that this Lerato woman might be the better woman and that you would leave me for her.”

I chuckle, “Nomasonto I am scared you might leave me not the other way around.”



“And leave all this?” she waves her hand up and down my body.

“I’m sorry too, I shouldn’t have mentioned Bheki.”

“You hurt me Terence but it’s in the past now just handle Lerato and keep her away from me because next time it won’t be just flowers I throw in your face.”

I laugh, “Are you threatening me, Mrs Jackson?”

“Yes.”

“Wow! You apologize and threaten me in the same line. Just out of curiosity, you said you’d do more than throw flowers in my face?”

She leans over and whispers, “I’d offload an M9 in your face.”

“Remind me to hide the guns.”

She laughs, “You better!”

“Nomasonto I am not cheating on you, I’d never cheat on you.”

She sits on my lap and pecks my lips, “I know!”

THE FOLLOWING MORNING

Nomasonto and I are on the couch cuddling and watching soccer. The doorbell rings and we ignore it, we are both lazy to get it and the person is not giving up until Nomasonto yells, "It's open!"

"I thought people respond, come in!"

She rolls her eyes, "Well they heard!"

Lerato walks in carrying flowers. Kill me!

## TERENCE

“Hello, good people,” Lerato walks into the house. She’s wearing jeans and a simple top, signs that she did not go to work today. She’s carrying the very same flowers she sent to Nomasonto the other day.

Can the earth open and swallow me because I am not ready for the drama that is about to take place.

Nomasonto looks at me then looks back at Lerato – I think she has a slight idea who she is.

“I’m sorry, who are you?” Nomasonto asks and I feel my body getting hot. Lerato is crossing the line, she’s not supposed to be here. I don’t care why she’s here but she’s not supposed to set foot in this house.

“Can I sit down?” Lerato makes herself comfortable on the couch. Nomasonto sighs heavily and sits next to me, “Oh these are for you!”

“I hate flowers,” – Nomasonto. She does, she loves the gesture but never knows what to do with them afterwards.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t know,” Lerato responds still beaming widely as if we are friends. I am looking at her hoping our eyes would meet and that’s she gets the message that she’s not welcome here. She’s not even looking my way.

“Terence, who is this?”

Before I can respond, Lerato beats me to it, “I am Lerato Montsho.”

“Oh, you’re Lerato! It’s nice to meet you, Mrs Jackson. You’re not what I expected, he loves his women slim.”

Lerato chuckles, “I come in peace Mr and Mrs Jackson.”

“You don’t because if you do you’d have respected my house. This is my turf and you showing unannounced is disrespecting me and crossing boundaries.”

I am going to sit this out because I know anything I do or say will be used against me.

“I know but I had to do this. I thought it would be appropriate if I came in person.”

Nomasonto replies, “You thought wrong. This is my safe space and you are invading it.”

“And I apologize for that.”

Nomasonto crosses her legs and asks, “Did you come for a threesome maybe?”

I look at Nomasonto who is keeping a straight face. What is going on with her today? Nomasonto is not this violent, she’s sweet to everyone. I guess Lerato chose the wrong day to mess with her. This time Lerato crosses her legs, “Nomasonto...”

“It’s Sereya for you, only he is allowed to call me that,” she tilts her head towards me. She is my Nomasonto and Sereya Jackson to the rest of the world.

“Sereya I...”

Nomasonto interrupts her again, “Mrs Jackson would be appreciated.”

“I’m here to apologize, okay!” Now Lerato is losing her shit. You can’t apologize and yell in the same sentence.

“What are you apologizing for?”

Lerato sighs heavily, "I might have gone a little too far and I am sorry."

"You went a lot too far, how would you feel if another woman did to you what you did. Wait, you wouldn't know because you have never been married. You don't know the true meaning of 'for better or for worst, in sickness and in health' it is always the unmarried ones that want to ruin other people's marriages. Tell me, did you not know that he is married?"

Lerato swallows hard, "That's why I am here to apologize. I realize that I went too far."

"You don't! What if he had agreed to be with you? Would you be sorry as you are now? God

you even have the nerve to come to my house! I could kill you and..."

I hold her hand and gently squeeze it. I understand that she is angry but she shouldn't push too far. Lerato rolls with the big guys and if she feels like her life is being threatened, this could turn into a war. Nothing that can't be handled but I am too old for that shit.

I whisper to Nomasonto, "She admits that she's wrong at least give her credit for that."

“Proceed!” – Nomasonto.

Lerato says, “As I was saying, I am very sorry for coming in between you and your husband. I shouldn’t have thrown myself at him like that, that wasn’t ladylike. I am not sorry for meeting him though – he made me realize something that I couldn’t see before I met him. He made me realize that I didn’t know my worth. I thought I did but I didn’t.”

“I don’t know if your husband told you but I have a ten-year-old son. I am a single mother and it’s not easy. I have been so frustrated that my baby’s father left me so much that I take it out of every man I run into. I thought hurting them back would fill up the void in my heart but instead, it turned me into a whore. Sleeping around became my pain killer. Your husband was going to be like any other man I run into but it got deep when he rejected me.”

“Terence... I mean Mr Jackson rejecting me had me questioning myself. Why doesn’t he like me? Am I not pretty? Is he not seeing what other men see in me? I want to feel wanted and when he rejected me it cut deep. I never go into relationships with the man I get with because I love it when they chase after

me. I love that they can want me but can never get me. Then I met Mr Jackson, he didn't even look my way it is as if the only woman that exists in his life is you. I was on a mission to tear you apart, I won't deny it. I wanted some of what you're getting. Who wouldn't want to be with a man that you're not scared would cheat on you? A man you can trust and know that he loves you wholeheartedly."

Lerato concludes by saying, "Anyway Mr Jackson knocked some harsh truth in me and I am glad that he did. I went home and cried my heart out. I looked at myself in the mirror and realized that everything he said is true and I have to change my ways."

"Wait, let me get this straight. You just wanted to sleep with him? Only that."

Lerato nods, "Yes."

"Look, I can never understand why you did what you did. But, I am sorry too for being harsh - I hope you understand where I am coming from. What you did is wrong but I forgive you."

Just like that? It must be nice being a woman. Lerato fishes into her bag and takes out a white envelope. She hands it to Nomasonto who hesitates but eventually takes it.



“Those are two tickets to Spain, take it as my way of apologizing for causing trouble between you two. I know that you have friends in Spain and I know you can afford to take yourselves there but take it a second honeymoon from me. And, no I am not planning to kill you both in the plane.” – Lerato.

Nomasonto answers, “I know, you’d kill me not him.”

Lerato chuckles and stands up, “I should leave you two and get to work I haven’t been there today.”

“Thanks for the tickets,” Nomasonto also stands up.

“I am sorry and I hope one day we can be friends.”

Nomasonto shakes her head, “I forgive you but we can never be friends.”

“I understand! Goodbye, Mr and Mrs Jackson!”

“I’m sure you can see yourself out. Just go the same way you came in,” Nomasonto smiles. Savage!

Lerato stands up and takes her bag. She apologizes once more before leaving. Nomasonto waits until the door closes and picks up the envelope Lerato gave her, “You rejected a woman that can afford a trip to Spain? I would have agreed shame! Lerato and I will be sipping wine in the plane as we speak.”

I laugh and pull her in my arms, “You should start treating me right, as you can see other women want me.”

“She bought you a plane ticket, I gave you two big-headed children.”

“Don’t call my children big-headed!”

She laughs, “Why do you think I always give birth through Section C? I cannot push those big heads out.”

“Speaking of babies...”

She tries to run away but I pull her back and she shakes her head, “We are not having another baby.”

“Didn’t you see Lerato? She’ll be glad to carry my child and here you are refusing.”

She shakes her head, “I permit you to go to her. I am never going back to that place. Ever!”

“Never say never, I know how to mess with your birth controls.”

She pouts, “I’ll give you head instead.”

“You give me head all the time.”

“Is it too late to ask Lerato to come back?” she asks and I laugh. They say marry your best friend and I found one in Nomasonto.

## LERATO

I wake up to a 'Are you coming?' message from my mother. I groan in annoyance and get out of bed. I hate attending family gatherings. I have the most judgmental family in the history of judgmental families. Just because I am thirty-two and single suddenly I need prayers. There's nothing wrong with being an independent woman, in my defence, I am single by choice. I can have any man I want, except for Terence of course. That man wouldn't even look my way.

Am I over Terence? Yell no! But I have decided to swallow my pride and let it go – shit still stuck in my throat. I could have Terence if I chose to – if I wanted to be Mrs Jackson I would have done everything in my power to be Mrs Jackson. But, my son comes first and if anything was to happen because I chose to mess with the wrong family. I wouldn't have been able to live with myself.

'Rato, I know you saw the message.' That's my mother again. I just wish the earth can open and swallow me. I don't want to attend the family gathering. I don't want to hear my sisters go

on about their happy marriages forgetting that I know every one of their scandals.

They call me when their husbands cheat and call me when they are in crisis – financially.

I am born in a family of five girls with me as the third born and everyone is married except me. I always feel like slapping my youngest sister when she starts giving me relationship advice. Her being married doesn't mean she knows more about relationships than me.

'Lerato!'

I reply to the text message, 'I am sorry, I forgot my phone online. Unfortunately, I won't be able to attend the gathering. I am not feeling well and I have a meeting with one of my important clients.'

'You have to come. Family matters most – I also want to see my grandchild.'

‘Mazvita will bring him, unfortunately, I cannot make it.’ I send the text and watch her type for about three minutes.

‘Rato I told my church friends that you are coming. Is it a lot for a mother to want to see her child? Do you want to see me when I’m dead?’

I sigh and type back, ‘I know you want to get me with one of your friend’s sons but mom I told you that I don’t need a man.’

‘What kind of a woman doesn’t want a man? You should come and meet Mxolisi. He is a well-groomed man with no kids. He is very handsome too.’

After gathering the courage, I type, ‘Ma I am not coming.’

‘It’s either you come or I show up with Mxolisi and his family at your house.’

Sigh! ‘Fine, I will come and I am coming to see you and not this Mxolisi. Who still does matchmaking in this century?’

I log out of WhatsApp and bathe. I ask Mazvita to get Quinton ready and also give her a weekend off. She insists on staying at home. She claims that going home costs a lot of money – she is from Zimbabwe. She prefers sending money instead.

One thing I love about Zimbabweans, they always have a side skill. They can be cleaners or builders but they always yield some skill – for example

Advertisement

Mazvita holds a degree in Law. It's just that jobs are hard to find these days.

'Where are you?'

I groan in annoyance, 'I am about to leave the house. What is so special about this Mxolisi anyways?'

'We can't keep our guests waiting, Rato!'

'Ma it's a family gathering. It is supposed to be about family, not me. I will call you when I am near.'

I am not even halfway done. I still have to apply makeup and call Zara telling her that I will be late on Monday. I know my mother will force me to stay the whole weekend. I switch off my phone to avoid my mother's calls.

Quinton and I leave the house around eleven am and we get on the road. I know Mazvita will spend the weekend with her boyfriend. She is old enough to do whatever the hell she wants as long as she's doing her job.

"Quinton switch on my phone and tell your grandmother that we will be arriving in the next hour," I toss him my phone. He's playing games on his phone.

"Who is this?"

I look at the phone and it's Terence's photo. What is this child doing in my gallery? I have to delete that picture before my mother sees it and thinks I have a man, "It's a friend, call your grandmother and stop looking into my phone."

I have nudes in there. Don't ask!

An hour later I am parked outside my parent's house. This place holds a lot of memories and reminds me of my childhood and all the ass whooping I received from my mother. I was a very naughty child.

"Quinton please..." he's gone and already talking to my mother who is standing by the gate. It's one of those old gates that even a bicycle can knock down but my mother doesn't want to change it. She even refused to renovate the house and said she likes it like that. It's a two bedroomed house and luckily my sisters never sleepover after the gatherings because I don't think I can handle sleeping on the floor or couch.

I take a deep breath and get out of the car. One would need some vodka to be able to handle my family. They are loud and their children are always crying.

"The rich aunt from Sandton," my eldest sister's son throws himself in my arms. Yup, I am the rich aunt of the family but I don't stay in Sandton.



“Hey, Lwazi!” I hold him tighter. He is about three years older than Quinton. He’s my favourite by the way. Yes, I have a favourite. Lwazi is the only one of my sisters’ children that never asks me for money and I love him for that. The other ones see me and they see money. I always tell them that my money is on my bank card and when they ask for it, I give them but without the pin.

I pretend to be talking to my youngest sister Aratwe to avoid talking to my mother. I am not ready to meet this Mxolisi guy. I bet all the money in my account he is ugly as Joseph.

My phone rings and I excuse myself.

Me: Zara!

Zara: I know you said I shouldn’t call you unless the company is on fire but flowers came for you and a wrapped box. Do you want me to send it to your house?

Me: Who are the flowers from?

Zara: They are signed M.M

Me: You can have the flowers and send the box to my place.

Zara: Aww you are so sweet. Tha...

I hand up and shove my phone into my dress pocket.

“If I knew better I would think you’re avoiding me,” mother shows up from nowhere. She didn’t even give me the chance to try and hide.

“I’d never!” I hug her.

“Come meet Mxolisi!” she takes my hand and leads me to the back of the house where the gathering is taking place.

“Mxolisi she’s here,” some lady I don’t recognize announces and I feel like rolling my eyes when I see the man standing in front of me. Beauty is indeed in the eyes of the beholder.

“Hey, Lerato!” a deep voice utters behind me and I slowly turn. Holy Mary, Jesus Christ and Somizi!

## LERATO

Breathe Lerato! My inner voice screams. If this god is Mxolisi then I am losing my morals today. I look at the man that I thought is Mxolisi and silently apologize. I was just angry at my mother for forcing me to see Mxolisi – I didn't mean to say he's ugly. Okay, back to this fine figure standing in front of me.

He's wearing grey formal trousers with a black long sleeves shirt that is folded up to his elbows. He added a brown belt that matches his shoes and he's wearing clear glasses. I know they are not for his eyes – I work in a fashion company after all. I can see a glimpse of his hairy chest from his half-done shirt that is neatly tucked to his waist.

“Hello Lerato. I am Mxolisi Majola!” he states. I wish he could let me record his deep voice and make it my alarm so I can wake up to his voice. This is not what I had in mind when my mother said he's handsome. I am going to give the old lady a high five after this. He is indeed handsome.

He is handsome but I still don't want a relationship - I would love to make out with him in his car though. That is if he owns one. The handsome ones are always the... unemployed, have no direction in their lives or they don't know how to lay down the pipe.

I clear my throat and extend my hand to Mxolisi. Instead of shaking my hand, he kisses it and my mother ululates. I'm sure they already want to plan a wedding.

"Do you want to go for a walk, Lerato?" Mxolisi asks and before I can turn him down my mother answers for me. Not wanting to embarrass Mxolisi I nod and he asks I walk out first. He is really well-groomed but unfortunately, I grew up in the ghetto. He leads us to his car.

He's driving an Audi 8 series. Not as pretty as my car but I am not comparing. I don't wait for him to open the door for myself, I do it myself and make myself comfortable in the passengers' seat. I watch him go all the way around and get in.

"Are you comfortable?" he asks and I nod. He starts driving and we are both quiet. He keeps stealing glances at me.

“What do you do for a living?” I break the silence.

“I work at the bank. As the loan processor.”

“That’s not bad,” I respond, “At least you have a job.”

“You don’t date unemployed men?”

I nod, “I don’t!”

“What’s wrong with an unemployed man?”

“A lot of things. Indoda must provide, how will he be able to take care of me if he’s unemployed?” I say boldly.

“What if you’re dating then he loses his job? Will you still be with him?”

I shake my head, “I cannot be with someone who cannot take care of me.”

“Can you take care of yourself?”

I scoff, “Did you look at me? This is all me.”

“Then it means you don’t need a man’s money.”

“I do.” I retort.

“Women are not fair. You want a man that will take care of you, protect you and spoil you but what are you bringing to the table?”

I smile, "I am bringing myself."

"That is not fifty-fifty."

I laugh, "It's either you take it or leave it."

"How old are you Lerato?"

"You don't ask a lady her age," I say.

"My apologies, how many Christmases have you spent on this earth."

I smile, "Thirty-two."

"Oh my God! You look twenty-five. You age like fine wine."

"And how old are you Mxolisi?" I question and cross my fingers that he doesn't ask me to guess. I hate people who do that.

"I am thirty- five!"

I nodded lightly, "Not bad!"

"Any man in your life

Miss Montsho?"

I nod again and answer, "Yes, Quinton."

I hope that will make him stay away from me. Mxolisi looks and sounds charming but I love my men toxic. He's too smooth for me. I will dominate him and end up breaking his heart so much that he would spit when he sees a woman.

"Your mother told me about Quinton, he looks like a nice boy," Mxolisi answers with a smile.

Why does my mother do me like this? I was hoping this would make Mxolisi leave me alone. I don't want him and I want to let him down easy. After I get in his pants, of course. I'm sure you're thinking 'what about Terence's words?' To hell with Terence and his wife.

"You know my son?"

Mxolisi takes out his phone and shows me Quinton's photo, "My mother sent me your picture and Quinton's a month ago. They have been trying to set us up but I kept postponing. I was scared you might not like me."

I don't like him but I respond, "How can I not like such a handsome lad?"

"You're also beautiful!"

I flick my weave, "I am a goddess!"

“Love the confidence.”

“So, Mr Majola... any women in your life?” I ask and wait for him to lie.

“I have a very demanding job and I have been focused on getting my life so getting a woman was the last thing on my mind.”

“How long have you been single?” I question

“About four years.”

“You even have a degree in singleness. Wow!” I clap.

“How long have you been single?’ he asks and I smile. I am single but not single... single. I get laid when I choose.

“Just a couple of years.”

“Maybe we should get together since we are both single. We would make beautiful babies don’t you think?” he chuckles nervously. I think he is scared to piss me off.

“Where are we going?” I change the subject. I don’t want to ruin his day by rejecting him, yet. I will send him a text message later and let him cry himself to sleep. Plus I still need to taste the eggplant.



“We are almost there!”

I sit back and enjoy the ride. He is playing Toni Braxton. I guess my mother told him that I love Toni Braxton. I wonder what else they discussed and I cannot wait to blow his bubble.

Does he think that I can just love him because my mother said he’s well-groomed? I love money and if he wants to get into my heart then he better give me money. Fifteen minutes later, we reach our destination and it feels like he has been driving forever but anything to get away from my loud family.

I was expecting him to take me to a restaurant but he took me to some house. But again we cannot shag in a restaurant. We get out of the car and surprisingly he does not lead me to the house. We go to the back and I smile looking at the picnic laid out. I have never had a picnic before - one point for Mxolisi.

He helps me sit down on the pillow. I am glad I didn’t wear jeans. I would be struggling to fold my hands as we speak. Mxolisi also sits down and reaches into the picnic basket and takes out my favourite wine. I see he’s trying to impress me but I would have loved it if he did something for me because he thought of it. Not because he knows I love it.

That's where people get it wrong. There's nothing wrong with knowing a person's likes and dislikes but a relationship should be built like a house. Lay out the foundation and build it brick by brick. If he rushes to spoil and impress me, this is what I will get used to. The moment he gets tired of trying to impress me that's when the relationship will die.

But, again I am not going to date this god of a man – he is hot and all that but not for me. Like I said I love them toxic.

An hour goes by and surprisingly I am enjoying Mxolisi's company or maybe it's the wine. He is funny and my ribs hurt because of laughing. I don't know when last I had this much fun.

"So tell me, you've been single for four years?" I ask now sitting next to him.

"Yes."

"So you've only been having one night stands?" I am provoking him.

"No."

I whisper, “You’ve been masturbating for four years?”

He laughs, “Maybe we should go back. I don’t want your mother to accuse me of getting you drunk.”

“Come on now, we can’t go back without you kissing me.”

He looks surprised that I brought it up first but he holds my chin and brings his lips to mine. I meet him halfway and kiss him. This man is not taking any action so I take the lead. His hands are on my face but I shove them under my dress and he gets the message and starts rubbing on cookie. Not breaking the kiss, I undo his belt and he stops me.

“I want to,” I shift down his trousers and sit on him. I kiss him and he’s a good kisser. My phone rings and I ignore it. The person leaves a voice message and I can hear the message but I am enjoying Mxolisi’s anaconda. I am going to kill Zara, I told her not to call me.

“Boss it’s me again. There’s a man named Joseph that is looking for you. He says it’s urgent – please get back to me as soon as you can. It’s almost knocking off time.”

## LERATO

Mxolisi and I are still outside his house and I am now lying on his chest. I have never had sex outside but I'd never miss the chance to experiment. As much as I don't want to admit it, he's good and he cared about me. I have never done it with someone who communicates. I didn't realize how much talking during sex matters until today.

Those random 'are you good?' those forehead kisses and 'right here'. I really don't want to be with Mxolisi but he seems like a nice guy and I'm tempted to experiment and see if a relationship with him would work.

I am sure you're wondering if I'm not worried about Joseph. I am not – I am happy that he decided to stop being a coward and show up. Even if it's after ten years. I ignored Zara's message on purpose. If Joseph is serious he will come back. He might have had his way back then but I won't give him the same power again.

As Terence said, I should never give a man power over me as I did with Joseph – including Joseph. See, I did learn something from Mr Jackson.

“Are you okay?” Mxolisi asks, gently stroking my arm. I am laying my head on his chest and his heart is beating very fast. I hope he doesn’t have a heart problem because I wouldn’t want him dying on me.

“I am fine, why?”

He kisses my forehead and says, “You got a little tense after the message you received. I know it’s not my business but who is Joseph?”

“There’s no man in my life, don’t worry yourself.”

He sits up, “We should get back to the gathering and we need to get you a jacket. It’s getting cold.”

“I also need to use the bathroom – this is your house, right?”

He chuckles, “It is my house.”

He helps me stand up and leads me into the house. I do a quick scan of the house and it’s not bad. He seems like a tidy person. He shows me to the bedroom, “This is my bedroom and you can use the bathroom.”

“Do you have anything I can change into?” I ask him.

“I’d say look into my wardrobe but don’t you think you changing your clothes would get us in trouble. What I did today wasn’t proper. I swear I didn’t know things were going to escalate to that.”

I laugh now standing by the bathroom door, “Don’t tell me you wanted to wait ninety days?”

“I wanted to wait until you were ready and I wanted our first time together to be memorable. Not that I’m saying it wasn’t but I don’t want you to take me as the type of guy that...”

I place my finger on his mouth and utter, “I had fun, Mxo.”

“Please can you not disappear on me after this? I know you don’t trust me but please just give me a chance.”

I sigh, “Mxolisi I would be lying if I said I like you. I can’t...”

This time he’s the one to place his finger on my mouth, “Give me a chance first then you can break up with me when you’re not happy.”

“You seem like a nice guy and trust me you’d want to stay away from me.”

“But I don’t. I want you in my life Lerato – I fell in love with you before I even met you. I am not going to let you go now that I have you this close,” he pleads.

I shake my head and he utters, “Was I that bad?”

“The sex was amazing, the best I have ever had but I can’t be with you. I am sorry.”

“Why not?” he asks.

“Mxolisi my life is complicated and a man is the last thing I need.”

“Just give me a chance to prove to you that I am capable of making you happy,” he holds my hands.

“Sorry but I can’t.” I let go of his hands and go to the bathroom. I wash up and use his toiletries`. He seems like a nice man but he’s too soft for me. I’m into men like Terence – the ones that don’t want me.

When I am done, I join Mxolisi in the sitting room and he looks sad. I sit on his lap and make him stare at me, “Mxolisi this is not the end of the world. Any woman would love to be with you. Have you seen how handsome you are?”

“But I want you. Lerato we slept together – I don’t know about you but that meant the world to me. You have no idea how much I have dreamt of the day I would talk to you. The day I would kiss your lips and feel your skin. I really love you.”

“You love me? You hardly know me.”

He sighs, “Lerato I have always been around you but you never see me. We were in the same class in school.”

“No

Advertisement

we weren’t!”

“I was quiet back in school. Mxolisi with the glasses?” he reminds me.

“Oh, now I remember you.”

We grew up together but I never paid any attention to him. To me, he was just my mother’s friend’s son. May I say he has grown to a very fine lad. I still don’t like him tho.

“Mxolisi you’re a fine man but I....”

He smashes his lips on my mine and deepens the kiss. He lifts me, letting me wrap my legs around his waist. I am surprised



he's able to carry me. He doesn't look that strong. He places me on the table and shifts everything away – this man seriously thinks he can manipulate me with sex.

I am too old for that – his anaconda is good but that is not enough to make me like him. He's too soft for me and I will give him sleepless nights. For his good, he should stay away from me.

"Lerato please!" he begs me as he thrusts in and out of me.

"I'm sorry but no."

"You rejected me back then and you're still rejecting me," now he's emotionally manipulating me.

"Mxolisi you don't want to be with a woman like me."

He glares into my eyes, "But I do. Please give me a chance."

Great, now he's denying me an orgasm, "Fine, we'll give things a try but don't say didn't warn you."

He turns me around and takes me from behind. I said he's too soft but man does he know how to lay down the pipe.

We stick around at his house and drive back to my parent's around eight pm. We also had dinner at his place and my mother hasn't even tried to contact me. That woman would do anything to see me married. Mxolisi parks his car outside my parent's house.

"Don't you dare touch that door," he warns before I can open the door. He gets out and goes around to open it for me, "There you go."

"I can open doors for myself."

"You're my woman now so prepare to be spoiled," he helps me out of the car. I cannot wait to go to my place and block him. He'll never see me again.

"I can't come into your father's house after what took place today. Can I see you tomorrow?"

I clear my throat, "I have a meeting with a client."

I don't have a meeting.

"Okay, I will communicate and see when you are free."

"Okay, I am going inside," I try to walk away but he pulls me back and kisses me goodnight.

I say goodbye and walk into the house as he watches me. I get into the house and I can tell they were looking at Mxolisi and me. They're trying to act normal but there's normal with Aratwe washing her hat in the kitchen sink. From the looks of it, our guests have left and only my parents and Aratwe are here. I wonder why she didn't leave with her husband.

"Mom who was that?" Quinton asks without taking his eyes off his phone. It's confirmed that they were looking at my every move with Mxolisi.

"He's a friend, baby."

I go to the sink and pour myself some water. I can feel my mother and Aratwe's eyes following my every move.

"We had lunch and dinner then he brought me back home." I put them out of their misery.

"We saw you kiss," Quinton mumbles and Aratwe hits him with a dish towel and tells him to leave the room.

Aratwe waits for Quinton to leave then talks when we can hear him talking to his grandfather in the sitting room, "So you kissed, does it mean you're dating?"

"No."

Mother frowns, "But you kissed. You don't kiss someone you don't like or not in a relationship with."

Then they don't know me as they think they do but I smile and say, "We are giving things a try."

My phone rings and I excuse myself. It is a number I don't recognise.

Me: Lerato speaking.

Voice: Hey, baby!

Me: Joseph?

Voice: Ahh she still remembers my voice. Can I see you?

Deep breathe Lerato! Deep breathe.

Me: Why do you want to see me?

Joseph: Because I want to see you.

Me: After ten years?

Joseph: Can I come to see you tomorrow?

My inner voice says no but my mouth betrays me.

Me: You can come to my house. I will send the address.

11

LERATO

“Mom your phone is ringing,” Quinton wakes me up. If there’s one thing I hate it is people who call before seven am or wake me up. If it can fit in a text message then there’s no need for you to call me. I take the phone from Quinton and wait for him to run out of the room. He slept in my mother’s bedroom and I shared the bed with Aratwe. My back hurts this girl was kicking me and stealing the blanket the whole night.

“Lerato answer your goddamn phone,” Aratwe mumbles. I leave the room and answer the phone outside. The sun is not yet up and people are already sweeping their yards. I waved at the neighbour and then get ready to insult whoever decided to disturb my peace on a Saturday morning.

Me: What is it?

Voice: I’m sorry, did I catch you at a bad time?

Me: I was sleeping. Who the hell are you calling me with a private number? It's not even eight am!

Voice: (Laughs) I am sorry to disturb you, my queen. I want you to say good morning.

Me: Mxolisi? Couldn't you send a text message?

Voice: I wanted to hear your voice and tell you how I am happy that we are now together. I promise to treat you right.

Me: (rolls eyes) my mother is calling me.

Voice: No problem have a great day. I love you.

I hang up and shove the phone into my gown pocket. Mxolisi keeps calling me with a private number. It is as if he knows I want to block him. I know that when I get back to my house he won't be able to find me.

My phone vibrates and it's a message from Joseph that reads, 'You forgot to send me your address.'

I sigh heavily and send him my home address but tell him that I will be home later in the day and that he should come around five pm.

'I want to see you now. I am getting ready to go to your house. I will be there in an hour.' – Joseph.

Who does this man think he is? I reply, 'I said I will be there around five pm.'

'And I said, I will be there in an hour. Be there, Lerato.'

I clap and shove my phone back into my pocket. Okay fine, I will go see him. I make up an excuse and tell my mother that I have to leave but I will be leaving Quinton behind. I cannot have Joseph see him, not yet. I bathe then drive home but I pass by Miguel's place – he asked to see me. Everyone seems to want a piece of me today.



“Hey, Lerato! He’s at the back,” that Jennifer, Miguel’s wife of twelve years. They have been together since high-school, divorced and remarried three times. I don’t know if that’s even allowed. Miguel has cheated on this poor woman countless times and all she does is forgive him.

I would have choked him in his sleep if he was my man. Jennifer has caught Miguel in bed with another woman but she’s still here and loves him unconditional. I don’t know how some women do it.

“Hey, Miguel!” I sit on the bench and wait for him to finish talking on the phone. Their backyard is beautiful and I heard that Jennifer does it herself.

“Hey, boss lady!” he sits next to me.

“I saw your message, what’s up.”

“I received a message from the big boss and we have to set up a meeting with the squad,” he tells.

“The big boss as in Alexander Brown?”

He nods, “Yes. I will set up a meeting with the team and keep you posted.”

“Is it that bad? You could have texted me you know.”

He sighs heavily, “It’s bad Lerato and you know the big boss is the one that makes sure we have all the resources we need.”

“So when are you planning on holding the meeting?”

He shrugs, “I will talk to the team first then set up the meeting.”

“Is that all? I have to meet up with someone.”

He touches my chin, “Are you okay? You seem disturbed.”

“It’s Quinton’s father, he’s in town.”

He laughs, “Since when do you let a man stress you. The Lerato I know dominates and men bow to her.”

I sigh, “He was my first and you know how they are – they always have some power over us.”

“No they don’t – you’re the one giving this man power over you it’s about time you show him who you are.”

I smirk, “I have an idea – call me when you set up the meeting.”

I rush out and tell Mazvita to leave my guest alone at the house because I am on my way. She had called me telling me about Joseph's arrival. I get to the house and find Joseph sitting on the couch and watching television as if he owns the place. I take a deep breath and smile.

"Joseph!"

He stands up from the couch and walks up to me and hugs me. Lord, he still smells amazing

Advertisement

"Hey! It's nice to see you again. You look gorgeous."

"I can't say the same about you."

He laughs, "Well, you look amazing."

"How can I help you, Joseph? That's if that is even your real name."

He shifts toward me but I get away from him, "Joseph is my name and I am sorry about what happened back then."

"You're sorry? After ten years – your apology is late."

He walks up to me. He holds my hands and stares into my eyes, “My phone died that day and I lost all my contacts. I tried looking for you and I couldn’t. I am sorry Lerato.”

“I don’t want your apology and if you don’t have anything else to say please leave.”

“Come on baby don’t be like that. We were happy before we lost touch,” he says and I shift away from him.

“Joseph we lost touch ten years ago and you expect me to just take you back? No, I have moved on with my life and I want you to stay away from me or you’ll regret it.”

He gets closer again. Argh, this man is annoying, “Lerato this is me. I made a mistake – I should have tried harder to look for you and I am very sorry. Please forgive me.”

“So you want me to believe that you have been waiting for me all these years?”

He nods, “Cross my heart.”

I can’t help but laugh. Doe this man thinks I am that twenty year old he played and ghosted, “How did you find me?”

“I saw you on the television when you were launching your fashion line. At first, I thought I was seeing things but it was

you. So I took your details and went to your company. Your secretary gave me your number,” he retorts.

I am going to kill Zara for this. I warned her about giving people my cellphone number. That girl gives me reasons to fire her every day. Joseph gets closer again – okay, I was lying when I said he’s ugly. I was just mad that he left me.

He places his hands on my waist and pulls me closer pressing his body against mine then tries to kiss me. I look away and his lips end on my neck. He still has that effect on me and it is as if he’s taking me back to ten years ago.

My vibrating phone disturbs us and I shift away from him to check who it is and it’s a text message from Aratwe, ‘Your boyfriend was here – he had brought you lunch.’

Mxolisi is just being a parasite and I will Doom him if he continues annoying me. What happened to calling before visiting people? Joseph takes my phone from my hands and tosses it on the couch then kisses me but I quickly shift away.

“Let’s go to my room.”

He beams widely and asks me to lead the way. I lead him to my room. I get in and push him to the bed then get on top of him. He sneaks his hand under my blouse while he kisses me.

“Wait, I want to show you something.” I go to my little drawer and take out the cuffs.

“I see you want to get freaky.”

I bite my lower lip, “Why not?”

I cuff him to the bed and tease him with my lips kissing and biting on his skin. I run my hands on his pants and smile when I see him getting hard. I help him out of his clothes leaving him with only boxers.

I take out the tiny whip and he protests, “Not the whip, I don’t like those things.”

“But I do,” I whip him hard on the stomach and he curses.

“Fuck Lerato is it supposed to sting like that?”

“Not, but this is what I feel like,” I whip him again and watch him flinch in pain, “Do you seriously think you can play me and

then come back in my life as if nothing happened. Do I look that stupid to you?”

“Lerato I am not...” the whip lands on his skin again. Man, I could do this all day, “Lerato untie me before I get angry.”

I laugh, “I don’t want to.”

“Woman you better pray I don’t get out of there cuffs.”

“By the time you get out, I would have long cut off your penis,” I walk up to my weapons drawer where I keep my guns and knives and take out a bolo machete.

“Lerato please don’t do this!” Joseph cries.

“Joseph don’t embarrass me – I haven't even touched you.”

## JOSEPH

“And then? I thought you said you’ll be back home late,” Mphoe interrogates me as soon as I walk into the house. I ignore her and continue walking to my destination which is the bedroom. I want to lie down first and then think of a solution on how to get back at that whore. Who does Lerato think she is? She thinks her cookie is everything – she messed with the wrong person. By the time I am done with her, she will be begging me to take her back.

“Joseph I am talking to you?” Mphoe continues following me.

“Do I have to explain my ins and outs now? Were you planning to bring one of your boyfriends, is that why you’re asking?”

She claps, “Bengibuza njee (I was just asking)”

“Stop asking stupid questions and bring me some of those bathing soaps that you’re always using.”

“Hawu baba, since when do you use those? And, why are you walking funny?” she asks. Do women ever stop talking?



“Mphoe just get me what I want and stop questioning me like I am your child.”

She shrugs and claps once more before exiting the room. I walk to the bathroom and run a bath for myself. I sit on the edge of the tub as I wait for the hot water to fill the tub. Mphoe walks in with one of her bathing salts and hands it to me then utters, “Your brother was looking for you.”

“I will call him, now leave.”

“Haibo, since when do you chase me out of the bathroom when bathing. What’s going on with you today? Last night and this morning you were in a cheerful mood and now you want to bully me. Is it my fault that they pissed you off wherever you were?” she mumbles.

“So now I cannot even take a shit in peace because you want to know stuff?”

She claps, “Fine, Joseph. I was going to do my hair anyways. The children are at their grandmother’s place.”

I wait for her to leave the bathroom and then lock the door. I take off my shirt and look at the bruises on my chest and stomach. That bitch had the nerve to do this to me and still

drive me home. I'm glad someone visited her before she got to use the knife.

My phone rings in my trousers before I can get into the tub and it's my brother. I answer the phone sitting in the warm water. I am going to get Lerato for this. I wasn't lying about losing contact with her that day. My wife found out that I was with another woman and destroyed my phone.

Me: Bafo! (Brother)

Voice: Where are you? I was just at your house looking for you.

Me: I don't answer to you. What do you want?

Voice: And then? What's going on?

Me: (sighs) It's just this woman whom I went to see. The bitch tied me to the bed and whipped the shit out of me and still had the nerve to drive me home.

Voice: (laughing) I would like to see this woman and high five her. That should teach you to keep your pants up.

Me: What do you want before I hang up on you?

Voice: I was in the area and decided to pass by your house. I will call you later.

Me: Listen, bafo I need some cash. I messed up and I need some cash before I put my wife and kids in danger.

Voice: You're not getting any money from me and I hope they kill you this time. How much do you owe them anyways?

Me: 50k please help me this once before they kill me. I promise I will stop gambling.

Voice: I am going to start planning your funeral.

I click my tongue and hang up. So much for having a brother. I know he has the money but he just doesn't want to give it to me. I have no choice but to go back to Lerato – that woman is rich.

## LERATO

I'm having lunch with Mxolisi. This man is starting to be a pain. I get that he likes me but first, he sent me flowers at my workplace then today he shows up at my house unannounced. I had to make up an excuse to make him leave because I couldn't leave Joseph alone in my house.

Mxolisi made me swear to call him so we can have our lunch. It's past two pm and I wish to be everywhere but here. Mxolisi is forcing his way into my life and I don't like it.

“I’m sorry for showing up at your house unannounced,” Mxolisi holds my hand. I am sure he can sense that I am not pleased with his behaviour. Normal people call first.

“I’m not happy, Mxolisi.”

He lifts my chin making me stare at him, “I am sorry. I promise next time I will call first. Please cheer up.”

“Aren’t you supposed to be at work?”

“It’s weekend, my queen,” he answers gently stroking my hand with his fingers. Argh, Mxolisi and his love. I hate it.

“Have you ever shot a gun?” I ask him and watch his eyes widen. I am bored. This conversation about how I slept is boring me.

“A gun?”

I nod, “Yes, have you ever shot a gun.”

“Why are we talking about guns?”

“I am just asking. It’s dangerous out there and one may never know when they get mugged.” I say.

“Have you ever shot a gun?”

I mumble, “No.”

Our phones vibrate at the same time causing us to chuckle  
“I need to get this and I am pretty sure you need to get yours  
too.”

I excuse myself and answer the phone heading to the ladies'  
room.

Me: Miguel talk to me.

Miguel: Where are you? Get to my house as soon as you can.

Me: Okay I'll be there in fifteen minutes.

Miguel: Hurry!

Me: Is it about the meeting?

Miguel: Yeah that and more. Carlos is here, I'll explain  
everything when you get here.

I hang up and look at myself in the mirror. I look great. So this is what Mxolisi has been looking at – no wonder he’s all over me. I get back to the table.

“Mxolisi I have to go,” I say not even taking a seat.

“Yeah, me too.”

“You can come by my place later if you want,” I pick up my bag and phone. He shifts closer and cups my face then plants a kiss on my lips.

“Take care of yourself for me.”

I smile, “I always take care of myself.”

I drive to Miguel’s house. There are a lot more cars than usual parked outside his house. I guess this has to do with the meeting. I make my way to the front door and let myself in. All eyes are on me as I walk into the room – they are looking at me as if they have never seen a pretty woman in their life.

So far I have counted nine men in the room excluding Miguel. Some are white and others black. Everyone is clad in an expensive suit and has a drink in their hand.

Miguel walks up to me, “Lerato is here, we can begin.”

“I didn’t know we have a woman in the team,” some white man utters. I hate him already.

“Never seen a woman before?”

The man chuckles, “I mean no harm, princess.”

“Call me princess one more time.”

“Okay, can we focus on why we are here,” Miguel shows me to the couch where he was sitting. “Yesterday I received a message from the boss, Mr Alexander Brown. As you all know, he is no more.”

Everyone in the room gasps except me, “Who the hell is Alexander?”

The white man who dared to call me princess answers, “He was our boss.”

“So what does his death have to do with us?”

Miguel answers, “The boss sent me a text message before dying saying we should choose a new leader.”

The white man again, “I was the boss’s, right-hand man. I should be the next leader.”

“How do we know that you’re not the one who killed him to be the leader? Right-hand men are never to be trusted.”



“Lerato let us not point fingers. The boss killed himself.” – Miguel.

“How do you know that it’s not Bobby here who did it?”

“My name is Carlos and I did not kill the boss. Miguel, you know this.” – Carlos.

“I think I should be your new leader after ya’ll wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for a woman. It’s clear we run the world.”

“Bullshit, we will not be ruled by a woman. Women are weak and this bitch will just lead us to our deaths,” someone decides to voice their opinion.

I pull out the gun from my thigh holster and fire at the person without hesitating.

“Lerato!” – Miguel.

“Anyone else wants to call me a bitch?” I ask with my eyes fixed on Bobby or Carlos whatever his mother named him.

## LERATO

Everyone in the room except Carlos has their gun out and pointing to the nearest person. I don't know why people are exaggerating – the person I shot is not even hurt. It's a flesh wound. You can call me all names for what I did but if I don't show these men what I am capable of – they are going to walk all over me.

They need a leader that will make sure everyone is safe and things are running smoothly. I am capable of running this organization – even better than the dead boss.

“Gentlemen please calm down,” Bobby stands up from his chair, “I understand why Lerato did that and I think she'll make a great leader.”

Did I hear correctly? Bobby is routing for me. Miguel lowers his gun first and shoves it on his waist. So far I have Bobby's vote and my Latino friend. I know Miguel is on my side.

Everyone else lowers their gun and so do I. Two men walk into the room and take the wounded guy. Next time he will learn to mind his words.

“Would you like to take a seat, ma’am,” Bobby shows me to his chair and I take a seat, “All in favour to have Lerato as our new leader please raise your hands.”

Oh wow! Everyone in the room has their hand up including Bobby. I look at Miguel and he winks – we need to toast to this.

“Gentleman I think that will be all. You can stick around if you want and help yourself at the bar. Carlos and Lerato...a word, in private?”

I stand up from my chair and follow Miguel out of the room with Bobby behind me. I turn to look at Bobby and catch him biting his lower lip. This man better not be looking at my behind.

We get to Miguel’s study, Bobby pulls a chair for me. Can someone tell him that I like my men black – like my tea.

Miguel clears his throat, “Lerato you cannot handle this position. You are tough and all that but you think with your emotions. You can’t be our leader.”

“Didn’t you just vote for me seconds ago?”

He nods, “I did because we want them to think you're in charge”

“I don’t understand?”

Bobby speaks behind me, “We have a mole in the group. The boss, Mr Alexander was betrayed by his right-hand man and we suspect he was working with someone in the team.”

“Didn’t you say you were his right-hand man?”

Miguel answers, “The boss had three right-hand men. Carlos, John and me.”

“So since I am not fit to be the leader then who is?”

Bobby says, “Miguel would make a great leader. You can be his vice.”

“What about you – I know you want the position too.”

Miguel and Bobby laugh. These men are making me look stupid. Bobby says, “It was a front sweetie. You’re still new in the game

but don't worry you will catch up soon. In this business, you trust no one – not even your shadow.”

“I'm not new in the business.”

Miguel smiles, “He means what you've seen so far were only highlights. The fun begins now.”

Miguel's phone rings and it's Jennifer so he answers his phone exiting the room leaving me with Bobby. I turn to him, “What's your story?”

“What do you want to know?”

“How did your boss die yet you're still alive?” I ask him.

“The boss killed himself. He couldn't handle his wife's death so he took his life.”

I scoff, “That's stupid.”

“Well, love make people do the craziest things.”

“Love makes people weak,” I retort.

“Does this mean there's no man in your life?”

I chuckle, “Is this your way of finding out if there's a man in my life?”

“Is there a man in your life?”

I nod, “Yes, Quinton.”

“Sounds like a child’s name. I have never seen a grown man named Quinton.”

I roll my eyes, “There is.”

“Quinton is your son, isn’t he?”

“Do I look like I have a child to you?” I stand up from the chair and pour myself some whiskey. I can’t have the team know that I have a child. They will use me as bait whenever things get dark.

I feel Bobby’s hand touch my stomach. He’s now standing behind me. He whispers in my ear, “Lerato I know everything about you. I know about your sisters, I know about Joseph, I know about Mxolisi and if I were you I’d stay away from that guy.”

I turn to face him

Advertisement

“Why?”

“He’s trouble.”

I smirk, “I like trouble!”

“Stay away from him because we won’t be able to help you when you fall into the pit,” he takes the glass in my hand and leaves the room. What is Bobby talking about? Mxolisi looks harmless.

MXOLISI

I take a deep breath and knock on Lerato’s door. I have never liked a woman that intimidates me like Lerato. I know her actions should push me away but for some reason, I just love her.

The door opens and I feel my palms sweating as she stands before me looking like a goddess. I see she took her time to get ready – she even changed her hair and looks prettier.

“Hey!” I smile trying not to be weird as I can, “You look amazing.”

“I had to dress up for my man.”

Her man? That's new. She leads me inside the house and helps me take off my jacket.

"These are for you," I hand her the flowers.

"Thanks but I hate flowers."

She takes the flowers from my arms and disappears to the other room and comes back after about two minutes.

"Mxolisi relax, I don't bite," she chuckles and offers me a seat. I didn't realize I was still standing, "Do you want something to drink?"

I nod, "Water would be fine."

"I want to show you something first," she takes my hand and leads me out of the room and down the passage. We get into some room, surprisingly it only has a table and two chairs. Lerato pulls the chair back and asks me to sit.

She goes across the room and comes back with a laptop and some weird thing that I don't recognize. She starts connecting the thing to her laptop then come to me and says, "Trust me."

"What's going on?"



She smiles and pecks my lips then scraps something to my arms that look like those things for checking blood pressure. She does the same to my chest and stomach and also my fingers using a belt.

“Lerato what is this?”

She answers, “It’s a polygraph.”

“Why do you have a polygraph in your home?”

She opens her laptop and asks, “What’s your name?”

“You already know my name – what is this?”

“Just answer,” she utters firmly.

I sigh, “Mxolisi Majola.”

“How do you know me?”

I answer, “Through your mother – her and my mother want us to be together?”

“How did you know where I live and work?”

I bite my tongue, “Your mother told me.”

“Have you ever been to jail?”

I retort, “No.”

“Ever fired a gun?”

“No.”

She glares into my eyes, “What do you want from me?”

“I told you that I love you.”

“Are you into any shady business?” this woman.

“Lerato what is this? You don’t need a lie detector to know my intentions about you. I love you and the only thing I want from you is your love. Look at the polygraph lines– I am telling the truth.”

She sighs and holds her head, “You should stay away from me.”

“I don’t want to stay away from you. I love you, Rato. What’s going on?”

“Maybe Bobby just wanted to mess with my head,” she says, almost whispering.

“Who is Bobby?”

She stands up and unstraps me, “Let’s go and eat.”

“Aren’t you going to explain what just happened?”

She shakes her head, “No, let’s go eat.”

She leaves the room first. Where and how did she get a lie detector? My phone vibrates in my pocket and I take it out.

‘Where are you?’ the text message reads.

‘I’m not your wife, leave me alone.’

They reply, ‘See why I never call or text you. I just wanted to check how you’re doing.’

‘Besides cheating a polygraph – never been better.’

‘Wait! That’s possible?’

“Did you die in there? ” yells Lerato. I shove the phone back into my pocket and head out.

## LERATO

Dinner with Mxolisi goes well although I cannot wait for him to leave. I cannot chase him out either since I am the one who invited him. What Bobby said is bothering me. What agenda could Mxolisi have and why was Bobby looking into my life. I don't know him nor have I ever had any business with him.

What could be the reason for him to do a background check on me? Most importantly, why does he think Mxolisi is trouble? I have never met a harmless man like Mxolisi – even the polygraph proved it. Something is up with that Bobby and I don't buy their story of Alexander killing himself. I feel like Bobby had a hand in it.

Yes, I am accusing him of killing his boss after all he has more to gain. According to Miguel, Alexander lost his father to a car accident, his mother had a heart attack, his sister and niece died in a shootout then his wife shot herself – so did he. I feel like all these deaths are connected to someone and I will find out who.

I might not know this Alexander but he has been paying me good money for being part of his team. I feel like I owe it to him to find his killer.

“Are you okay? You seem distracted,” Mxolisi asks. I smile and assure him that I am fine. I don’t like Mxolisi but at the same time, I don’t want to hurt his feelings. He seems like a nice man – he could give me very beautiful babies but I feel he’s too weak for me.

I need a man that will be firm with me. I need a man that will tell me to shut the fuck up when I am talking too much. Not that I would listen but it would turn me on. I look at Mxolisi and my lips curve into a smile – he’s so handsome argh I hate that I’m about to break his heart.

“Mxo we need to talk,” I sit up with my legs folded.

“That doesn’t sound good.”

“Mxolisi you’re a nice guy...”

He interrupts me, “And she’s breaking up with me.”

“I don’t want to hurt you. You’re a great person, any woman would love to be with you.”

“Any woman but you?” he sounds hurt but it’s for the best.

“I’m sorry.”

He nods lightly, “Do you want me to leave?”

“I think it’ll be best if you did.”

He stands up and gets his jacket, “I’ll see you around.

Ngiyakuthanda uyezwa (I love you)”

He leans over and kisses my lips then walks to the door. He turns, says goodbye then leaves. I sit on the couch and hold my head why does my heart feel heavy? I don’t like this man but he’s sweet and respects me.

MXOLISI

I sigh heavily and turn on the ignition key ready to leave Lerato’s house. While reversing the car someone knocks on the

car window and I roll it down. My eyes land on the beautiful Lerato.

“Did I forget something in your house?”

She shakes her head and then says, “Please come back.”

“To your house?”

She nods, “Yes... please come back.”

I kill the engine and climb out of the car. She grabs me by my jacket and pulls me down to her level kissing me. Okay! I thought she just dumped me. She is leading the kiss and I let her. She pulls back and steps back.

“If we are going to do this then you’ll have to lose the glasses.”

I chuckle, “I need the glasses to see.”

She yanks them off my face. I don’t know why people do that, “Lerato I can see but I need my glasses.”

“Park your car back and join me in the house.”

“Yes ma’am!”

I park the car back where it was then follow Lerato into the house. I think I understand what my father meant when he

said, 'One can never understand women – they change their minds every second'

'What time are you coming to your house?' another text message.

'Don't you have better things to do?'

They text back, 'You know I sometimes question how we are related.'

'So do I

Advertisement

now leave me alone.'

'Mx come on I need a job it's been months and they are threatening to take my house,'

'Fine, I will organize something but the job is out of the country. Get your passport ready and I will send you the details.'



He replies, 'Thanks bruh I owe you my left lung.'

'Mind what you say – I could make a lot of money with your lung. And, stop texting me before I block you.'

I join Lerato in the house. She left a note on the sitting room table stating I should join her in the bedroom. Second door on the left. I wonder what she has in store for me. I slowly open the bedroom door and find her on the bed wearing red lingerie. She gets off the bed and meets me across the room.

"May I?" she reaches for my glasses and I permit her. She places them on her dressing table and then kisses me. I noticed she loves being in control and I let her. "Go down on me!" she commands. Whatever the queen wishes. I lay her on the bed and devour her as she screams my name which is giving me confidence that I should continue what I am doing. I keep going until she releases her juices. I get in between her legs and potion myself but she flips me over - getting on top and rides me like a rodeo. What am I doing to do with this woman?

I watch her lying next to me breathing heavily – there’s just something about a woman that dominates. She looks at me and says, “What are you doing tomorrow around lunch?”

“Do you have any plans for me?”

“Let’s go to the shooting range?” she utters and I wait for the punch line but she is serious.

“Why the shooting range?”

“I love it there and I want you to come with me,” she retorts.

“If that’s what you want then I’ll be there.”

She pecks my lips, “Try not to agree to everything I say – at least put up a fight first even though you’ll end up giving in.”

“Noted.”

The following day I go to work although I would have preferred to spend the day in bed with Lerato. I tried to convince her to skip work but the lady takes her job seriously. My work phone rings and I answer it.

Me: Majola!

Voice: Sir there is a Miss Lerato here looking for you.

Shit, I forgot about our date.

Me: Tell her I will be down in five minutes.

I put the phone down - grab my wallet, phone then head out. I thought she was joking about the shooting range thing. I find Lerato waiting for me by the reception.

“Your receptionist is very pretty,” she says. I didn’t know that’s how we greet each other.

“You are prettier,” I place my hands on her waist and pull her closer then kiss her.

“People are watching – I don’t want to get you fired.”

“I can never get fired – please lead the way,” we walk towards the exit and I open the door for her. She insists on us using her car. She’s going to drop me off at my workplace afterwards. She claims my work is more important since I work for someone.

We get to the shooting range, and Lerato seems familiar with the place. She's leading the way, gets us the guns, goggles even those things for the ears. The things we do for love – here I am listening to a woman tell me about guns and how I am supposed to stand or hold them.

She holds my glasses and asks me to shoot at the chart in front of us - I keep missing. She seems to be enjoying what I am missing. Another chart gets put up for her - she fires at the red circle without missing it.

“Are you sure you can see because the way you are missing,”  
Lerato laughs.

“I am that terrible, sweetie.”

She rubs my shoulder, “You'll get used to it.”

Her phone rings, “Mxo we should go,” she excuses herself answering her phone. I pick up the gun and fire at the red circle five times without missing. I throw the gun on the little table and follow Lerato out.

15

LERATO

I had to cut short my date with Mxolisi when I received a call from Quinton's school - stating that my son was talking to some white man they don't recognize. According to his teacher, Quinton states the man is his friend.

At first, I assumed it was Miguel but Quinton knows him and he would have stated that it was him. I think it is Bobby – now he's applying to be kicked in the private part. It's one thing to do a background check on me – now he's getting close with my son.

"Miguel where is he?" I storm into Miguel's office, "Where is that friend of yours?"

"What are you talking about?" clueless Miguel asks. I feel like yanking my hair off – when it comes to my son, I attack like a wild animal.

"Where's Bobby?"

Miguel looks at me for a second, looking rather confused, "Who is Bobby?"

“Your white friend, where is he?”

“You mean Carlos?” he queries, “I don’t know where he is – what happened?”

“Your friend had the nerve to go and see my son.”

“I don’t understand - why would Carlos go to see your son?” he picks up his phone and calls Bobby while I pace up and down the room. Miguel tells his friend to come to his office.

Miguel hands me a glass of whiskey, “Calm down, Rato. I am sure he meant no harm.”

“He’s not supposed to be near my son – we work together but that doesn’t make us friends. My family is off-limits.”

He exhales heavily, “Let’s hear him out first.”

“I don’t want to hear him out, I want to punch him in the throat.”

“Or you can handle this like adults – violence doesn’t solve anything,” he refills my glass.

About twenty minutes later, Bobby walks in. He is dressed the same way Quinton’s teacher described him.

“Hello, good people,” Bobby sits opposite me and it takes everything in me not to strangle him or even better shot his balls.

Miguel sighs, “Carlos did you go to see Lerato’s son?”

“Is there a problem with that?” – Bobby.

“How do you know where my son goes to school?”

“Carlos why would you go to her son. We talked about this – our families are not involved in our deals,” Miguel scolds him but that is not enough. I want to punch him.

“I was passing by and I saw her son – I didn’t know it was a big deal.” –Bobby.

“Stay away from my son and next time I won’t be so polite,” I grab my bag and exit the room. He’s lucky I have a meeting to get to – I was going to give him a piece of my mind. I will also get someone to keep an eye on Q for me. If Bobby can find him, anyone can. I couldn’t want my son getting mixed in my shady business.

“Lee wait,” Bobby holds the car door before I can close it, “I am sorry.”

“Why did you do that?”

“I meant no harm, I swear. I just wanted to see your son up close and I didn’t realize it will upset you. I apologize,” he sounds sincere but what he did is crossing the line.

“Why did you need to see my son?”

He replies, “I wanted to see the child so lucky to have you as his mother.”

“Bobby I like my men black if you’re trying to use my son to get to me then you’re doing it wrong.”

He bites his lower lip and shifts closer, “Then let me stop beating around the bush.”

“I don’t like you and I don’t get with people I work with. Now if you don’t mind

Advertisement

I have a meeting to get to.”

He nods lightly then utters, “Take care of yourself and I hope you took my advice about staying away from Mxolisi.”

“Why should I stay away from him?”



He winks and walks away. I hate being kept in the dark and these men are starting to get on my nerves. I start the car, drive out then call Zara.

Zara: Mrs Montsho!

Me: Please cancel my meeting – I cannot make it.

Zara: Boss this is one of our sponsors, can I move it to tomorrow instead?

Me: No problem.

I hand up, shove my phone in my bag and drive to the bar. I need a drink – my head is all over the place and I need to focus. Something is up with Bobby and I need to get to the bottom of it. I would ask for Miguel's help but he seems close with Bobby.

“Can I have something strong?” I sit at the bar.

Romeo answers, “Rough day?”

“Sort of – did I tell you I am now in a relationship?”

He laughs, “Who managed to tame you?”

“Do I look like the type that can be tamed?”

He hands me a glass of whiskey, “I feel for the poor guy.”

“I am not going to hurt him – he’s a sweet guy.”

He asks, “Do you like him?”

“No, but he’s good in bed.”

He laughs, “Poor guy - let me serve other customers.”

My phone rings and I groan in annoyance when I see Mxolisi’s name. I am having a rough day and I don’t have the energy for his sweetness.

Me: Mxolisi I am having a rough day. What do you want?

Mxolisi: What’s wrong – did something happen to you?

Me: Something like that. What’s up?

Mxolisi: Forget about me. What's wrong?

Me: There's this guy that I work with that went to see my son. I am not happy about it...

Mxolisi: I'm sorry – what is the guy's name?

Me: It doesn't matter.

Mxolisi: This is your son – what if something had happened to him?

Me: I got this don't worry.

\*\*\*

CARLOS

I am chilling on the couch watching soccer when a knock disturbs me. I am not expecting anyone so I ignore it. I pick up the remote and pause the game when I realize the person is not giving up.

When I open the door I am met by a face I don't recognize,  
"Who are you?"

He asks, "Are you, Carlos?"

"Yes, why?"

The man answers, "I have a delivery for you."

He punches me hard on the stomach followed by a blow to the face that sends me to the floor. Before I can utter a word he continuously kicks me on the stomach and chest until I pass out.

LERATO

From the bar I drive to Mxolisi's workplace – I don't care that he's at work. I have an itch that needs to be scratched. Plus,

they say if you want to know if your man is doing anything shady, show up at his workplace unannounced. Luckily the receptionist recognizes me from earlier and leads me to Mr Majola's office.

"Lerato!" Mxolisi hastily closes his laptop and stands up, "I didn't know you were coming."

I close the door behind me, lock it then close the blinds and walk up to him. I kiss him hungrily and he doesn't protest. He kisses me back and lifts me placing me on the table then gets between my legs and starts pounding on me – hard!

\*\*\*

"Should I look forward to random visits like this?" Mxolisi asks with his head pressed against mine as we both catch our breaths, after climaxing.

"Maybe."

He pecks my lips, "You should visit more."

"If you ask me nicely, I might."

He kneels between my legs and buries his head, "Is this enough to make you come back again."

“I don’t know – why don’t you continue maybe I might change my mind.”

God, I could get used to this. My phone vibrates on the table and I glare at the screen, ‘Carlos has been attacked. GET HERE NOW!’ – Miguel.

MXOLISI

I smile and wave Lerato goodbye. She insisted I don’t walk her out and I respect her decision. I have work to catch up on anyway. I reach under my office table, take out the listening device that Lerato placed and toss it out the window.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you guys for downloading this book from my site please keep visiting <https://novelsguru.com/> for supporting me and also don’t forget to share it with your friends.

Dear Friends please download these books direct from <https://novelsguru.com/> bookmark this site for latest African books, and also supporting me Thanks.

\*\*\*\*\*

## LERATO

From Mxolisi's office, I drive to Miguel's house. Armed men are surrounding his house. Bobby gets attacked and he doubles security at his house, how fancy. I wish I would meet the person who roughed up Bobby and shake their hand. This white man is an annoying fly – in fact, I wish they had killed him.

I walk into Miguel's house and find him sitting on the couch with Bobby who is holding an ice pack to his face. I see the person forgot to kick him in the balls.

"Hey, Miguel." I make myself comfortable on the couch,  
"Bobby!"

"What took you so long?" – Miguel.

"I have a life and you can't just summon me as you please. What happened to him?" I tilt my head towards Bobby.

Miguel answers, "I was hoping maybe you have the answer since you two have beef going on."

“If it was me he would be dead and I don’t need anyone to do my shady business for me. If I wanted to rough him up – I would have done it myself.”

Miguel looks at Bobby and says, “Told you it’s not her.”

Bobby removes the ice pack off his face. Man, they rearranged his face. He looks blue, green and yellow, “I never said it was her. I think someone is after us.”

“Who is us? Don’t put us in your business – someone is after you, not us.”

“I think Bobby is right. See, Lerato now you making me call him Bobby. I think Carlos is right – maybe someone is after us. Mr Alexander’s Will has not been found and maybe the person is after Carlos because of Xander’s money. The boss was a wealthy man. Him and his family dying means there are millions of rands just lying somewhere and we don’t even know who has access to the money.” – Miguel.

I answer, “What do you care if there are millions out there? It’s not your money and if your boss didn’t leave the money in your names then maybe he didn’t trust you. And, why Bobby?”



Bobby says, "I was there the day the boss died. His other right-hand man, Johnny betrayed him and he asked me to help."

"Why did this Johnny turn on his boss?"

Bobby shrugs, "I never got to find out since the boss died."

"But this Johnny guy has to have been working with someone. There's no way he just took down the boss in one night."

Bobby shakes his head, "I don't know."

"We need to find out who is behind Carlos being attacked and soon." – Miguel.

"I will look into it – after all, you can't send a man to do a woman's job."

"Just don't sleep with people that might get you in trouble," Miguel warns.

"I can sleep with whoever I want, I am not using anyone's cookie." I stand up from the couch and then turn to Bobby, "Although I wish they had killed you, take care of yourself."

"Same goes with you, with that man you're sleeping with," – Bobby.

"What is your problem with my man?"

"I didn't know you were seeing someone," – Miguel.

“He’s seeing that loan processer. That man is too clean and I can bet my life he’s hiding something,” Bobby tells.

“What is wrong with a man living an honest life? Mxolisi is an example that there are still good men who live an honest life.”

“He’s too clean and for someone who is into shady business you should know this,” – Bobby.

“I can take care of myself, Bobby. Thank you for worrying now if you’d excuse me. I have bad guys to chase

” I pick up my bag and head out.

I head to my car and drive off to my workplace. I hardly got any work done today and it’s unlike me. I get to my office and test the listening device I put in Mxolisi’s office but it is not working. Could it be that I did not put it correctly? I will have to plant another one in his house maybe. As much as I trust him I need to know what I am dealing with.

Someone knocks on the door and then lets themselves in. Zara hands me a yellow envelope, “This just came in for you.”

“Thank you and you look amazing today.” She looks different but that shirt is too tight. I said to wear her size not wear something she won’t be able to walk in.

“Thanks, I bought it...”

I interrupt her, “I don’t care, get out I have work to do.”

“You don’t have to be a bitch about it,” she mumbles heading to the door. I let it slide because she would hang herself if I was to give her a piece of my mind.

The door opens again and I answer without looking, “Zara I told you to leave me alone.”

“It’s me,” a male voice utters and I lift my eyes only for them to land on my baby daddy. I see he came back for more.

“Hey, Jojo!”

“I think we started on the wrong foot. I apologize for what I did but I swear I lost your contact,” he sits opposite me.

“Joseph I am not the naïve girl I used to be ten years ago.”

“I am not trying to fool you,” he tells.

“You are because you want my money. I know about your debt, I know about Mphoe and your kids, Mr Joseph Gwala.”

He swallows hard, “I was going to tell you.”

“Oh cut the crap... but you know I am a very nice person so I am going to help you clear off your debt.”

He asks, "What's the catch?"

"I want a pound of flesh from your body."

He stutters, "A pound of flesh?"

"I am kidding but I need you to deliver something for me in Tanzania."

He nods, "I can do that. What is it?"

"Drugs."

His eyes widen, "How am I supposed to cross the border with them?"

"You swallow them, Jojo. I am sure you can swallow a few packets of drugs for 50k."

He nods, "I'll do it."

"I will call you tomorrow, now leave my office."

I continue with work – I know swallowing stuff is dangerous but he has no choice. It's better to earn the money than to try and trick me. Not that he would have succeeded. I have a lot of work to catch up on and people just keep disturbing me.

The yellow envelope that Zara brought in has all the information I need on Alexander and I did a little research on Mxolisi. I want to see what Bobby is talking about – I am not the type that ignores the red flags. If I happen to notice something off about Mxolisi I will cut him off immediately.

“It’s knocking off time – let’s go home,” Mxolisi walks into my office. Why won’t people leave me alone today? It’s five past five pm and everyone is preparing to leave. I wonder what time Mxolisi left his workplace

“I can’t, I still have a lot of work to take care of.”

He closes my laptop, “I am not asking you, let’s go.”

“Don’t command me.”

He smiles, “Please Miss Lerato Montsho rest your body and resume tomorrow?”

“Since you asked nicely.”

I stand up and notice Zara talking to Shade. That man thinks I am in a relationship with him and I cannot let him see Mxolisi.

“Mxolisi help yourself to some whiskey I’ll be back,” I close the blinds and shut the door behind me. What is it with these men

and showing up unannounced? I need to make Shade leave before he picks a fight with Mxolisi.

## MXOLISI

I sit on Lerato's chair and open her laptop. It has a password but that has never stopped me. Two minutes later I am in and transferring all the data I need on my USB. I open my briefcase and take out a yellow envelope and replace it with the one on her desk.

"What are you doing on my laptop?" Lerato asks now standing by the door. I turn the laptop around and she smiles, "Why are you going through my photos?"

"I wanted to see my woman."

She whispers, "I have nudes in there."

"I was hoping to find one."

She sits on my lap and asks, "Who are you exactly?"

17

MXOLISI

Lerato sits on my lap and asks, “Who are you exactly?”

“Are you asking for my name again?”

“Never mind, do you want to go for drinks? My place, my treat,” she offers. I can never say no to a pretty lady like her. She stands up first then I do the same. I wait for her to pack up her stuff then we head out. Again, she insists on us using her car but lets me drive it.

I drive us to her place. I have noticed that her son is never around when I get invited I wonder if he’ll be around today. Maybe she’s not ready to introduce me to her son. The drive to her place is quiet – too quiet if I may say.

Lerato loves music and today she’s just quiet as if she’s in deep thoughts. I gently squeeze her hand and utter, “Are you okay?”

She smiles, “Yeah...you?”

“I am good as long as I am around you.”

She smiles again, lightly nodding. Something is a little off. Lerato isn't the type that shuts up and right now she's quiet and it's bothering me.

"How was your day?" I ask her and she chuckles.

"I spent most of my day with you. The shooting range, the shagging in your office."

The shagging in my office is the best part of my day. She forgot the part where she planted a listening device in my office and did a background check on me. Luckily someone tipped me about this but it was too late since the file had already been delivered to Lerato. I am glad I managed to get my hands on it before she can open it.

Not that I want to hide from Lerato but I love our relationship as it is and I would love it to stay like that. I like Lerato and digging into each other's lives will just ruin our relationship.

By the time we get to Lerato's house, it is dark outside. I park her car where I had parked mine yesterday. My phone vibrates and I look at Lerato who is climbing out of the car.

"You'll find me in the house – don't be long."



I answer, "Does this mean you have another surprise for me?"

"No, but we can figure it out once you're in."

I wink at her and watch her walk toward the door then answer my ringing phone.

Me: I said don't call me!

Voice: I am ready, what's the job?

Me: Didn't you get the part where I said I will call you when everything is ready?

Voice: Brother they are going to kill me – please I need this job. They gave me until tomorrow to pay their money.

Me: Is it me or everyone in our family is in debt?

Voice: Are you helping me or not?

Me: Fine, someone will come to your house in the next ten minutes and don't screw this up.

Voice: I won't!

Me: Your life depends on it so you better not mess up.

Voice: What about my money?

Me: I paid the debt last night – deliver your end of the deal.

Voice: Thank you, I owe you one.

Me: You do!

I hang up and take my briefcase. Just like Lerato I also brought listening devices. I put it behind her rear mirror. There's no way she'll notice it – not even when cleaning the car. I take my briefcase, phone and then follow Lerato into the house.

She changed her clothes and tied her weave up. Tying her hair up means no sex – women love letting their hair down during sex. I do a quick scan of the room and we are alone. The house lights were also off when we got here meaning her helper and Quinton are not around.

I toss my briefcase on the couch and walk to her. She's standing by the kitchen door – the door that divides the sitting room and the kitchen. She has a glass of some sort of alcohol in one hand and she's carrying the bottle with the other. That is not good either. She changed her leather skirt to a flared dress – one can easily hide something under those.

I stand in front of her and try to take the bottle from her hand but she holds on to it tighter.

“Come on I'll just take a sip.”

She shakes her hand and whispers in my ear

“I need you sober for this.”

“Yet you're drinking?”

“I can do whatever I want,” she walks into the kitchen and I stay by the door. She gulps down the remaining alcohol in the glass and then places it on the table along with the bottle.

She turns to face me and beams widely. Something is off – Lerato doesn't smile this much. She always has her resting bitch face on and hits the pin in the head. If she wanted us to shag, we'd both be naked as I speak.

She sits on the table and asks me to join her. I walk to her, stand in between her legs and glare into her eyes. I try to reach for her thighs but she locks her hands with mine. I need to check if there isn't anything underneath that dress. She leans over and kisses me.

She runs her hands on my waist and now I am convinced she's up to something. But, I go with the flow and her kissing me is distracting me. I open my eyes when her hands stop touching me and hold her hand before she can smash the glass in my head. When did she pick the glass up?

“What are you doing?”

She winks and picks up the bottle with her other hand. I hold it too before she can smash it on my head and quickly shift away from her. She placed the glass and bottle back on the table and asks, "Do I look that stupid to you?"

"What do you mean?" I play dumb because that line could mean two things. One, she knows or two, she's fishing out information.

I shift backwards as she walks toward me, "Did you seriously think I wouldn't find out?"

"What are you talking about?"

She kicks me hard on the stomach and I kneel catching my breath - a knee to the face follows. Fuck she aimed for my nose, I can feel the warm liquid coming out of my nose.

"Don't dirty my floor," she throws the dishtowel at me and pulls out a gun. I knew there was something underneath that dress.

"Lerato calm down," I cough with the dishtowel pressed to my bleeding nose. Man does this woman know how to throw a kick.

“Is this a game to you? You thought why not go for Lerato the single mother who has been single since Jesus left.”

“No,” I cough again. Shit, I think something is in the wrong place in my stomach, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Stop lying to me. Did you think I wouldn’t find the listening device you put in the present you sent me?”

“What listening device are you...” before I can finish my sentence another blow to the face hits me and this time she did it with the gun. I hastily grab her arm and twist it behind her back taking the gun from her hand. My nose is still bleeding but this woman won’t stop throwing punches, “Lerato calm down.”

She kicks my leg causing me to lose balance and uses that opportunity to break loose and pulls out another gun.

“Lerato I don’t want to hurt you!” I point the gun at her and she does the same, cocking it.

18

(unedited)

MXOLISI

“Lerato calm down and hand me the gun,” I say not taking my eyes off her. I don’t trust her one bit. She’s capable of shooting me without hesitating, “Lerato can we handle this like grown adults?”

“Yet you have a gun pointed at me. It didn’t look like you were handling the matter like an adult when you put that listening device on me and when you used my mother to get to me.”

I sigh, still pointing the gun at her, “Our parents arranged this, I swear.”

“You’re lying to me – you used my mother to get to me. Do you even love me?”

I reply, “I do love you.”

“I don’t believe you and if you don’t lower your gun in the next five seconds, your family will mourn you.”

“I don’t want to hurt you, Rato!” I warn her.

She kicks the gun off my hand and catches it, now she has two guns pointing at me. "Let's quit it with the threats, shall we?" she shoots next to me, more like a warning shot.

"Who do you work for?"

I reply, "I work at the bank, you know this."

She shoots at my legs, another warning shot - causing me to dump, "Next time it'll be your head and don't you dare lie to me. I know that you cheated the polygraph and I know that you took some information from my laptop."

I shake my head, "I didn't take anything from your laptop."

"My laptop has a password yet you managed to open it. To think I stood up for you yet you're just a man on a mission. Now tell me who you work for before I blow your brains out."

"I told you I work for the bank!"

She attempts to throw a punch but I hold her hand, twist it again and grab the gun from her hand and throw it across the room. She tries to hit me with the gun in her other hand but I



hold it too. At the end of the day, she's a woman and there's no way she can overpower me. I pin both her arms behind her back taking the gun.

I press the gun to her head, "I said calm down."

"You calm down," she elbows me hard on the stomach and breaks loose.

"Why are you so stubborn? At least let me explain."

She shakes her head, "I don't want your explanation. You play me and you get stitches sweetheart. I don't take betrayal lightly."

"So what do you want to do, fight me?"

She scoffs, "We both know I can kick your ass."

I toss the gun across the room. I have been taking it easy on her, maybe one slap will knock some sense into her. But again, I can't hit a woman. If I was to lay hands on her I would hurt her.

"I am not the bad guy, Rato," I walk up to the sink and wash my face.

"What do you want from me? Why are you planting listening devices on me?"

I pull the chair and sit. Lerato still hasn't moved from her position

Advertisement

"You also planted a listening device in your office."

"That was after Bobby warned me about you."

"Who is Bobby?" I ask her.

"Carlos!"

"Oh, I didn't know his name is Bobby," I pull the chair for her,  
"Please sit."

She looks at the guns across the room then at me. She walks to the chair and pulls it further away from me, "I'm listening."

I exhale heavily, "I don't work for anyone – I am my boss. The bank is just a front. The listening devices I planted on you were not to spy on you but to protect you. As you know Mr Alexander Brown had three handlers who are John, Miguel and Carlos. Until this day no one knows who Johnny was working with."

"It still doesn't answer my question. Who are you?"

“Alexander was my brother, half-brother. My father went around making anyone with a vagina pregnant,” I retort.

“How come you have different surnames?”

I reply, “I am using my mother’s surname.”

“What do you want from me then?”

“When my brother was still alive I was in charge of handling his money. My job was to make sure the money is clean and that everyone is paid on time. That’s why I work at the bank. I know you’re wondering why no one knows I exist – I kept out of the team that way I won’t be a target and if something was to happen to my brother no one would know where his money is.”  
I explain.

“You said you don’t work for anyone – sound like you worked for your brother.”

I shake my head, “I worked with my brother. We were in it 50/50.”

“Still all this has nothing to do with me.”

“You work with Miguel and Miguel worked for Alex. You bring a lot of money to the business so Alex took a liking in you. Alex

wanted to come clean after getting married and hand down the business to you,” I tell.

“But he died before doing that, right?”

“Not really. He had signed everything over to you – all that was needed was your signature and a meeting with you,” I retort.

“Alexander didn’t know me. Why would he want to hand down the business to me?”

I ask, “Lerato you always manage to smuggle drugs worth a million rands in one trip, why wouldn't he want you handling his business.”

“Yeah, I am that good.”

“Exactly the reason why Alex took a liking in you. With that mindset we could make billions,” I say.

“How do I know you’re not lying to me?”

I answer, “I can call the lawyer and let him explain everything to you.”

“What about you, why are you not interested in all this wealth and what do you mean the listening devices were to protect me?”

“Carlos is after the money. When Alexander died he went on a mission to look for the money. Carlos and Alexander were close so he knows that there are billions of rands lying somewhere.”  
– me.

Lerato reaches for the bottle of alcohol on the table and I keep my eyes on her hand in case she decided to smash it on my head. She drinks from the bottle. “You said the listening devices were to protect me – I still don’t get that part.”

“Carlos knows that Alexander signed the business to you and I haven’t figured out his intentions but I just wanted to make sure you’re safe.”

“Why?” she asks.

“Didn’t you hear me when I said I love you?”

She chuckles, “You’ve been lying to me yet claiming to love me?”

“Honestly, the plan was never to fall in love with you. Remember in the business we don’t use our real names, I never knew it was the same Lerato until we had slept together. I wanted to stay away from you but I couldn’t.”

“So how long were you planning on hiding your identity from me?” she drinks from the bottle again but this time hands the bottle to me.

“Honestly, as long as I could. I loved that we had a normal relationship.”

She laughs, “You call that a normal relationship?”

“I love us and I hope we can still date.”

She shakes her head, “I don’t want you.”

“Ahhh, I forgot I am too weak for you and you want a man that will tell you to shut up and you obey?”

She laughs, “You are too soft for me.”

“I can be rough if I want to.”

“I am not interested and clean your blood from my floor,” she stands up and exits the room picking up her guns.

## LERATO

It's a little hard to believe anything Mxolisi said. I have been in this business long enough to not trust anyone. I never knew about this Alexander so it's hard to believe that he wanted to pass down the business to me. But if it's true then I don't blame Alex for wanting me to take over.

I have proven that I can run this thing and I bring more money compared to anyone we work with. The only problem right now is Mxolisi – what if he's playing me? What if he's using Alex's name to make me throw down my guard. I hope I get all the answers I need in that yellow envelope.

I am in the shower hoping the hot water would boil burn the anger rising in me. I feel like punching Mxolisi again – I hate people who play me. I don't care whether he was trying to protect me. I don't need protection. He was supposed to confront me as any normal person would.

The shower water stops running, “Are you trying to burn yourself.”

Mxolisi is in the shower, naked. “Why are you here?”

“We are bathing. I need some hot water to soothe my skin isn’t you kicked the liver out of my stomach.”

I turn to face him and place my hands on his chest, “Again why didn’t I shoot you in the head?”

He smirks, placing his hand on my lower back and pulling me closer pressing me against his body, “Because you like me.”

I glare into his eyes and do not breathe out a word. I still don’t trust him but right now we are both naked in my bathroom. He smiles at me and it takes me back to the day I first met him – Mxolisi is tall, dark and handsome. Him turning out to be a bad boy is kind of a turn on. I repeat – I don’t like him. But, he gives it to me good and right now my clit is throbbing hard I feel like my heart is beating in the wrong place.

I swallow hard and wait for him to make the first move. Instead, he asks, “Are we not going to bathing?”



I clear my throat and take the sponge then squeeze some gel into it. Mxolisi takes the sponge from my hands and I don't protest.

I find it hard to argue naked and I have never bathed with a man in my life. Mxolisi opens the shower and lets the water run on my back then closes it. I bit my lower lip when I feel his lips on the back of my neck – this man is fulfilling my wildest dreams. I have always wanted to do it in the shower, like in the movies.

The men I always get with never satisfy me enough to want to take it to the shower. Then I meet Mr Majola – tall, dark and handsome yet knows how to lay down the pipe and he's a bad boy. I take back everything I said about him.

Mxolisi rubs the sponge on my back going downwards then brings it to my stomach going upwards. Argh. What is he doing to me? I tilt my head back when he rubs the sponge on my breasts with one hand while the other goes down to my cookie. A man that knows how to find the clitoris, Lord have mercy!

He whispers in my ear, “How do you know how to kick like that?”

“I am a single mother who works with dangerous men – figure it out.”

He bites my ear

“I need a rematch at the shooting range.”

“Who said we are going to see each other again?”

“So you’re telling me that this is the end?” he asks rubbing my clit.

I suck in some air and answer, “Yeah.”

“So we won’t be able to do this anymore?”

I nod, “Yup!”

“I want more, Rato. I can make you happy – I can take care of you.”

“I can take care of myself, I don’t need a man in my life.” I retort.

“Why not? Who will cater for your sexual needs?”

I bite my lower lip and close my eyes as I am almost close to climaxing. He gets the message and keeps doing what he’s

doing until I release my juices on his hand. How I wish all men were here to take notes.

When we say we are close we don't mean change your pace – we mean to keep doing what you're doing.

“Can you do that on your own?” Mxolisi murmurs.

“I can always get you to do it for me.” I turn on the shower tap and let the water run over my body then get out leaving Mxolisi and ignoring his boner. I don't care what he does with himself – I am good on my side.

I dry myself walking to the bedroom and take off my shower cap. I check my phone that is on the charger next to the bed - I have a missed call from my little man. I call him back.

Me: Hey, Q!

Quinton: Mama I miss you.

Me: I'll come to get you tomorrow.

Quinton: That's what you said yesterday.

Me: I know it's just that I had some work to take care of. I promise tomorrow I will come to get you and Mazvita.

Quinton: Granddad won't let me watch cartoons. He's always watching the news.

Me: (laughing) I'm sorry little man but don't worry tomorrow by this time you'll be watching Henry Danger.

I jump when I feel hands on my stomach. I forgot Mxolisi is in the house – funny not long ago we were pointing guns at each other. He snatches the phone from my hands and starts talking.

“Mxolisi don't talk to my son.”

He puts the phone on speaker and locks me in his arms.

Mxolisi: Hey, Quinton!

Quinton: Who are you?

Mxolisi: Your daddy (he covers my mouth with his hand) you'll see me tomorrow, okay?

Quinton: Mom!

I bite Mxolisi's hand and he lets go of me. I pick up the phone and hang up, "Why would you say that?"

"Am I not his new daddy?"

I feel like strangling him. I don't want to confuse my son. Quinton knows that his father left. I walk away from Mxolisi but he pulls the towel off me. I liked him better when he was less annoying.

"Are you mad?" he asks and I click my tongue. He shifts closer and also drops his towel. "Why don't we let Majola apologize to you?"

“Leave me alone.”

He presses his body against mine and squeezes my behind causing me to chuckle, “I’m sorry.” he says

I don’t respond. He shifts my chin up causing me to face him and gently kisses me. His one hand is on my behind while the other is fondling my breast.

He lifts me, letting me wrap my legs around his waist and gently places me on the bed. We go back to kissing as he rubs his manhood on my clitoris.

“Protection,” I whisper.

“I’ll pull out.”

“No, I have protection in my drawer.” I push him off me. He groans in annoyance and takes the condom. I am on the pill but I can’t risk it and I don’t want STIs or STDs.

I stand up from the bed and push him to the bed getting on top and kissing him. He flips me over and takes me from behind. I noticed today he’s in charge. He holds on to my hair as he gives me deep strokes. Who is this man? I’m starting to think Mxolisi

has a twin brother. This man here is flipping me like meat on the braai stand. What happened to the gentle Mxolisi?

He spanks my behind causing me to giggle as he pounds on me and asks, "Are we taking Carlos down or do you want to sit this one out?"

"Who is we? I don't work with you."

He flips me over putting me in the missionary position, "Why are you like this?"

"I take orders from no one – if we are going to do this then we do it my way."

## MXOLISI

I wake up to an empty bed. I sit up and rub the sleep off my eyes then reach for my phone. It's past eight am. I look across the room and my eyes land on Lerato who is sitting in front of the mirror powdering her face – whatever it is ladies do.

I attempt to get out of bed but notice that I am in my bathing suit, “Where are my clothes?”

Lerato shrugs and continues with what she's doing. I swear my clothes were on the floor when I went to sleep.

“You didn't wake me up?”

She answers, “I thought you were going to wake up the same way you do every morning.”

“But except I'm not in my house.”

“That's not my problem,” she stands up from the chair and puts on her black stilettos. She's wearing grey slack pants with a white blouse.



She walks up to the fitted wardrobe and pulls out something that she throws at me and also throws a t-shirt, “Get dressed, I need to lock my house before I go.”

“Whose clothes are these?”

“I don’t know,” she picks up her handbag and laptop bag and then waits for me to finish getting dressed. The clothes are tight but I have no choice since I cannot find my clothes.

I didn’t bring my car so Lerato is dropping me off at my place – at least she’s generous to do so. The drive to my place is quiet and Lerato is hard to read. One can never know what’s on her mind. One moment she’s punching me the next she wants me to ‘go faster’ – I don’t know why she’s playing hard to get. I know for a fact that she feels the same way I do.

She just hates being dominated but I know she feels the same, “So my clothes just disappeared into thin air, in your house?”

“I threw them away. Your shirt had blood on it. We wouldn’t want people to think I tried to kill you, don’t we?”

I scoff, “Didn’t you?”

“You’ll be dead if I wanted you dead.”

Lerato parks the car outside my house but I insist she drives in. After a lot of convincing, she agrees. I find my brother whom we share a mother and the same person who is supposed to be on his way to Zambia, sitting on the couch.

“Siya why are you here?”

“What are you wearing?” that's the first thing he says.

The clothes Lerato gave me are tight. If I bend these trousers will tear. Siyabonga (my brother) shifts his attention to Lerato and asks “And who is this gorgeous thing?”

Lerato flashes a smile, I can tell she's faking it. She greets Siya and tells me that she has to leave.

“Am I going to see you tonight?” I ask her and she shakes her head mentioning spending time with her son then leaves.

“She's pretty,” Siya watches Lerato through the window until she drives off.

“Why aren't you on your way to Zambia?”

He answers, “The person you said was going to call me didn't call.”

“What? Let me call him,” I head to my room and put the phone on the charger then change to my clothes and call Denise.

Me: Why wasn't the merchandise delivered?

Denise: The buyer cancelled the deal. He claims to have gotten a better offer somewhere.

Me: (Furious) So you let our buyer go? Why didn't you give him a better offer than what he had received?

Denise: I tried boss but he insisted on going to Tanzania where he'd meet the new supplier.

Me: Who is this new supplier?

Denise: Some lady that goes by the name Lady Lee. I tried looking into her but everyone knows her as Lady Lee and warned me not to dip deeper.

Me: I'll call you when I need you.

I hang up and harshly throw my phone on the bed. Lady Lee is Lerato. That's the name she is using in the game. Even Alexander referred to her as Lady Lee. How did she know about this deal?

I take off my clothes and jump into the shower. Lerato wouldn't let me bathe at her house. I bathe and join Siya in the sitting room.

"So who is that woman you were with?"

"That's my woman, Lerato," I retort.

"Larato as in Mr Montsho's daughter? Mother should also arrange a relationship for me too and I thought you didn't like her?"

"Why don't you just mind your business and be grateful that I cleared your debt," I take my car keys that are on the table. I asked one of my workers to take the car home last night.

"Thanks, brother. And, if you don't like Lerato can I have her?"

“Siyabonga I never said I don’t like her. She’s my woman and I wouldn’t be with her if I didn’t like her.”

LERATO

“One more packet Jojo,” I hand him the packet. He’s kneeling with his face buried in a bucket

Advertisement

gagging. He’s sweating bullets but everything has a prize. He has managed to swallow forty small packets of drugs and I just need him to swallow one more. Yes, this is dangerous and he could lose his life but that’s a risk I am willing to take. He hasn’t eaten anything for the past 24hours but we gave him something so that he doesn’t pass out.

Joseph shakes his head, “I can’t take it – I am sorry.”

“Just try, I promise to add an extra ten thousand.”

He takes the packet from my hand and sighs heavily before shoving it in his mouth. He gags a couple of times but finally manages to swallow it.

I shift away from Joseph and yell, “Okay team let’s move before he loses his shit. Zipho get the jet ready and I need this man in Tanzania as soon as yesterday. Richard, please help Joseph to the jet.”

I stand with my back against the wall watching everyone run around like crazy. I have to make sure the merchandise is in Tanzania by this time tomorrow.

‘Mama I am still waiting.’ – Quinton

‘I am on my way, baby. I am stuck in traffic.’

I check the time and it’s just after ten am. I walk to the jet and find Joseph sitting on his seat looking like he’s going to breathe his last breath at any moment. He’s just hungry but they will take care of him on the Tanzanian side. I have a team waiting for him at the airport.

I kneel next to his seat, “Are you okay?”

“Is this punishment for what I did?”

I chuckle, “It’s just business Jojo and I wouldn’t let anything happen to the father of my child.” He almost vomits but covers his mouth, “Hey, hey don’t lose the merchandise.”

“We have a child?”

I pat his shoulder, “Try not to die and I will tell you everything.”

I head towards the door, “Zipho keep an eye on him and call me when he dies.”

She laughs, "Did you have to make him take so many packets?"

“He’ll be strong.”

ZARA

Another boring day at the office. My boyfriend is sick so he did not make it today. Did he have to get sick today of all days? Today the ice queen is not around and we could be making out in the bathroom if Bonginkosi was around.

“The beautiful Zara!” Melusi sits on my desk placing a cup of coffee in front of me, “How are you today?”

“I am good but I wish Bonginkosi was here.”

“I am just happy lucifer is not here,” he says and someone chuckles behind him causing him to jump off the table. I recognize the man from yesterday. He’s one of Lerato’s acquaintances that look like they just stepped out of an erotic novel.

Melusi quickly leaves and I stand greeting the man. He stretches his hand to me and I do the same. Instead of shaking my hand, he kisses it. Is that even allowed?

“Zara, right?” Lord his deep voice. I nod vigorously, “Can we talk, in private?”

I swallow hard and stare at him. He takes my hand and leads me to Lerato’s office. The blinds are down so no one will see us – not that we are hiding.

“Mr Majola, right?” That’s what Lerato referred to him.

He places his hand on my chin making me face him, “I need a favour from you,” he whispers in my ear and I gasp.

“But Lerato will...”

He shuts me up with a kiss, “Forget Lerato.”



## LERATO

I'm in the car with Quinton and Mazvita listening to Quinton go on about what a great time he had at his grandmother's place. Quinton can talk all day and not get tired – I think he inherited it from his father's side. No one talks as much as he does on my side of the family. He's telling me every single little detail that happened at his grandmother's house even the visitors that came in – along with what they said.

I haven't had any feedback about Joseph and that means everything is going great. If something was wrong Richard would have updated me. I drop Mazvita and Quinton at the house and then drive to work. I haven't been to work today – I had important things to take care of.

People start running around as soon as I walk into the building. I am sure they thought I wasn't coming in and spent the day lazing around.

“Hey, Zara!”

She drops the papers in her hands. This girl is very clumsy and the only reason I haven't fired her is that she does her work perfectly. Besides being annoying she's a nice kid and there's so much potential in her. I believe one day she can open her fashion line. I have seen the designs she sketches in her free time – she is good. She just needs to toughen up and go for what she wants.

“Mrs Montsho!” she stutters picking up her papers with some still falling out of her hands while she's picking other papers, “I didn't know you were coming?”

“You didn't know that I wasn't coming either – any messages for me?”

She clears her throat letting the papers in her hand fall out. She picks up her diary, “Quinton's school called – they want to see you. Mr Miguel said stating that he can't reach you on your cellphone and that you should call him ASAP. And, Mr Majola is in your office.”

“Are you okay? You look a little shaken and what are those papers?”

She shifts away before I can touch the paper in her hand, “It’s nothing, I want to print some things and I am sorry for doing it at work.”

“Why are you so jumpy today?”

She chuckles nervously, throws her diary on the table and continues picking her papers, “I am always jumpy.”

“Can you move that meeting at four with Jessie to three pm? I want to knock off early.”

She nods vigorously, chuckling while at it, “Yes, boss.”

“You are being very weird today.”

I walk to my office and find Mxolisi sitting in my chair. Doesn’t he have things to do? I am not in the mood for him today. I sit opposite him and cross my legs, “Mr Majola or must I say Mr Brown. To what do I owe this visit?”

“Come on I thought we are together now?”

I lean back on the chair, not taking my eyes off his and say, “In your dreams.”

“Lerato I know you like me – you just don’t want to admit it.”

I roll my eyes, “Shouldn’t you be at work?”

“Says the woman who just showed up at her workplace at two pm?”

I clear my throat and fix my blouse, “I am pretty sure you heard the part where you mentioned that this is my workplace. I own this meaning I can do whatever the hell I want. Now

Advertisement

why are you here?”

“Are you taking over the business that Alex left for you?”

I answer without hesitating, “I thought about it and I’m going to pass.”

“Why? This is a great opportunity – you could be the boss.”

“I am already the boss. Why don’t you take the opportunity after all you’re a great candidate? Alexander was your brother and I think it’ll be fair that you take over his business.”

He frowns but quickly hides it with a smile, “I am pretty sure he wanted you to run his empire. I can’t go against his wishes.”

“Too bad he died before telling me and I don’t want to run the business.”

He exhales heavily, “If that’s what you want. Am I going to see you tonight?”

“No, I will be with my son and I have work to catch up to.”

He nods lightly and gets up from my chair, “I’ll get going then,” he walks to me and kisses me on the lips, “I’ll pick you up after work.”

“That would be great, thanks.”

He walks to the door and I stop him before he walks out and throw the listening device that was in my car. I guess he planted it before our outburst.

My phone rings

Me: Richard is everything okay?

Richard: Yes, I heard someone is trying to hijack our client but we managed to secure the deal.

Me: Who wants to take our client?

Richard: He goes by the name M.M

Me: (sighs) I'll take care of it. How is our carrier?

Richard: (laughs) Zipho told me he'll survive – poor man.

Me: Tell her to keep a close eye on him and give him another dose so that he doesn't pass out.

Richard: I think she gave it to him just now. That's why I was calling you but he'll make it.

Me: Call me if anything changes.

I hang up and toss the phone on the table. I have a feeling that Mxolisi is going to be trouble in my life. I take the yellow envelope I received the other day and go through it. Something is a little off.

'Richard can you resend the information I asked for yesterday – please send it a portable document file (pdf)' I send the text message

MXOLISI

I park the car on the side of the road and another car parks next to mine. The window rolls down.

"She's not buying it," I tell the person in the other car.

"Then you need to try harder. We need her on our side – convince her that you love her and get her on our side."

I reply, "I do love her."

"Then it shouldn't be hard – we are running out of time get on with it already."

I sigh heavily, "Lerato isn't the easiest to handle you know. That woman is smart – she even managed to steal Diamond from us."

"Are you telling me that the merchandise was not delivered?"

I nod lightly, “She managed to change the buyer's mind and made him take her deal.”

“More reason to want her on our team. I tried to get through Miguel too but he won't barge either. Please try to get to Lerato, she's our only option.”

“I am on it,” I roll up the window and wait for the other car to drive away. I call Zara.

Me: Beautiful Zara, have you thought about what we talked about?

Zara: Sir I can't do it I am sorry.

Me: You could make a lot of money Zara – think about it.

Zara: But sir you're putting me in a very tough spot.

Me: I am not even asking for much. You can do this and earn yourself ten thousand rands.



Zara: What if the boss finds out? I could lose my job.

Me: She won't find out – if you lose your job I will get you a better job. Even better, you could run your own fashion house.

Zara: (Sighs) When do you want me to do it?

Me: Today.

Zara: Okay.

## LERATO

I stand up from my chair and walk to the tiny table where I keep my whiskey and pour myself a glass. I opened the portable file document Richard sent me and I can't believe what I read. I am aware of how dangerous my line of work is but I never realized things were this deep.

I have never been scared in my life and right now I am. I am scared for my son and my family – I have a feeling things are going to get ugly starting today. It all started as beef between two families and now it's deeper than that.

Pouring whiskey into the glass seems to be a lot of work so I drink from the bottle. I am shaking. I check the time on my wristwatch and it's twenty minutes to three pm. I have a meeting with an important client but the client has to wait.

I pack my staff and get ready to leave. I try calling Miguel but his phone is not going through. I think this is why he has been trying to get hold of me. I call Jennifer.

Me: Jenny, thank God! How are you?

Jen: I am good but Miguel asked me to get to the safe house and that it's urgent. What's going on?

Me: It's a long story – where are you?

Jen: On my way to pick up the kids then go to the safe house.

Me: Go to the safe house. The kids attend the same school as Quinton - I will pick them up.

Jen: Lerato what's going on?

Me: I will explain everything when I get there.

I hang up and get everything that I need and rush out. “Zara I’m leaving you are in charge.” I storm by her desk and she follows me.

“Are you leaving? What about the meeting you asked me to shift to three pm?”

I reply, “Tell Bonginkosi to step in for me.”

“But boss he’s not around.”

I hold her by her shoulders glaring into her eyes, “I am leaving you in charge meaning you are the boss. Make sure everything goes well.”

“Mrs Montsho I...”

I yell, “I said handle everything, Zara!”

“Yes, boss.”

I rush out and go to my car but I need petrol so I pass by the gas station and there’s a queue.

ZARA

I take out my phone and call Mxolisi as soon as Lerato leaves. My hands are shaking and sweaty – I hate what I am doing but I could use the money. Lerato has been very nice to me but she's also been a bitch.

Mxo: Any good news for me?

Me: Mrs Montsho just left the office in a hurry. I think something is wrong.

Mxo: (curses) I think she knows. Zara, we have to act fast. I need you to do the plan now – beat her to where she is headed.

Me: I am scared.

Mxo: Don't be – it's nothing to be scared of. You got this Zara. Hurry!

Me: Okay where will I find you?

Mxo: I am sending the location and step on that gas as if your life depends on it.

Oh God, what am I doing? I rush to my car and drive out. People are asking where I am rushing to but I am ignoring everyone. I step on the gas like my life depends on it and get to my assignment although I am scared. I am shaking as a leaf and I hope people cannot see it.

“Quinton!” I wave at him and he comes running and hugs me. He looks nothing like his mother. It’s funny how a ruthless woman like Lerato gave birth to such a lovely soul.

“Let’s go,” I lead him to my car. We get in and I look around to check if there isn’t anyone I recognize. I get into the car and then drive to the location Mxolisi sent.

“Where are we going?” Quinton innocently asks and I feel my heartbreaking.

“Your mother asked me to take you somewhere.”

The location Mxolisi sent me is not far, I get there within ten minutes. I find Mxolisi and two guys waiting for me. Quinton cowers behind me as we walk to Mxolisi. Mxolisi smiles and greets Quinton.

The man that is standing next to Mxolisi looking like robot hands Mxolisi something. Mxolisi looks at Quinton and starts waving the thing on his body until it beeps. Mxolisi holds Quinton's arm and asks, "Do you know what this is?"

Quinton shakes his head – he has something that looks like a scar on his arm. Mxolisi takes what looks like an injection from one of his robots and injects it on Quinton's arms then takes out a knife.

"Mxolisi!" I scream and he tells me to relax. I watch him cut Quinton where he has a scar. I look aside when I feel the urge to vomit but look again and see him take out something that looks like metal and gives it to one of his robots.

"Did it hurt?" Mxolisi asks Quinton who shakes his head. I also ask him and Quinton tells me that he did not feel anything. "Thanks, Zara!" Mxolisi goes into the car with Quinton and leaves me standing.

One of his robots throws a bag at me and gets into another car and they all drive away. I open the bag and quickly close it when I see the money inside. I get into my car and drive home where I leave the bag then drive to work.

“Are you okay?” Melusi startles me. I feel like everyone knows what I did.

“Why would you sneak up on me like that?”

He looks at me confused, “I didn’t – your phone is ringing.”

I glare at the screen and stand on my feet when I see Lerato’s name. I feel my body getting hot

Advertisement

she knows!

Me: Mrs....boss... is...

Lerato: I don’t have all day – I forgot my wallet in my office please bring it. I have been trying to get hold of you for almost thirty minutes.



Me: I was in the bathroom.

Lerato: Hurry, Zara!

Me: Yes, ma'am.

I take my car keys and head to where Lerato is and give her what she asked for.

"Zara are you sure you are okay?" Lerato asks.

"I am fine."

"Take the rest of the day off and ask Lira to take care of everything," she tells.

"Thank you!"

She flashes a smile, "I know I am not everyone's favourite but if you're not feeling well you can tell me. Even if you want something."

I nod and thank her once more.

LERATO

I see Miguel's girls standing outside the school and wave at them. They knock off at three pm and I am sure they have been waiting for a while now. I am surprised that Quinton hasn't called me to complain. My little prince hates waiting.

"Hey, Lerato!" the girls chant in unison and buckle their seatbelts.

"Hey, cuties. Did any of you see Quinton?" I ask trying to look around for Quinton.

"We saw him talk to some lady and they left together."

I try calling Quinton but his phone is not going through. I try tracking him with my phone but I can't find him either. I smile at the girls trying not to show them that I am panicking and drive us to the safe house.

Miguel is waiting for us outside the house. The girls run to their mother leaving me with their father.

"Thank you," – Miguel

“I can’t find Quinton. I think they have him. The girls say they saw him leave with some lady.”

Miguel answers, “It must be someone he knows. There’s no way he can just follow a stranger.”

“I have called everyone Miguel.”

“I will ask the team to look into it,” he retorts.

“I looked into Alexander and it’s bad. I think Carlos’s death is a warning that war is coming.”

He sighs heavily, “It’s hard to fix this because we don’t know what these people want from us. Carlos was found hanging in his house and he left a note saying it was all too much for him. Carlos didn’t look like a man that wanted to kill himself – Carlos cared about the boss and I think that’s his only crime.”

Mxolisi warned me not to trust Carlos and now he’s dead. Could it be that they killed one of their own? I can’t sit and do nothing so I put my team on a mission to search for my son. This is exactly what I have been scared of.

\*\*\*

“I waited for you at your workplace,” Mxolisi walks into my room. I am pacing up and down making calls and trying to find my son.

“Not now, please!”

“What’s going on?’ he walks to me.

“My son is missing Mxo. Someone picked him up from school and I can’t find him. I am scared for my little boy.”

He cups my face and says, “I will find him. I will get my team on it and your son will be next to you when you wake up.”

“Promise?”

He pecks me on the lips, “I promise you!”

**MXOLISI**

Lerato falls asleep in my arms. A message pings in her phone and I check her phone. I saw her password earlier so I open it easily and it’s a pdf from a person named Richard. I open it and it’s information about me. I delete the message and thank Richard then delete the message again.

## LERATO

As Mxolisi promised, I woke up with Quinton lying next to me. Mxolisi is not in the house nor did he leave a note explaining how he found my son. Quinton looks fine but he has a bandage on his arm – I guess that means they took out his tracking device. Why would they do that to a ten-year-old and what was the whole intention for taking him?

I try waking Quinton up but he is deep asleep. They must have drugged him and I am pretty sure he won't remember anything that happened when he wakes up. I reach for my phone to check if I don't have any updates from my team. I have a text message from Miguel.

'Any news on Q?' – Miguel.

'A friend of mine found him. He looks fine but I am going to invite the doctor over to check on him just to be sure.'

‘Why and who would take Quinton?’ – Miguel

‘I have no idea but you need to keep your girls safe – maybe make them stop going to school for a while.’

‘I will talk to their mother and see what she thinks – take care of yourself.’ – Miguel.

I get out of bed, updating the team that Quinton has been found. I am surprised no one could find him but Mxolisi did. Could it be that Mxolisi is known by people in high places or maybe he is one of the big dogs?

I bathe, I am not going to work today – not until I find the person who took my son. When I get back to my room Quinton is still sleeping. I place my palm on his forehead just to check if he’s okay and he seems fine.

I go through my messages sitting on the bed next to my son. The person who took him must be someone very close to us. Quinton hardly talks to strangers – even when they are family.

I get an update from Zipho and the team - they all arrived safely in Tanzania. The exchange is taking place at ten am.

MXOLISI

“Mxolisi!” Lerato throws herself in my arms. I envelop her in my arms and hold her tight. I am in her house – I had to take care of some business that’s why I left without saying anything. I hate what I did but I had to do whatever it takes to get her on my team. I knew taking Quinton would get to her. I like the little man and I feel bad for using him as bait. I know he won’t remember anything that happened. He was not harmed – we took good care of him.

“Thank you very much Mxo! I owe you one,” she says with her head rested on my chest.

I gently rub her back then step back a little, cup her face then kiss her, “Anything for the woman I love.”

“How did you find him?”

I stroke her face with my fingertips to her jawline and say, “I know people who know people.”

“Do you want me to make you breakfast?”

I beam widely, “Maybe Quinton should disappear more often.”

She leads the way to the kitchen and dismisses the girl that is in the kitchen washing dishes. I sit on the chair and watch the lady do her magic. She’s not only skilled with the gun but she’s good in the kitchen too. Like my mother said – she’s a keeper.

“I think I should send Quinton to my mother’s place. I need my family under one roof where I can keep a close eye on them. I’d have to come up with an excuse to make all my sisters go to my mother’s place,” Lerato says moving around the kitchen sprinkling this and that in whatever she’s cooking. It smells divine making my stomach growl.

“There’s no need for that, your family is not in danger.”

She shakes her head, placing a plate on the table in front of me and dishing for me, “I can’t be too sure. Quinton disappeared and Carlos was found dead so I am not taking any chances. I want my family to be where I know they are safe.”



“Carlos is dead?”

She nods, “He committed suicide.”

She goes to the cupboard and opens the drawer talking out cutlery then places it in front of me. She goes back to the cupboard and takes out a small bowl and dish towel. She hangs the dishtowel on her shoulder and goes to fill the bowl with some water then comes back to me.

“Do you want me to kneel,” she chuckles holding out the bowl so I can wash my hands. She sits opposite me as I eat – I would have loved her to join me but she claims not to have appetite since her son is not yet awake.

\*\*\*\*

“Lerato!” I hold her hands, “Have you considered my brother’s offer?”

“Mxolisi I have a lot going on. As you saw my son disappeared and no one knows who took him – I need to take care of that first.”

“Babe I can take care of you and Quinton. I would love to work with you running my brother’s empire,” I tell her.

“Why me?”

I smile and kiss the back of her hands, “I want to work with someone I can trust and I will be fulfilling my brother’s wish. He wanted you to take over and I want to work with my woman.”

“I don’t know Mxo – I just have a bad feeling about this. I looked into your brother and your father killed innocent people. Your brother is dead because of that – you should also be careful before they come for you.”

I tell her

Advertisement

“I can take care of myself, I just want you on my team.”

“I don’t know Mxolisi.”

“I will protect you and make sure nothing happens to you,” I assure her.

“Fine, I will see your brother’s lawyer but I am not agreeing to anything and this doesn’t mean I am accepting the offer.”

I smile, “Fine with me.”

Lerato stands up when Quinton walks into the room. She picks him up and asks if he's okay. She gets some water for him – she loves her and I hate that I had to use the little man as bait. I needed to get on Lerato's good side – she will forever be grateful that I found her son for her. She gets to love me more and I get what I want. It's a win-win.

I leave Lerato with her son and head to her workplace. I need to have a chat with that Zara girl in case she decided to spill the beans. She also needs to understand that the kiss meant nothing - I don't know why I kissed her.

“Zara!” I sit on her desk and she almost falls out of her chair. This girl only has ten thousand and she can't sit still. What would happen if she got a million?

“Mr...Mr Majola! Mrs Montsho is not around.”

“Relax woman you look like you killed someone and hid their body under your table. Settle down will you,” I say. She composes herself.

“I feel bad for what happened yesterday.”

“Don't, I took Quinton to his mother and everything is fine. I wasn't going to hurt the little man,” I retort.

“I just hated the whole sneaking around and hiding it from my boss.”

“I paid you good money didn’t I?” I ask and she nods, “I hope this stays between us and if you ever think about telling this to Lerato, remember you are in this too. You took the money.”

She swallows hard and shakes her head vigorously, “I won’t tell her.”

“Good girl and did you do what I asked?”

She nods still looking frightened, “I did and I will send everything to you now.”

“Good girl. See, you and I make a great team.”

She flashes, “I think you should go before Mrs Montsho sees us together.”

“Ahh you learn fast – I’ll keep in touch, Zara. Stay beautiful.” I head to my car and call my business partner.

Me: Get the lawyer ready, Lerato is on board.

Voice: Finally!

Me: Did Carlos have to die though?

Voice: Carlos saw me that day and I cannot show my face while he's around. Plus, he was bothering your woman and I took care of him. You should thank me.

Me: I told you I don't want anyone getting hurt.

Voice: So it's nice when you send people to rough him up?  
Anyway, when should I bring the lawyer?

Me: Tomorrow will be fine and I don't want mistakes. I want this over with so Lerato and I can move on with our lives.

Voice: Do you really love her?

Me: I do – falling in love with her was never part of the plan but I love her now.

I wipe my hands with a dish towel when I hear the doorbell ring. I hear the door opening before I can exit the kitchen. It's been six hours since I woke up with Quinton next to me. My boy doesn't remember anything and I am relieved, I wouldn't want him having nightmares.

Although I am a little worried about what kind of drug they gave him that the doctor failed to detect. I haven't gotten the chance to talk to Mxolisi to ask how he got my son. I only talked to him in the morning and he left soon after Quinton woke up. We had hardly talked.

"Hey, Jojo! You're back – how was your trip?" I ask Joseph as he makes himself comfortable on my couch. He looks terrible. He looks like he hasn't slept in a week. I expected him and the team to show up later tonight.

"Where's my money?" he asks sounding a little out of breath. Poor Jojo.

"What money?"

“Lerato don’t fuck with me – I almost died!” he doesn’t even have the energy to shout. I head out of the room and go to the kitchen to get him a pill I usually give people after being a carrier. He still hasn’t eaten – I told them to starve him a little. That should teach him a lesson to stop gambling. I toss the pill in water and hand it to Joseph. He makes a face making him look uglier, “What is that?”

“Drink it so I can make you something to eat.”

“Woman give me my money so I can leave,” he pushes the glass away.

I sit on the same couch as him, “I paid off your debt and sent the ten thousand I promised you to your wife.”

“Why would you do that? That’s my money.”

“I wasn’t going to give you the money so you can go gamble again. The money is with your wife and you need to find a job. A job that won’t get you killed. Do you want your children to grow up without a father?” now I am getting frustrated especially knowing that he is Quinton’s father. I don’t want my son growing up around someone like Joseph.

Speaking of Quinton, he is upstairs, sleeping. The doctor gave him something that knocked him out. He was claiming to be exhausted. Joseph and I stay quiet for some time until he breaks the ice.

“Do we have a child together?”

I shake my head, “I wanted to tell you something that will motivate you so that you don’t die.”

“Oh, it kind of helped though. I am sorry about what happened ten years ago.”

I stand up, “It’s in the past and it was nice meeting you but we have no business to discuss so I’d appreciate it if you left.”

I walk to the door and open it. Joseph stands on his feet looking like he’s going to die at any time. He walks out and holds the door before I can close it, “I’m sorry for not being there for our son. Zipho showed me his picture and she made me promise not to breathe a word. I want to say you did a good job raising him and I hope one day you’d let me meet him.”

I frown and slam the door in his face. How dare Zipho show Joseph, my son? I don’t care if she was trying to motivate him not to die but everyone knows that my son is a no go area.



I head to the kitchen and get back to cooking. Mazvita is helping me make dinner. I invited Mxolisi over. I owe him for saving my son's life. I receive a text message from Shade stating that he's coming to my workplace to collect his bank card. I forgot I had it and I need to set things straight with him and tell him that I am with someone else. I know he'll be angry but I am with Mxolisi now.

\*\*\*

"Zara!" she jumps out of her chair and her phone goes crushing on the ground. I think the screen broke. I didn't mean to scare her that much, "I'm sorry are you okay? I didn't think you'd get that startled."

She kneels and looks for her phone. She drops it again when she stands. She looks a little shaken and she's looking everywhere but at me.

"Mrs Montsho, good morning... I mean good afternoon," she drops her phone again and picks up her diary, "You..."

I hold her hand, "Breath, Zara! Come on breath with me... take a deep breath and exhale."

I take the diary from her hand and read her horrible handwriting. She should have become a doctor, “Why are you like this?”

She laughs

Advertisement

weirdly and ends up coughing, “Me? What do you mean? What am I like?”

“Like you know something,”

She laughs and slaps my arm, what is wrong with this girl?

“What could I possibly know? There’s Melusi.” She rushes off. I knew she was crazy but I didn’t know she now needs a mental institution.

I go to my office and something on the table catches my eye. Someone shifted things on my table and tried to put them back where it was but failed because the only person that knows how I arrange my stuff is the cleaner. There’s a flower pot I don’t recognise and it looks creepy.

I open the door and yell for Zara. She comes running, “Yes, boss... Mrs Montsho... Lerato...sorry what do you need?” this girl is just all over the place today.

“Who was in my office when I wasn’t around?”

She answers, “No one – only I got in and out.”

“Did you touch my laptop or things on my table?”

She shakes her head with so much force as if her head might fall off her shoulders, “No, I didn’t touch anything I swear.”

“And no one got in?”

“No one boss,” she retorts.

“I have cameras in my office and I just watched the clip proving that...”

She interjected, “I am sorry please don’t fire me, ma’am.”

I don’t have cameras in my office but Zara is stupid so I play along, “How could you?”

“He made me do it ma’am I swear I didn’t want to...” she doesn’t get to finish her sentence blood splashes on my face and she falls to the floor.

She’s been shot. I quickly take off my jacket and apply pressure on the wound watching her choke on her blood, “Please!”

“You’ll be fine, just hang in there,” I take my phone out of my jeans pockets and call the ambulance.

“Please don’t let me die.”

“I won’t! I won’t let you die Zara just stay with me.”

MXOLISI

I look at myself in the mirror and apply cologne to my wrist and neck. Lerato invited me for dinner. My phone rings and it’s Lorenzo I work with his brother.

Me: I thought we agreed on meeting the lawyer tomorrow – why are you and your bother bothering me?

Lorenzo: I see fucking Lerato is messing with your head.

Me: Don't talk about my woman like that – are you forgetting who you're talking to? We both know I could end you by just snapping my fingers.

Lorenzo: Whatever, while you were busy lazing around your girl almost spilt the beans.

Me: What are you talking about?

Lorenzo: I have been keeping a close eye on that Zara girl and she almost told Lerato the truth so I took care of her.

Me: Lorenzo what is it with you and killing people? Wasn't I clear when I said no blood? For your sake, I hope she makes it.

Lorenzo: That girl almost blew your cover and I just saved you. Is that how you thank me?

Me: How do you know that she wanted to tell Lerato? Why didn't you talk to me first?

Lorenzo: I sent a flower pot to Lerato's office and it has a listening device. Plus, I had nothing to do so I was stalking our Lerato. She's a beauty!

Me: You are sick and you better pray Zara makes it or I'll kill you with my bare hands.

Lorenzo: As if Mr Clean record can kill a person anyways someone put a bounty on your woman. Ten billion to anyone who kills her.

Me: Lorenzo tell me that bullet wasn't for Lerato?

He hangs up. Argh, this is why I hate working with psychos.

'Jasper hold your psycho brother before I kill him,' I send the text message to Jasper. Jasper is the one I work with. He just had to include his crazy brother in our business.

## MXOLISI

I drive out of my house at full speed while trying to get hold of Lerato but her phone is not reachable. I don't even know where to start looking for her or where she was when Zara got shot. Maybe I shouldn't have involved Zara in all this. She's just a kid and not cut out for this line of work.

I used her because she's the only person close to Lerato enough to get me the information I need. Now the poor child is going to pay for just ten thousand rands. Why was she trying to talk in the first place? I appreciate Lorenzo for what he did but at the same time I feel bad – Zara is just a kid.

Speaking of Lorenzo that crazy head switched off his phone – I can't reach him. Jasper assured me that he will keep a close eye on him but Lorenzo listens to no one. Killing gives him adrenaline– he is sick. I try Lerato's number once more and it leads me to voicemail. I need to keep a close eye on her especially now that there's a bounty on her head.

I put my team on task to find out who wants her dead and why. Like Lorenzo stated, my hands always remain clean. I have people doing my dirty job for me – people like Lorenzo who can kill and still shout hallelujah in church. My phone rings and I quickly answer it thinking it's Lerato but it is Jasper.

Me: What's up?

Jasper: You don't have to worry about Lorenzo, he's here with me. (I can hear Lorenzo laughing)

Me: Make sure you give him his pills because it's clear he's losing his mind and tell him to stay away from Lerato.

Jasper: (to Lorenzo) why do you always have to act carelessly?  
(to me) I am sorry man and still on Lerato, I just received news on her bounty – it's now twelve.

Me: (Curses) who is putting out all this money? We need Lerato alive, Jasper. You know we can't open the vault without her. It's DNA locked.



Jasper: Can't we just cut off her hand and then take the twelve billion?

Me: What part of I love her don't you understand? Plus, there's a lot more in that vault – help me keep Lerato safe.

Jasper: (sigh) Fine but you need to give Lorenzo something because this twelve billion is making him lose his mind. He's carrying an M25 ready to kill(I hear Lorenzo laughing again – that psycho)

Me: I will send him something. Ask your crazy brother where Lerato and Zara went – I know he knows.

Jasper: (after about two minutes) I'll send you the details. I am sorry again you know how Lorenzo is.

Me: Put him on a leash or something.

Jasper: I will make sure he behaves.

Me: Why do you think these people want Lerato dead? What's the word on the street?

Jasper: Your woman did not only take our buyer – she's going around the streets taking everyone's buyers and ruining people's businesses. Everyone wants to work with her so you can understand the frustration of other drug lords.

Me: She's good at what she does, hence why I want her on our team so please keep her safe for me.

Jasper: You know I got your back. As long as money is coming in - I am game.

I hang up and drive to the hospital with the name Jasper sent to me. I cannot believe that Lorenzo followed them even after I warned him not to. I need to take care of him before he ruins things for me. I have worked hard for this plan to work and I

will not let anyone ruin it. I waited years and I am close to getting what I want.

I ask for Zara at the reception but I have to be family for them to help me luckily I spot Lerato. She rushes to me and throws herself in my arms. I noticed she has a weak spot for the Zara girl. That's why I used her because I knew Lerato wouldn't suspect a thing.

"Are you okay?" I hold Lerato in my arms. This is the second time she breaks down in my arms, "I heard Zara got shot – word spreads quickly out there."

"I don't think that bullet was meant for her. Now the poor child is going to die because of me."

I cup her face and wipe the tears off her face, "Zara will be fine – let's think positive."

Lerato and I spend almost the whole day at the hospital. Around five pm the doctor tell us that our little Zara might make it and that they managed to get the bullet out although she lost a lot of blood. They assure us that she's in good hands and permit us to go home.

“You need to be more careful – you could have died today,” I hold Lerato’s hand as I drive us to my house. Her shirt is stained with blood and she cannot go back to her house like that. Not with her son around.

She smiles faintly and answers, “I don’t die that easy. I just need to make sure Zara is safe and then get whoever tried to kill me. I am done playing nice.”

“There she is – the badass lady.”

She smiles

Advertisement

“Thanks Mxo, for putting up with me even though I am not the easiest to handle.”

“You know I love you.”

She retorts, “I love you.”

Did she just say she loves me?

We get to my house and I lead the way to my bedroom. Lerato asks, “Is it me or your house looks different?”

“It’s you plus that day you were angry that your mother forced you to meet me.”

She laughs, “Maybe.”

We get into the room, “Do you want to wear my clothes after bathing?”

“Do you want me to wear your clothes?”

I bite my lower lips, “I think the tie would look good on you.”

“Just the tie?”

LERATO

“Just the tie?” I ask Mxolisi as he places his hands on my lower back and pulls me closer. He undoes the buttons on my shirt and strips me off it throwing it on the floor. He gently kisses me. I also help him off his t-shirt. He lifts me and gently places me on the bed – funny how it still surprised me when he lifts me. I guess I am used to being with men who don’t do that. Today there’s no time for foreplay so we get straight into it.

Sexual intercourse with Mxolisi is always the best – he communicates and he doesn’t just do it to satisfy his needs but he is in the present. We are doing it together – for a moment we become one. Every stroke and those in between kisses. How he randomly tells me he loves me. How he never dominates me but make sure I get it how I want it. How he’s able to read in

between the line on which pace I want him to go at. How he's able to make me lose my senses. I think I am in love with him.

"Are you okay?" Mxolisi asks breathing heavily, lying next to me.

"I'm good," I beam widely.

"Do you want me to run a bathe for us?" he gets out of bed and goes to the bathroom. I can hear the water running into the tub. My phone vibrates in my jean pockets and it's an email with a Re: read this alone.

"Mxo, I'm going to get some water!"

He yells from the bathroom, "Hurry."

I put on his t-shirt and head out to read the email. A whole essay. I sit on the couch reading through it. I feel my knees getting weak. This can't be! My eyes are deceiving me. I continue to read the rest of the message as my tears cloud my vision and I feel a lump growing in my throat. I feel like screaming, I feel like smashing my phone into the wall – blood is going to be shed

'Yours Lorenzo' my inner voice reads the last words of the email and I feel the tears fall on my face.

26

LERATO

Re: read this alone

Good day Miss Montsho, I hope this email finds you well. You might want to sit down for this one because it's about to get bumpy. I don't know what you prefer, wine or water but you're going to need one of those for this one. Where should I begin? Yes, from the beginning. My name is... well that's not important. What is important is what I am about to tell you. Don't worry too much – there is a happy ending. Maybe.

Once upon a time, there lived a very ugly man named Alexander Brown. Despite his ugliness, he was rich and fancied by many. Alexander was a very powerful man who never lived by the rules and lived his life however he pleased.

In the public eyes, Alexander was a man who owned a publishing company and inherited a lot of money from his late parents. Let me not bore you with details on Alexander's father - this email is not about him.

No, wait you need to know about Bernard Brown so you may understand his ugly son better. Bernard was one of the powerful drug lords in South Africa – also one of the men who couldn't keep their manhood in their pants. According to rumours, Bernard fell in love with Betty Levin. Betty Levin was a married woman and had two sons named John and the other one I don't care what he was called.

Have patience with me, I am not a good storyteller but I promise I am getting there. When Bernard found out that his lovely Betty was married he got mad. For a man who always got what he wanted he felt like he was being challenged so he went over to the Levin household to show them who he is and why they should never mess with him.

Long story short he butchered the Levine family. I was going to take you through the details but I wasn't there so I don't know the exact details. Moving along, Bernard killed everyone except little John who was almost the same age as his son Alexander. Leaving that little kid was the worst mistake of his life because my beautiful Lerato, kids never forget.



Little John or should I say Johnny as they called him grew up with an agenda to avenge his family's death. He became close with Bernard's son, Alexander – he was his right-hand man. Years went by, and Alex and Johnny worked together and were the best team ever. Of course, that was part of the plan for Johnny.

Why am I telling you all this? Don't worry I am getting to the fun part. As you know Alex did not have just one right-hand man, his other right-hand men are the late Carlos, Miguel and Mxolisi Majola. I think now will be a great opportunity to sip on that wine. Yes

Advertisement

Mxolisi – the same one you're sleeping with was Alex's, right-hand man. He was also working with Johnny to take down Alex but unfortunately, Johnny died the day his boss died. All that hard work only to die, very sad.

Johnny was in charge of making sure Alexander's business runs smoothly, Carlos was the one that was in charge of smuggling the guns in and out of the country for his boss. Carlos made sure the boss was safe and protected. Miguel was in charge of running the drug business alongside you. Mxolisi is the one that

made sure the money was clean hence he works at the bank – too bad he could touch it but couldn't have it.

I am sure you're wondering why all this has to do with you. Alexander kept all his money in a secret account and only you can open it. Shocking, right? He used you because you're the only one he could trust. You didn't know him but he knew you and made you unknowingly lock the vault where all the money is stashed.

Don't crack your head, trying to think of the vault and how you locked it. You won't remember because you weren't conscious when you locked it – it's biometrically locked. The vault is also the reason why Mxolisi is close with you. He doesn't care about you – he only wants the money.

That man loves money so much that he was willing to betray his boss and now he's using you to get to the money. I know you don't believe me but you can ask him yourself. Why do you think he's so bent on having you on his team? He just wants the money and will get rid of you as soon as he gets it.

I know you're falling for him but Mxolisi doesn't love you. If he does then he wouldn't have taken your son knowing what it would do to you. Yes, he's the one that had your son with the help of that girl you trust so much – Zara. That's why Zara got shot, she almost spilt the beans.

See now you've made me say too much. I even forget what I wanted to say but don't worry I will email you when I remember.

Yours Lorenzo.

\*\*\*

I close my eyes and place my hand on my pounding heart as the tears fall on my face. I sink to the floor and sit on the cold tiles with my back against the couch. These tears are not because I am hurt but because I feel like ripping someone apart. It is one thing to mess with me but to mess with my son is another story.

The disgusting part is that the person behind all this is the man I was starting to love. I knew something was up with him but my heart betrayed me. I trusted Mxolisi – I opened up to him only to find out he's just a man on a mission.

The email could be all lies but why would someone write all this only to be lying. I need to find out the truth and if Mxolisi is playing me then he will feel my wrath. Speaking of Mxolisi I don't know why he hasn't followed me or maybe to him I haven't gone that long.

I stand up and wipe the tears off my face. I cannot sell myself out. I have been in the business long enough to know betrayal can come from anyone. I have to beat Mxolisi in his game – fake it till I make it, right?

The doorbell rings before I can join Mxolisi. It's now past ten pm. I go to open the door. A man who looks like he's in his late thirties stands before me, wearing a smile as if he was expecting me to open the door.

"Hello." I greet him.

He rubs his palms together and smiles, "You must be the beautiful Lerato."

"Are you looking for Mxolisi? I'll go call him," I turn around. I feel a blow to the back of my head and pass out.

MXOLISI

"Lerato!" I call. I have been waiting for her to join me in the bathtub for some time now. I also got distracted by a phone call I received. It was about the bounty on Lerato. Everyone seems to want a piece of her and I don't know if I'll be able to keep her safe but I will try my best.

"Lerato!" I have looked everywhere in the house and I cannot find her. Could it be that she left? But she would have told me. I heard the doorbell ring a couple of minutes ago, maybe Lerato left with the person.

I call Lerato's phone and it rings on the couch. Lerato never leaves her phone. I know her password so I unlock it and check if she received a message that might have made her leave but there's nothing. I check her emails and there's nothing out of the ordinary. Something is not right. I want to ignore this and believe that she left on her own but I don't believe it.

I head out and drive to her house. Quinton is the first to greet me – he knows me as his grandmother's friend from the gathering. I ask Mazvita if Lerato came back but she hasn't seen her since she left in the afternoon. I call a meeting with the guys and tell them to meet me at my house.

I find Lorenzo and Jasper waiting for me, "I think they got Lerato."

"We are talking twelve billion..." Jasper nudges Lorenzo's stomach before he can finish talking.

"What happened?" – Jasper.

"I don't know – she just disappeared."

Lorenzo laughs, "Maybe she will reappear when she's ready."

“This is serious Lorenzo! If she dies it means all this hard work we have put in is in vain. I’ll lose the money and my woman,” I yell but yelling at Lorenzo is like yelling at a rock.

“Calm down, we will find her.” – Jasper.

A text message comes through and it is a video of a man who has his face covered and he’s carrying Lerato. She seems to be wearing the shirt I was wearing earlier and she’s also unconscious. The man puts her in bed and shifts the hair off her face the words ‘CHECKMATE’ follow then the video stops.

ZARA

I slowly open my eyes – it takes me about a minute for my eyes to adjust to the light in the room. I have an oxygen mask on my face and I can feel someone is holding my hand. My body feels numb and my throat is dry. I try to speak but no voice comes out. I feel the bed shift a little. There is a figure sitting next to me – a male figure.

He is wearing a huge smile as if he's pleased to see me yet I have never seen him in my life. I try to speak again but my voice fails me again. The man sitting next to the bed lets go of my hand and exits the room. Minutes later he comes back with a man almost the same height as him but the other man is wearing a long white coat.

I look at my surroundings and a woman in grey scrubs is standing next to me touching things that I have never seen in my life. I do a scan of the room as my brain registers everything around me. I am in bed and my body feels numb. The lady in scrubs is a nurse and the man in the white coat is a doctor. But who is the man who was holding my hand?



The doctor checks on me asking how I feel but my eyes are on the man standing at the far end of the room. Why was he holding my hand? The last thing I remember was me talking to Lerato in her office. I was about to tell her what happened between me and Mxolisi then I woke up here. Could it be that she beat me up I lost consciousness? That woman is capable of anything.

“Miss Xaba!” the doctor snaps his finger in my face. My eyes are glued to the mystery man that I cannot hear anything the doctor is saying, “Are you in pain?”

I try to talk but croak – my throat is dry as the desert. The nice nurse helps me sit up and then gives me water as the doctor explains to me how I ended up at the hospital. He says that I was shot and have been unconscious for three days but it was a flesh wound and the bullet did not do much damage. I don't hear the rest of the stuff because I am staring at the man smiling at me. Who is this man? The doctor leaves along with the nurse after whispering something to the man standing by the door.

“Hey, cutie!” the mystery man sits next to the bed and holds my hand again. My hand feels great in his. He’s good looking and has a dimple that shows when he smiles. His hair and beard are neatly trimmed.

“Who are you?” I ask not peeling my eyes off his.

“You don’t know me but I was there the day you got shot. That woman is cruel – how can she shoot you like that.”

“Lerato?” I ask and he nods, “She’s the one that shot me?”

I get that I messed up but why would Lerato try to kill me? Is she that cruel that she would kill me without thinking twice? I have a family and siblings to take care of. I wonder where my family thinks I am. I am sure they are worried sick.

“Hey,” Mr Man touches my chin bringing me back from thoughts, “It’s okay, she won’t hurt you. I know she will try to kill you again but I will protect you. Lerato will never hurt you again.”

My breathing escalates, “She’s still coming for me? Oh my God, what have I gotten myself into?”

“Relax, Zara. I will protect you and I think the best way to hide from her is to go away for a while. I know you’re worried about

your family but I will take care of them. For now, your safety matters most.”

I take a deep breath calming myself. I look at this man promising to protect me, “I don’t know you.”

“Where are my manners? My name is Lorenzo Garcia.”

“Do I know you, Lorenzo?” I ask him and he smiles.

“You don’t but if you stick around longer you will get to know me.”

I look at him trying to read his facial expression but fail, “What’s the catch – why are you helping me?”

He leans over and whispers, “I hope to win your heart in the future. You’re a very beautiful woman, Zara.”

I bite my tongue trying to stop myself from blushing. I think he’s already stealing my heart which is weird since I am seeing Bonginkosi but this man is HOT. He is in the same category as the men that usually go out with Lerato.

“Do you want to go home with me?” – Lorenzo.

“Am I allowed? I mean the doctor.”

“I can always ask the doctors - just give me your word and I will make it happen, my lady,” he winks and I nod vigorously. Look at me trusting a man I hardly know. I ask for his cellphone so I can call my mother - he gives me privacy.

Me: Hey, mama. I am sure you're worried about me...

Mother: It's okay baby, your friend told me about the job opportunity you got. I heard you're going to be working for one of the top fashion companies in the United States of America.

Me: What!

Mother: We are very excited for you and baby you didn't have to empty your savings for us – that's a lot of money you gave us.

Me: I don't know what you're talking about, I didn't...

Lorenzo walks into the room still wearing a smile. I hang up. “I called your mother so that she doesn't worry about you. I also

sent her money that will cover her for a while. I hope you don't mind."

"Lorenzo you didn't have to."

He shifts closer, "I care about you and right now I want you to be safe. Speaking of your safety. The doctor released you and I am taking you home with me."

"To your house?"

He nods, "Don't be scared – I won't hurt you. Or you can go to your house but I can't watch over you while you're there. It'll be disrespecting your mother."

'Choose home! Choose home!' my inner voice screams but my mouth betrays me and I choose to go with Lorenzo.

LERATO

I have been in this room for days now. I don't know how many days - I cannot see the outside and I cannot tell if it's night or day. I am not tied up or being mistreated. I have been in this room and no one has talked to me – I have tried asking to talk

to their boss but the armed men seem to be on mute. There's a bathroom and a shower that I am allowed to use. There's an armed man that brings me food. At first, I didn't eat but hunger got the better of me and I ended up eating. They also bring me clothes to change into – If I didn't have a son out there I'd have preferred staying in this place forever.

The door opens and I stand up from the bed. The man that brings me food came in about ten minutes ago so it has to be someone else. It is a face I recognize – from Mxolisi's place. Speaking of Mxolisi he better pray I don't get hold of him because I will kill him.

“Lerato!” the man beams at me, “You look good – maybe you should get captured more often. It's good for your skin.”

“Who are you?” he shakes his head still wearing his stupid smile. If he didn't have two armed men standing by the door I would have kicked his mouth. “What do you want from me?”

“You are the key, sweetheart. Now that I have you, I just have to find the safe then I am a billionaire,” he evilly laughs.

“I am not going to open anything for you.”

“Oh you will – I will find something that will motivate you. I can always visit Quinton at his school or maybe visit Zara at the hospital. I know you care about her which I don’t understand because she betrayed you,” he says.

“She didn’t betray me – she’s just a kid.”

“It’s sad how the ones close to us are always the ones to stab us in the back. Speaking of Zara, let me show you something,” he takes out his phone and hands it to me. It’s a video of someone lying on the bed and the video zooms in showing Zara’s face, “That’s my bed by the way,” he breaks into laughter again.

“Zara has nothing to do with this – she’s hurt. She needs a hospital.”

He smiles, “Don’t worry I will nurse her and make sure she’s well.”

“Who are you?”

“My name doesn’t matter but...” I run out of the room before he can finish talking. I kneel by the toilet and vomit. The strange man stands by the door, “You good?”

I shake my head, “It must have been something I ate. I am not used to this kind of food.”

“Or maybe congratulations are in order. The boys tell me this has been happening for five days now.”

I sit on the floor and flush, “Five days? How long have I been here?”

“Two weeks.”

“No, It can’t be that long– what do you want from me?” I ask standing up. I walk up to him and stand in front of him.

“I told you that you’re the key.”

I grab the gun that is on his waist and point it at him, “Let me go or I blow your brains out.”

He raises his hands, “Relax Lerato and give me the gun.”

“You relax – move!”

“Okay,” he slowly turns and we walk out of the bathroom with me following behind him with a gun to his head. His robots raise their guns at me but he warns them, “Relax gentleman.” They lower their guns and the man turns around to face me – I maintain my posture.

“Lerato don’t be stupid,” he lowers his hands and shoves them in his trouser pockets.



“Let me go or I will blow your head off.”

He laughs and his men join in, “Shoot! I dare you.”

I cock the gun and curse – it is empty. The weird man laughs again and his robots join in. He snatches the gun from my hands, “Do you seriously think I would carry a loaded gun around you? But so you know, I hate being threatened.”

A punch lands on my face sending me to the floor. He takes out his phone and I can tell he is filming me, “Tell Mxolisi to come to get you?”

I shake my head and he hits me hard across the face with a gun. I can feel the salty taste in my mouth, “Tell him to come to get you!”

“Go to hell,” I spit in his face causing me to earn another hard blow.

“I can go all day you know. Before you think about being stubborn think of your child. Mxolisi’s child.”

## MXOLISI

“Tell Mxolisi to come to get you?” a voice utters. I cannot tell whose voice it is because the voice has been tempered.

Lerato’s voice is clear yet the other person is not. Even the other person’s face has been blurred. I received a video a while ago – at first, I ignore it thinking it was just a random video. Then the person sent a text message telling me to watch the video.

I feel like smashing my phone against the wall – why is this person torturing Lerato like this.

“Tell Mxolisi to come to get you,” the voice roars again. Lerato shakes her head and he hits her across the face with a gun.

“Tell him to come to get you!”

“Go to hell,” Lerato spits in his face causing her to earn another hard blow to the face.

“I can go all day you know. And, before you think about being stubborn think of your child. Mxolisi’s child.”

The video ends - I feel my soul leave my body for a second. Lerato is pregnant? How? We tried to be careful as possible but again anything is possible, we were fucking like rabbits.

“Damn it!” I smash the glass in my hand against the wall and start punching everything in my way until Jasper holds me back.

“Calm down, Mxo. You can’t lose your shit, not now. We need to think of a way to find Lerato and soon.”

I yell, “She’s pregnant! With my child – she’s pregnant man and this person is punching her like she’s nothing.”

“I know but you losing it won’t solve anything. We need to find a way to look for your woman. We worked hard Mxolisi for things to end like this. What do you think the person wants?” Jasper asks and before I can respond he turns to Lorenzo who is watching the video, “Will you turn that off!”

“Leave me alone, please. I warned you two to get on the plan but Mr Clean record wanted to do things his way. All you had to do was grab Lerato, make her open the vault then we have our money but no - you just had to fuck her,” – Lorenzo.

“Shut up before I strangle you to death!”

Lorenzo laughs, “That would be lovely, don’t you think?”

“Jasper warn your brother.”

Jasper sighs, “Lorenzo now is not the time. Can we please focus on finding Lerato so I can stop listening to both of you go off every day. And you Lorenzo, I am warning you - stop being annoying.” – Jasper.

“Would you look at that, my brother turning against me? I thought blood is thicker than water,” – Lorenzo.

“I will punch you in the face, Lorenzo,” Jasper warns him. Lorenzo clicks his tongue and goes back to watching the video. I hold Jasper back before he can jump on him.

“Lorenzo please stop that, we need to find Lorenzo – we need your brains on this one,” I say and he switches off the phone, tosses it on the couch then stands up.

Lorenzo is crazy but he always has great ideas. He was the one that suggested we use Zara and his plan worked. Jasper sits down and we all do so.

“Let’s hear what the person who took her wants, I am pretty sure they are going to contact you.” – Lorenzo.

Jasper

Advertisement

“We don’t have the time to wait – the person wants Mxolisi to get his woman meaning they want something and we can’t give it to them.”

Lorenzo asks, “What if they kill Lerato – she’s pregnant.”

Jasper shakes his head, “Lerato is the key. If it’s the money they want then they kill her. They will try everything to get to Mxolisi but Mxolisi you have to be strong for this one. I know you love her but one thing I know is they won’t kill her. She’s the key – without her, we won’t open the vault.”

“You’re going to get Lerato killed with that mindset.” – Lorenzo.

“What do you suggest, Lorenzo?” I ask.

“Let’s wait to hear from the person and see what they want in exchange for Lerato.”

“I think waiting is a bad idea, “Jasper mumbles.

“What do you suggest then?” – Lorenzo.

Jasper replies, “Let’s find this person. Doesn’t Lerato have any tracking devices?”

“Even if she does we have no access to them,” I answer.

“Why don’t we reach out to Miguel?” – Jasper.

Lorenzo laughs, “That I would love to see, Mxolisi and Miguel in the same room. They will kill each other.”

“If Miguel sees me he will know what I want from Lerato and I can’t have that. We have no choice but to wait for the next video or instructions from the person that has Lerato.”

AN HOUR LATER

I receive a call from a private number. I answer the call putting the phone on speaker.

Me: Hello.

Voice: Mr Majola! How are you today?

The person is using a voice changer same as in the video.

Me: What do you want?

Voice: We both know what I want. Give me the location of the vault and your woman goes free.

Me: What vault are you talking about?

Voice: I hate being lied to, Mr Majola. Do you want me to kill your woman to prove that I am not blabbing?

Me: I don't know what vault you're talking about but if it is money you want then name your prize.

Voice: (laughing) you're funny Mr Majola but I want the vault. It's either that or your woman and baby die.

Me: Go ahead and kill her.

Voice: I am not blabbing, Mr Majola.

Me: What do you want me to say then? I don't know what volt you're talking about. Yes, I care about Lerato but I am afraid your request is impossible.

Voice: Say goodbye to your woman then.

The call ends. I bury my face in my palms – I don't know if that was a smart move.

“Mxolisi you're going to get her killed.” – Lorenzo.

Jasper says, “You did great – they won't kill Lerato. They are just blabbing. Stand by your decision and they will have no choice but to release her.”

I stand up and exit the room. I hope my decision will not get Lerato killed. I won't be able to live with myself if they kill her – I can't do this to Quinton.

LERATO



August...

September...

October...

November...

December...

January...

February...

March...

April...

ZARA

“Hey!” I feel hands envelop me from behind. I don’t need to turn to know that’s Lorenzo. We have been seeing each other for the past ten months and I have to say the past months have been the best of my life. I have never felt so loved in my life. Lorenzo takes care of me, I even quit my job. I design and work from home – I could open my own fashion house if I chose.

Speaking of working, I hear Aratwe took over her sister’s business. Lerato was declared missing. Lorenzo told me that she fled the country after almost killing me. Lorenzo and I are officially dating and my family knows about him. It wasn’t easy breaking up with Bonginkosi but I had to.

“Hey, babe!” I turn to face Lorenzo. He looks sad, “What’s wrong?”

“I want to show you something,” he leads me outside - to his car. “Please don’t hate me,” he opens the door and takes out a baby.

“Whose baby is this?”

He shrugs, “I don’t know but I found her by the side of the road. People can be cruel out there. I know I should have talked to you but I couldn’t just leave her.”

“You have a nice heart, Lorenzo. You did a good thing.”

“Can we keep her, please?” he pleads. He’s so sweet.

“Of course, we can keep her, what do you want us to name her?”

He smiles, “I think Ammara would suit her.”

## LORENZO

“He’s sleeping,” Jasper sits next to me. We are in Mxolisi’s house. We have been spending a lot of time there for the past ten months. Mxolisi is a mess – Lerato’s disappearance broke him. Mxolisi is not the type that knows how to play dirty after all he’s used to cleaning money and wearing suits. Lerato’s disappearance left him a mess. As much as he loves her, he doesn’t want to give up the location of the volt.

Well, Mxolisi wants to but Jasper won’t let him. If Jasper wasn’t my brother, I swear I would have eliminated him by now. He is very annoying.

“I think Mxolisi should give up the location of the volt,” I test the waters. Jasper shakes his head and takes a sip of whatever alcohol he’s drinking, “What if they kill Lerato?”

“They have been keeping her for ten months. If they wanted to kill her they would have done it by now – it’s only a matter of time until they release her.”

I speak through my teeth, “I hate that you guys are just sitting and doing nothing. It’s like my life is on hold now because of you two.”

“We never asked you to be here. You can go if you want.”

I stand up and take the glass from his hands and drink from it. It’s not alcohol – this jerk, “Well, I am leaving you can stay with your friend and wipe his tears when he starts crying.”

“Where are you going? You’re very secretive these days. If I knew better I’d think you’re in love but what woman in their right mind would date you.”

I chuckle, “Women happen to love me, dear brother.”

“When am I meeting her?”

I hand him back his glass, “Never!”

I take my phone and car keys, “If you need me, you know how to find me.”

“Use protection! The world doesn’t need more crazy people like you.”

I give him the middle finger before shutting the door. I get into the car and drive to my house – Zara asked me to come to get

her so she can go shopping. She needs some baby things – she asked one of her siblings to come to stay with us so she can help with the baby although I insisted we get a nanny.

I find Zara playing with the baby. Little Ammara has been with us for three days yet Zara is already obsessed with her. I feel she would make a great mother – I wonder if she's open to the idea. I stand by the bedroom door watching Zara play with the baby, she's such an amazing soul and I love having her around. Zara understands me.

“Look Ammara, daddy is here to get us,” Zara looks at me wearing a huge grin. I didn't know she noticed that I was standing by the door.

“Are you ready?”

She nods standing up, “Yeah let me just get the baby her bottle so we can go.”

“The baby has to stay.”

Her facial expression changes. I know she's about to manipulate me. She places the baby on the bed and walks up to me, “Please can we go with the baby? I promise she won't annoy you – I'll make sure she stays quiet.”

“No.”

She pouts her lips and places her hands on my lower back pulling me closer. She unbuckles my belt, “Zara what are you doing?”

“What does it look like I’m doing?” she bites her lower lip lowering my trousers.

“Okay, okay woman - not in front of the baby.”

“Look at you already putting your daddy cap on,” she shifts back and helps me buckle my belt, “So we are taking her with us?”

“If that’s what you want.”

She wraps her arms around my neck and gently kisses my lips, “Thank you and I love you.”

“Get the baby before I change my mind.”

LERATO

“I brought you food,” Tumie walks into the room carrying a tray of food. I have been with these people for ten months so yeah I now know their names. I have been in this room for ten months – I feel like I am losing my mind. I don’t know why I am being held in this place. But from the little information I have received, they want Mxolisi to give them the location of some vault and I am the key.

I don’t know how my life got this messy. One moment everything was going great then Mxolisi showed up, I fell in love and let my guard down. I wonder how my family is doing, my baby Quinton and my newborn. They didn’t even let me touch her – they took her away soon after I gave birth to her.

I wonder what they did to my little girl. As if it’s not enough that I have to deal with the pain of losing her

Advertisement

my breast hurting is a reminder that I have a baby out there. A baby that I don’t know what they did to – I’m sure she’s a month old now.

“I’m not hungry, Tumie.”



“You didn’t eat in the morning – you have to eat something before you die of hunger,” he pushes the tray to me.

“Dying is better than being in this place.”

“Well, it is what it is now stop punishing yourself,” he sits down and places his gun next to him. He usually chats with me while I eat but he makes sure the others don’t see that. I eat then push back the tray to him.

“How’s my baby?”

“You know I can’t give you that information but what I can tell you is that I looked into your son and he’s fine. He is staying with your parents and sometimes visits that boyfriend of yours – I noticed they are close,” he retorts.

“What about Zara? Did she get out of the hospital?”

He shakes his head, “I can’t tell you that either.”

“So are you and your boss planning to keep me here forever?”

“Lerato you know I am just doing my job,” he stands up, takes his gun and the tray then exits the room. I sit on the floor and sigh heavily.

The door opens and I quickly stand up. It's their so-called boss – I always feel like giving him a handshake on the neck when I see him.

“Lerato! How are we today?” he's always smiling it is very disturbing.

“Where's my baby?”

He smiles and holds out his hand, “Let's take a walk?”

“I can walk on my own.”

He steps aside making way for me, “After you, my lady.”

It's been long since I have been in the sunlight and my eyes are no longer used to the brightness. It feels good to be out here. I do a quick scan of my surroundings and there is no escaping.

“Here,” the man that never bothered to introduce himself to me hands me sunglasses. I want to turn them down but I could use them.

“Where's my baby?”

He replies, “She is fine, don't worry. You know I wanted to do this the easy way but your boyfriend or should I say your baby daddy is very stubborn. He won't give me what I want and I am

running out of patience. I have other better things I can do than to feed you all day.”

“Then let me go, I promise I will find the volt for you. Give me back my baby and I promise I will get you what you need.”

He shakes his head, “The thing is that I don’t trust you. Here I run things but out there I am nothing compared to you so I am not taking any chances.”

“I won’t do anything, I promise. You can hold on to my little girl to prove that I am not lying. Let me go and I will find the volt and trade it for my daughter.”

“You see the thing is that now that I have her, you’re no use to me,” he retorts.

“What do you mean?”

“I’m sorry, Lee. I am done playing nice,” he says then calls two of his men and tells them. “You know what to do.”

One of them grabs me by my arm and harshly pulls me away.

MXOLISI

I pour myself some whiskey and sink onto the couch. It has become my favourite chill spot since Lerato was captured. To everyone, Lerato just disappeared – her parents are devastated and Quinton is always asking about his mother. If it wasn't for Jasper I would have given up the location of the vault. I really care about Lerato but the plan involves two people and I cannot screw it up. Oh, three people including that nutcase Lorenzo.

“Hey, Mxo!” Jasper walks into the room.

“You know I don't need a babysitter.”

“I am here as a friend – it must be hard for you,” he sits next to me. I offer him some whiskey but he turns it down. He has stopped drinking.

My phone vibrates a couple of times and I pick it up. I have twelve text messages, they are pictures. I download them - my heart sinks. They are baby pictures – my baby!

“What's wrong?” - Jasper. I hand him the phone, “This is getting out of hand.”

My phone vibrates again and I see Jasper's facial expression change. This time I ask him what's wrong and he shakes his head, "Jasper what is it?"

He slowly hands me the phone and its pictures of Lerato lying in a pool of blood. They killed her.

'I warned you Mxolisi. You have twenty-four hours or Quinton follows his mother,' another message comes through.

JASPER

“Mxolisi stop!” I hold him back to stop him from punching the wall and destroying everything that is in front of him, “Mxolisi calm down please!”

He sinks to the floor and cries – now that’s not something one sees every day. Mxolisi has been a mess the past ten months but I didn’t realize Lerato’s death would break him like this.

I pick up Mxolisi’s phone from the couch and look at the pictures once more to see if maybe they were tempered with but they are not. They used one of those cameras that show you the day and date. Honestly, I did not see this one coming. I didn’t think the person would kill Lerato since she’s the key. How will they open the vault now that Lerato is dead?

“Mxo I am very sorry. I know I am the one who kept you from telling them the location of the vault.”

He shakes his head, “They killed her, Jasper. For money! Why didn’t they take me and torture me since I am the one that knows everything? Now Quinton is going to grow up without both parents because of me. How will I be able to look Quinton in the eye knowing that his mother is dead because of me?”

I squeeze his shoulder, “It’s not your fault – you know it’s not.”

“Maybe I should have listened to Lorenzo and not have fallen for Lerato. Maybe they wouldn’t have used her as bait if we weren’t together.”

“She’s gone now – we have to find a way to keep Quinton safe before this person strikes again. Let me call Lorenzo.”

I leave Mxolisi sitting on the floor and step out to call Lorenzo. He doesn’t pick up his phone so I keep trying until he answers.

Me: Why have a phone if you’re not going to answer it?

Lorenzo: Jasper why are you calling me as if I ran away with your kidney. Me not picking up the phone means I am busy.

Me: Busy with what? Get your black arse here.

Lorenzo: Why? You can't get Mxolisi to stop crying?

Me: This is serious – Lerato is dead.

Lorenzo: I told you so.

Me: Now is not the time, Mxolisi needs us. Get here already

Lorenzo: He needs you, you're his friend, not me. I am busy I will come when I can.

Me: Lorenzo get here before I track you down. Can you act like you have feelings like a normal person?

Lorenzo: Fine, I am coming.



I hang up and shove the phone back in my pockets then join Mxolisi in the house. Lorenzo shows up an hour later. Sometimes I question how Lorenzo and I are related.

“Hello, people!” Lorenzo walks in. He’s been in high spirits lately.

“What took you so long?”

“I have a life outside you and Mxolisi,” he sits on the couch next to Mxolisi who is sitting on the floor. He squeezes Mxolisi’s shoulder and utters, “I’m sorry, man. I heard about your woman and I am sorry. I just wish you’d listened to me though.”

“Now is not the time,” I kick Lorenzo’s leg. Sometimes I forget that his mouth has diarrhoea.

“Jasper you were right,” Mxolisi answers on a low note, “They were going to kill her even though I gave them the location of the volt.”

“So they just killed her, no demands whatsoever?” Lorenzo asks.

“They want the location or Quinton is next,” I retort.

“Mxo just give them the location.” – Lorenzo.

“Lorenzo, they had my woman who was carrying my child, for ten months. Don’t you think I would have given them the location if I knew it?” Mxolisi drops the bomb on us. Lorenzo and I look at each other in disbelief.

“What do you mean you don’t know the location of the volt?” – Lorenzo.

“Isn’t I told you that Lerato was supposed to meet with Alex’s lawyer? That’s where we were going to get the location of the volt. Without Lerato

Advertisement

the lawyer will never agree to see us.”

“All the hard work – down the drain,” I throw myself on the couch.

“And you kept this from us? You know what, I am done - I have places to be,” Lorenzo stands up. He points at me, “Don’t call me unless your life depends on it.”

ZARA

I hear the car drive into the yard, it must be Lorenzo. He's home early today. A few minutes later he walks into the house, slamming the door behind him, "Lorenzo the baby is sleeping."

He looks at me and frowns. I don't know what they did to him wherever he is coming from but he looks mad, "The baby has to go – you're getting attached and this is not our baby."

"No, the baby is not going anywhere," I put the baby on the couch and take Lorenzo's hand leading him to the kitchen so we don't wake the baby up, "What's wrong and don't tell me it's about the baby not being ours?"

He sighs, "I wouldn't want you to get attached and then they take her from us."

"No one is going to take her from us – not with you around. I know you will protect us."

"I don't know, Zara. Things did not go as planned. I messed up," he retorts.

"I'm sure whatever it is – it can be fixed. There is always a way out to everything."

He pulls me closer and kisses my forehead, "I am afraid on this one there isn't."

“Baby there is always a way out. Come on you are smarter than that. Just take some time and think whatever it is through.”

He smiles, “I love how you always believe in me.”

“Who wouldn’t want to believe in a man like you?”

He cups my face and gently kisses me, “That’s why I love you.”

Lorenzo has never told me he loves me all ten months we’ve been together. He shows me but he’s never told me.

“Are we keeping the baby?”

He nods, “Whatever the lady wants.”

“Aren’t I one lucky lady? I now believe that everything happens for a reason. If Lerato hadn’t shot me then I wouldn’t have met you. Even in the worst situations, there’s always a way out.”

“Oh my God, Zara!” he spins me around then kisses all over my face “You’re right. There’s always a way out. The vault is biometrically locked. Ammara is the key.”

“What?”

He pecks me on the lips, “I love you! I love you!” He rushes out.

## MXOLISI

My morning alarm wakes me up. I drag myself out of the bed to the bathroom. I splash some water on my face and stare at my reflection in the mirror. I can't believe Lerato is gone. The one-woman I was actually in love with is gone. I don't know where to go from here. All those years Johnny and I spent trying to get the money and it ends like this. All the hard work, down the drain.

I brush my teeth and jump into the shower letting the cold water hit my skin. I haven't been to work in almost a year. I stopped talking to my friends and colleagues. The only people I am still in touch with are Lerato's family and my family. I feel like it's my responsibility to keep an eye on Lerato's family since their daughter disappeared from my house.

I dry myself and put on a suit, something I haven't worn in months. I think Jasper is right – sitting and whining will not

bring Lerato back. I have already wasted too much time the past months thinking these people will give up and let Lerato go. They have my daughter and I have to do whatever it takes to get her.

I open my tie drawer and my eyes land on Lerato's phone that is in there. Looking at her things always reminds me that I am the reason she's dead. They took her from my house...wait a minute. These people took Lerato from my house. Only limited people are allowed in my house only people who have the gate remote or someone who knows the ins and outs opened for them. Why didn't I think of it?

I drop the tie in hand and rush to my study room. I turn on my laptop. I have cameras outside my front door. I put them so I know who is knocking that way I can ignore people I don't want to talk to. Lerato disappeared ten months ago so I search through the footage and find the one from eleven months ago. It is going to take forever but I am willing to go through all the videos until I get the clues I need.

My phone rings, it's Jasper. I know he's checking if I am okay but today is not the day. I turn off my phone and put Lerato's on the charger – luckily I still remember her password. I go through the CCTV footage although I have to fast forward them.

When I see that Lerato's phone is fully charged, I connect it to my other laptop, the one I use for work and go through her phone - more like hack it. I check all her calls, messages and emails she received the day she disappeared which is not much of a hustle because the day she disappeared is also the day she last used her phone.

I fast forward the clips on the CCTV footage to the actual date when Lerato was taken and let the video play while I go through Lerato's text messages. On the text messages, I don't find anything so I look through her emails that's when I find an email she received from Lorenzo's account. I know Lorenzo's email by heart because he uses it to get notifications from the bank. I handle everyone's accounts making sure they are paid on time.

I feel my blood boil reading the email. How could Lorenzo rat me out like this? A car driving into the yard on the footage

grabs my attention. The person gets out of the car and walks toward the door. I zoom in on the person's face but fail to see it. The person knocks on the door and the door opens but I cannot see the person on the other side. A few minutes later the person on the other side falls to the ground. I see the man who knocked carry Lerato. I cannot see his face because he's wearing a hat. It's like he knew that there are cameras at the door.

I check the time and it's now past three pm. I can't believe I have been sitting here for eight hours. I put the video on pause and head to the kitchen to get myself something to eat. When I get back to the study I rewind the video to the time when the person was knocking on the door. Something on his arm catches my attention and it's a tattoo. I zoom in on the video and curse. I know that tattoo even in my sleep.

I quickly grab my work laptop and freeze Lorenzo's bank accounts. I switch on my phone and let Jasper's messages flood in then make a call.

Me: Make sure Lorenzo cannot use his passport and send the message to every airport.



Voice: Is everything okay boss?’

Me: Do as I say and don’t tell Jasper.

Voice: Yes, Sir.

Me: Tell the team to keep a close eye on Quinton in case he tries to use him as bait.

I look for my car keys and head out I. I am going to strangle Lorenzo. He better pray I don’t get my hands on him. All this time I thought he was just a nutcase yet he’s the one behind the chaos. I can’t believe he has my daughter and went as far as killing Lerato just for money.

I make another phone call.

Me: Where are you?

Voice: I am at work where could I be?

Me: Go to your house and stay there I have a feeling he's coming for you.

Voice: What are you... ( I hear grunting then the line goes dead)

I step on the accelerator and drive to Bhebhe's workplace. Bhebhe is one of Alex's lawyers. If Lorenzo is after the volt then he will go after all of them until her finds out the one that knows the location.

LORENZO

"Who are you?"

"I am just a friend, Mr Bhebhe," I take a seat on his chair with my cocked gun still pointing at him. Finally, I have found him.

All I have to do is make him tell me the location of the volt. You see I happened to take Lerato's fingerprints while she was still alive and I have so much of her DNA if that's needed too.

"What do you want from me," Mr Bhebhe asks wiping blood off his nose. I might have punched him a little hard - I wonder why Mxolisi was calling him.

"Where is the volt?"

He answers, "What volt are you talking about?"

"I hate people who waste my time, Mr Bhebhe. Now let me ask you one last time, where is the volt?"

He shakes his head, "I don't know what you're talking about."

I sigh heavily and attach the silencer to the gun and shot his leg. He screams like a bitch, "Try again." I say.

"I really don't know what you're talking about."

I shoot his other leg, "Do you maybe want me to shoot your penis to show that I am serious?"

The old man cries like a little girl

"I swear on my life, I don't know anything about the volt."

My phone ringing disturbs me from my session with Mr Bhebhe. “Don’t you dare make noise,” I warn Mr Bhebhe then answer Zara’s phone call.

Me: I am in the middle of something can I ...

Zara: (interrupting me) I don’t know if you noticed but none of our bank cards is working. I sent my sister with it and I think it’s blocked.

Me: When was that?

Zara: I couple of minutes ago – she just called me. She’s still at the supermarket.

Me: (I curse but not loud enough for Zara to hear me) Listen to me. Take the baby and go to the safe in my closet the pin is 1564. Take the big bag that’s inside and meet me at the nearest gas station.

Zara: Love what is going on?

Me: Please just do as I say. Leave the house as soon as possible. Don't call your sister – grab the bag and the baby. Use the silver Volvo.

Zara: Okay.

Me: I'll meet you there now.

I hang up and shift back my attention to Mr Bhebhe who is still sitting on the floor, "How many lawyers did Alexander have?"

He answers, "I don't know – my job is to make sure that his publishing house does everything by the law and I handle the legal stuff there."

"What did Mxolisi say to you when he called?"

He replies, "He told me to go home."

"Well, you're no use to me so..." I pull the trigger and then head out. I drive to the gas station that is near my house.

Zara shows up about five minutes later, “Lorenzo what’s going on, why does it feel like we are fleeing?”

“We are,” I take the bag and toss it in the car that I came with.

Zara jumps into the passenger’s side, “What’s going on?”

“I’ll explain everything when we are safe. You’ve been around me long enough to know that I don’t live an honest life,” I step on the gas. I drive for about half an hour and find another car waiting for us. We swap cars, get into the other one and drive straight to the airport.

My phone rings, I forgot to lose it.

Me: Mxolisi Majola!

Mxo: Where are you?

Me: You’re the last person I would tell my whereabouts.

Mxo: Why are you doing this? Why would you betray me like this?

Me: That is very rich coming from you. You betrayed the woman you love and you betrayed your boss. I learnt from the best.

Mxo: You better pray I don't get my hands on you.

Me: I will be waiting for that day but as they say, when life gives you lemons – put them in your bra and make your tatas bigger.

I hang up and throw the phone out the window.

“Who is that?” – Zara.

“Don't apply to be thrown out of the car,” I step on the gas until we get to the airport. I have a private jet on standby. I knew this day would come but I didn't know it will come this soon.

“Am I allowed to asked to where we are fleeing to or am I going to be thrown out of the jet?” Zara fastenes her seatbelt. The hostess hands her the baby and walks away.

“I am sorry, I didn’t mean to be harsh. We are going to Benin – I promise to explain everything when we get there. I will also tell you about who I am then you can choose if you want to stay with me or you can just walk off the jet right now.”

She shakes her head vigorously, “No, I want to be with you.”

“Let’s hope you’re also willing to accept me for who I am,” I tell her.



“Ammara!”

A voice calls. At first, it feels like I am dreaming but the sound of the person banging the door hard jerks me up. I sit up and fumble for my glasses on the side table. I put them on and look at the time on my phone. It’s five past seven am – I overslept! I usually wake up at six am – I am sure that is why this woman wants to break down my door.

“Ammara!” she continuously knocks.

“Go away!”

“I know you’re mad at me for not letting you go out last night but I have a surprise for you. Please open the door?” she pleads and I ignore her and focus on the person in my bed, Jeremy. Jeremy and I have seeing each other for six months and sometimes I sneak him into the house, nothing happens it’s just kisses and cuddling.

“Ammara!” that’s my dad and knowing him, he will break down the door if I don’t open it.

“Jeremy.” I shake him, “Jeremy wake up you... my dad is here.”

The mention of my Dad wakes him up, he's scared of him – everyone is but Jeremy takes the cup.

He jumps to his feet but he's still struggling to keep his eyes open. I toss him his jeans and he quickly puts them on. I open the window - we stay in a double story house so it's not that far down.

“One second!” I push Jeremy out the window and toss him shoes. I look for my shorts and put them on.

“What is taking so long?”

“Dad, I am getting dressed, what is wrong with you people?” I put on a top and open the door.

“Happy birthday!” they both chant in unison. Mom is carrying a cupcake with a candle on it. I roll my eyes, blow out the candle then slam the door in their faces.

“You raise them for sixteen years and they slam the door in your face,” I hear Dad say.

“That’s Ammara for you,” Mother answers. I take my phone and call Jeremy.

Me: Do we need to send you an ambulance - you didn’t break something?

Jeremy: This is not the first time you’ve pushed me out your window so no, I am good.

Me: Cool then see in a few minutes. My dad is driving us today.

Jeremy: Your Dad looks at me like he wants to rip out my guts.

Me: He’s like that you know how old people are – don’t be late we’ll pick you up in forty-five minutes.

Jeremy: Happy birthday!

Me: No presents – I don’t want any presents, please!

I hang up and put my phone on the side table along with my glasses. I take off my clothes and head to the shower singing along to BTS they are my favourite boy group. When I am done – I put on my uniform and fix my hair. I have very stubborn and kinky hair. I can't find any clean socks so I head to the kitchen to ask my mother.

“Mom, did you see my school socks?”

She answers, “In the laundry room.”

I hug my father from behind and kiss his cheek, “It's my birthday today.”

“Says the person who slammed the door in our faces.”

“You know I am not a morning person – what did you get for me?” I ask and he focuses on his newspaper. Who still reads a newspaper in this century? My parents are very old school for people who are not even in their fifties – my mother is the worst. I still don't understand how she owns a fashion house with her hideous fashion taste.

“I thought you said no presents,” he answers.

I let go of him and drag myself to the laundry room to find my socks. I put them on and get my satchel then join my mother in the kitchen.

“You okay sweetie?” mom places a plate of bread with eggs and bacon in front of me. This is what I get for my birthday?

“I’m good!”

“Baby you said no presents, remember?” she kisses my cheek and goes back to pots. I look at my father who is concentrated on his newspaper. I didn’t think they would listen to me when I said no presents. The one time I wanted them not to listen to me, they did.

I eat sulking and answering the happy birthday text messages I am receiving from my friends. When I am done eating, I harshly toss my plate in the sink and ignore the stare I get from my mother.

“Dad I am ready to leave.”

He hands me the car keys, “You can drive yourself today... you said it yourself that when you turn sixteen we should let you drive yourself to school.”

“Really? You guys decide to suddenly start listening to me – I don’t even have a diving license.”

“Figure it out,” he retorts.

“Mom!” I sulk.

“Sorry baby, I can’t drive you... I have a meeting to get to.”

I pick up my satchel, “If I die I will haunt you both – see you later.” I kiss my dad on the cheek and head out ignoring my mother who is asking for her kiss.

When I get outside my eyes land on a maroon mini cooper clubman. It has gold balloons and a number 16 balloon floating above it. I rush back into the house and jump onto my father, hugging him, “Thank you! Thank you!”

“Happy birthday, princess!”

“Best birthday gift ever – does this mean I am getting my license soon?” I ask excitedly.

“You will get your license but you can drive it to school today.”

I jump up and down, “Thank you and mom, I love you. See you guys later.”

I rush outside and take off the balloons then drive to Jeremy's house.

LORENZO

"You did well

Advertisement

she's happy," Zara hugs me from behind. When I first told her about who I really am, I thought she was going to leave but she didn't. For some reason, she loves this life. Of course, I didn't tell her some of the things like Ammara being Lerato's child.

Speaking of Ammara, I didn't know I would fall in love with her like this. When she started calling me daddy, I instantly became her father. I would take a bullet for that child. We have bonded so much over the years and I don't think I am able to let her go. Ammara is also one of the reasons why I don't want to move back home. I know Mxolisi hasn't stopped looking for her – I have people keeping me updated.

Leaving home also meant leaving everything and everyone. Zara is still in touch with her family and visits them once in a while but I haven't talked to my parents or brother since that day Zara and I fled. I know Jasper is disappointed but it was survival of the fittest too bad I never got the location of the vault – not that I was looking for it anymore.

When we moved to Benin, I started a clean life with the money I received on Lerato's bounty. It's true when they say being a parent changes one. Ammara turned my life upside down. She's the best thing that ever happened to me, her and Zara.

"You know she's going to want a present from you too, right?" I tell Zara.

"I will gift her a gift voucher you know how picky our daughter is."

I laugh, "Just give her money before she makes you return the things you'd have bought for her."

My phone rings and it is Ammara's school. I groan in annoyance – Ammara is one trouble maker. Not a day goes by without her school calling to complain about her.



Me: Good afternoon!

Voice: Mr Garcia we are calling about your daughter.

Me: (sighs) Did something happen?

Voice: We would love to have a word with you in person, sir. We are aware that you're a busy man but this might include the police so we'd appreciate it if you come to the school.

Me: Okay I will be there now.

I hang up and shift my attention to Zara who steps away and raises her hands, "You know to handle her better than me."

I drive to Ammara's school and head to the principal's office – there's already a crowd. I do a quick scan of the room and my eyes land on the boy who is holding an ice pack to his face. I bet a hundred bucks, Ammara punched him in the face.

“Thank you for coming, Mr Garcia. We called you because your daughter assaulted his classmate,” the principal says.

“He assaulted me first,” Ammara shouts.

“No, I didn’t,” the boy speaks.

“Mr Gracia this is not the first time your daughter does something like this. If this continues we will expel her from the school.” – School principal.

“Expel me for what – this big head sexually assaulted me and I get suspended?” Ammara yells. Did I mention that she’s just like her mother?

The boy retorts, “I just kissed you.”

“That’s sexual harassment!” – Ammara.

“Calm down princess,” I warn Ammara and she sits back down. I tell the principal, “I apologize for her behaviour but you can’t suspend her. It was just a fight between two peers.”

“Your daughter broke his nose and it wasn’t just one punch. She was beating the heck out of him,” – Principal.

Ammara chuckles and mumbles, “He’s lucky he can still speak – I wanted to punch his teeth out.”

“My apologies, I will pay for any medication needed and Ammara will take the suspension. How long is it?”

“Two weeks and remember this is her last strike,” the principal answers. I apologize to the boy’s family then we head out.

Being a parent has really softened me. If these people had found me 16 years ago it would have been a different story.

“Let’s see your hand,” I say to Ammara as we walk to the car.

“I think I broke it.”

“Isn’t you didn’t keep your thumb in. I told you to keep your thumb in when throwing a punch,” I say.

“So... am I in trouble?”

“You’re grounded till you die,” I get into the car and wait for her to get hers. A message comes through...

‘Mxolisi is in Benin. I think someone knows your whereabouts – I mean your current location.’

Another one from Ammara follows, ‘Race you home!’

## LORENZO

‘Thanks for the heads up. You know the plan.’

I send the text message and then drive home. I know that I will find Ammara there – she is on a mission to beat me home so I know she won’t make any stops. As for Mxolisi if he thinks he will get me then he’s fooling himself. I have been in the game longer than I can remember. We might be in the same city but he will never find me. The same way he couldn’t prevent me from leaving the country. Now that I know he’s here and looking for me, I just have to be extra careful.

Again, I am not worried about Ammara – she’s my little girl now and Mxolisi is never getting her. When I get home I find Ammara’s car already parked and she’s sitting on the bonnet beaming widely.

“You beat me, I must be getting old,” I get out of the car and join her.

“Maybe I should have made us bet – I could be rich as I speak.”

“Too bad you didn’t,” I say, “Baby we need to talk about something.”

“Okay.”

I exhale heavily, “You know that my line of work is dangerous, right? From now on I need you to be extra careful okay – avoid talking to strangers and always be in public places.”

“Relax, Dad! I know how to take care of myself and I would never get hurt because I know what it does to you. So relax.”

I smile, “Good girl. How’s your hand?”

“It’s fine now. I am sorry for disturbing your day – I know I am not the perfect daughter.”

I rough up her hair a little, “You’re the perfect daughter and next time punch him in the gut, okay.”

“Okay,” she rests her head on my shoulder, “How did you get involved in this kind of life. The guns and all that?”

I answer, “My father was in this line of business which automatically made us a target and forced us to live this kind of life.”

“So given a choice would you choose a normal life?”

I whisper, "A normal life is boring."

"I think so too. Imagine if I couldn't defend myself when that big head kissed me today."

"Ammara you're a girl, a very beautiful one and I am sure he meant no harm. You see some people read a lot of fiction and watch a lot of movies. I am sure he thought it was romantic," I tell her.

"Well, it wasn't and next time I won't be so polite."

I laugh, "That was you being polite? Remind me not to mess with you, Miss Garcia."

"Well if I had let him go then I wouldn't be the daughter of Lorenzo Garcia."

"Hey... only your mother is allowed to use my name." I get off the bonnet and also help her get off.

"My apologies. Since I won't be going to school can I go see Jeremy? He skipped school today."

I retort, "You're grounded, young lady."

"Oh, I kinda thought you'd forgotten about that."

I shake my head, "I kinda didn't but we can go to the shooting range if that makes you happy."

“Let’s make a deal, if I beat you then I am no longer grounded.”

“Sweetie I taught you everything you know, you can’t beat the master,” I tell her.

“We will see about that, Mr Garcia. Let me go change my uniform.”

“Ammara are you challenging me?” I ask her and she nods.

“It’s on!”

MXOLISI

Sixteen years! For sixteen years I have looked for my Lorenzo and my daughter - no sign of them. It is as if they vanished into the air, I tried everyone and every connection I have but Lorenzo is nowhere to be found. At first, I thought Lorenzo was working with Jasper but he was also shocked about his brother betraying the team.

I think we underestimated Lorenzo and what he’s capable of. We treated him as a nutcase yet he was the brains of the operation. I have to admit we never suspected a thing – I give

him this one but he made a wrong move when he killed my woman and took my baby. Now that's something one doesn't just push aside.

Today my daughter is turning sixteen – that's if she's still alive. I saved the date when Lorenzo updated me about her birth. Each year I light a candle for her – it helps me have faith that she is somewhere out there and that I will get her and avenge her mother's date.

I wonder what she's like, I wonder what her name is or if she looks like her mother. Right now I am in Benin – I got a tip that Lorenzo is on this side. It has been sixteen years looking for this mf but I am willing to do whatever it takes to get my daughter. I owe it to her mother. Speaking of Lerato, someone showed me where she is buried. His name is Tumie and claims to have been working for Lorenzo.

At first

Advertisement

I was in denial, I didn't want to believe and accept that she is gone. I even had her dug up and it broke her family's heart



when they found out she was gone. At least her family know her resting place. Quinton has grown into a fine young man – he’s a doctor now, a gynaecologist. I last talked to him a year ago when he got a job outside South Africa but I don’t know where.

The sound of a car horn snaps me out of my thoughts. I sometimes zone out. I am on my way to the house I am going to be using while I search for Lorenzo. I know it sounds like looking for a needle in a sack of sand but I have to find my little girl. I will not rest until I do.

I don’t have other kids and yes, I tried to move on with my life but failed. I feel like my life will start the day I find my daughter. I get to the lonely house and contact Jasper via Facebook messenger. He’s the one that got a tip that his brother is on this side. I appreciate all he’s doing for me. Luckily, Jasper managed to move on with his life – he’s a married man and a father of three little boys

‘The house is lovely, thank you, Jasper.’

‘Try to find yourself a wife while at it. Do you want to die alone?’ – Jasper.

‘Maybe I am destined to be alone.’

‘There’s no such thing man and I think you’ve been a little harsh on yourself. You never knew this would happen.’ – Jasper

‘Still, I feel like it’s all my fault. Let me shower – I will check in with you later.’

‘No problem let me get back to my family.’ – Jasper.

I log off messenger and shower. I don’t know where to start looking for my daughter. Even if I were to run into her I wouldn’t know her because I don’t know what she looks like.

The following day, I wake up and put operation find Lorenzo in motion. I have a team in each city searching for Lorenzo and this time there won’t be any escaping.

I am in the car, on my way to the supermarket. I don't know my way around so I am using the GPS. I need some groceries and a few things for the house. I stop by the traffic lights and the car door opens. A young girl who looks like she's in her early teen gets in – is this what people in Benin do? Do they just get in people's cars without permission?

The little girl smiles, "Can I get a lift?"

"No, get out!"

"Don't be so grumpy, I am not going far," she fastens the seatbelt and leans back on the car seat, "Cool ride but it's girly and the traffic light is green."

I get the car moving since the other drivers now want to bite my head off, "I am going to park the car and you get off or I throw you out."

"You are not throwing me out, I told you I am not going far."

I get off the road and park the car on the side, "Get out kid, I don't have time for drama."

“You want drama? I will give you drama,” she rolls down the window and screams “KIDNAPPING! I’M BEING KIDNA...”

I quickly roll up the windows, “What is wrong with you?”

She smiles, “I will get off two blocks away.”

I shake my head and start the car, “Do you know that I can kidnap you if I choose to.”

“Oh no, I am scared.”

“It’s not a joke – it’s dangerous out here. Don’t go around getting in people’s cars.” I tell her.

“Noted, kind sir.”

“What’s your name?” I ask her.

“Don’t tell me you like me, sir we just met.”

I laugh, “I don’t like you – you’re old enough to be my daughter.”

“Age is just a number.”

I answer, “Teen pregnancy and AIDS are real too.”

“I would mind getting AIDS from you.”

I laugh, “How old are you?”

“I’m old enough... please drop me off at that sign.”

I park the car where she tells me, “My name is Ammara and in the future try to keep your doors locked. It’s not safe around here. And, you’re going the wrong direction – your GPS is wrong.”

She helps me with the correct directions to the supermarket, “Take care of yourself, okay?”

What are the parents feeding these kids? She’s talking to me like I am her age but I wave at her, “Bye, kid.”

## AMMARA

“Where are you coming from?” a voice startles me and I almost jump out the window. I debate on whether to climb down and use the front door or just get into my room using the window. Long story short, I snuck out of the house to go hang out with my friends since I am grounded until I die. It is not fair that I am grounded when I am the one who was ‘sexually harassed’ and I beat my dad at the shooting range hoping it would reduce my sentence but Mr Garcia wouldn’t hear any on it. According to him, I am in it till I die.

I left my phone in my room that way my father won’t track me down and made sure my door was locked. I didn’t use my car either because my parents were going to notice that I wasn’t in the house hence I had to ask for a lift. I know, I am not supposed to talk to strangers but I am a big girl and I can handle myself. I tried to be subtle as possible but I am surprised to find my father in my room. This is supposed to be my private space.

“Hey, dad! Is that a new shirt? It looks amazing on you?” I stand near the window and in a position that allows me to climb back out if there’s a necessity.

“Where are you coming from?” he’s wearing that look that makes me almost pee on myself. I am sure in moments like these, he wishes he had made my mother take plan B. My dad and I joke around but even I know where to draw the line when he’s like this.

“But dad you’re not fair. We agreed that if I beat you at the shooting range then I am no longer grounded,” I mumble not taking my eyes off his movements.

“So you thought sneaking out of the house would make me agree to let you go however you please?”

I reply, “I am just a sixteen year old, give me a break. Dad, I have a life outside this house you know. I have friends to hang out with and it’s not fair how you always want to keep me indoors even for the pettiest reasons.”

He looks at me and shakes his head. I know he’s holding back from lashing at me. He always avoids hitting me by all means.

He sits on the bed and pats the space so I can sit with him. I hesitate but eventually sit next to him.

He takes my hands and gently caresses them with his fingers. He takes a deep breath and says, "Listen, sweetheart, I know you're at that stage where you want to hang out with your friends and do what you like. Trust me I want that for you too. I want you to be like any normal sixteen year old out there but the problem is that you're not like any normal sixteen year old. You're the daughter of someone who lives a dangerous life. We can't live a normal life because we always have to look over our shoulder.

"I am not letting you go as you please not because I am trying to keep you caged or I want to control your life. I just want you to be safe. You have no idea how worried I get when you go to school because every day I have to think that there's a possibility you might not come back home. You being my daughter alone makes you a target – that is why I do the things I do. To keep you safe."

"Dad I know your line of work is dangerous and etcetera but isn't this the reason why I took defence lessons and why you



taught me about guns? So that I can be able to take care of myself when you're not around. How will I know how to survive on my own if you keep pampering me like I am still eight? Please trust that I can handle myself and I know what to do if I were to get in trouble," I tell him.

He smiles and brushes my cheek, "You're growing too fast and excuse me for caring about my only daughter. Remember there is only one you and if I lose you, I will never get another you."

"You'll never lose me, dad. And maybe you and mom should have another kid you know I need a little sister or brother."

He sighs then kisses my forehead, "Not with this lifestyle. It's enough that I have to make you hold a gun."

"You had me and we are doing fine."

He strokes my face again, "You're different and I never thought I would love you so much."

"Don't tell me you wanted mom to terminate me?"

He laughs, "Not really but you changed me and I can't imagine my life without you. You're the best daughter any father would want besides the rudeness and stubbornness of course."

“I love you, dad.” I hug him, “So what do you say? We put everything behind us and go have ice cream.”

“No, you are doing two weeks – no cellphone and no television.”

“That is not fair, what am I supposed to do in the two weeks? I am suspended at school and now you’re putting me on lockdown too.” I fold my arms on my chest.

“You should have thought about that before sneaking out. Hand in your cellphone.”

“This is not fair,” I mumble standing up from the bed then take my phone from the dressing table and hand it to him.

“The other one too.” I roll my eyes and go to my wardrobe and take out my school satchel then take out the other phone and give it to him. “The third one too.”

“Dad I only have two phones.”

“Do you want us to make it three weeks?” he asks and I shake my head and pull the phone out of my jacket pocket. He stands up from the bed and asks me to follow him to his study.

“I am going to the shops, Ammara how do I look,” mother asks as she twirls.

“Spare the cabbages that hideous shirt, mom.”

“What is wrong with my shirt? This is what everyone is wearing,” she retorts.

“You mean everyone at forever inappropriate town?”

“Be nice,” dad nudges my arm.

“It’s been sixteen years yet I just can’t get used to some of the things you say. You kind of remind me of my old boss – she was just like you. What was her name again? Yeah, Lerato Montsho. That woman was so rude – there was this one time when she told me that I look like a boy,” she says and Dad coughs as if he choked on his saliva.

“The Lerato woman was right, you do look like a boy and you dress terribly for someone that owns a fashion line.”

“Ammara enough!” Dad grabs me by my arm and pulls me into his study slamming the door behind us

“Listen, young lady, you need to stop being rude to your mother. She might dress terribly but that’s who she is and you should stop being rude to her.”

“I’m sorry.”

He sighs, “Your mom is different from me and you. She’s fragile and doesn’t take honesty too well so try to be polite, okay.”

I nod, “I will apologize to her.”

“Okay but now I want to show you something,” he goes around his table and opens a drawer he takes out a card and hands it to me. It’s a photo – a photo of that man that gave me a lift today. Could it be that my dad saw me? I hope he doesn’t harm the poor man. I don’t sell myself out and if he asks about this man, I am going to deny it until I swear on my mother.

“This man’s name is Mxolisi Majola. If you happen to see this man, turn in the other direction. He is very dangerous and goes around kidnapping kids for human trafficking. He pretends to be their father and gives them solid evidence that one believes him. So please, stay away from him,” he says and I look at the man’s photo. He didn’t look harmful at all when I met him. But he did mention kidnapping me.

“I will make sure to stay away,” I say still looking at that man’s picture. My father dismisses me after forcing me to apologize to my mother.

“Mom!” I knock on her bedroom door and let myself in. She quickly wipes the tears off her face when she sees me. “Mom I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings.”

“It’s not you. Talking about Lerato opened a can of worms. I miss home and my old life.”

“What do you mean – Isn’t this home?”

She shakes her head, “I was born in South Africa.”

“Then how come we never go there and how come you and dad don’t have relatives?”

She sighs and looks around checking if dad is anywhere nearby, “Your dad and I had to leave home because his line of work got dangerous and we had to go somewhere safe.”

“So how was it like in South Africa and how did you meet dad?”

She chuckles, “It’s a funny story. My boss Lerato tried to kill me and your father saved me.”

“Why did your boss try to kill you?”

She answers, "I betrayed her - I deserved it really and she shot me."

"How did you betray her?"

"Ammara it's a long story," she retorts then we hear dad yelling that he's stepping out and he'll be back later in the day.

"We have time."

She exhales sharply then says, "So back in the day I used to work for this gorgeous woman named Lerato Montsho. She was everything I had always wanted to be. She was the boss lady and could get any men she wanted. One day her boyfriend made a deal with me and asked me to sort of kidnap Lerato's son for a prize. I did that and I felt guilty afterwards, when I tried to tell Lerato the truth that's when she shot me."

"You said when you tried to tell her the truth...meaning she didn't know that you had betrayed her then how could she shoot you?"

She shrugs, "I don't know but I was talking to her then the next thing I woke up at the hospital with your dad next to me."

"Is that how you met dad?"

She nods, "He offered to help me and I just fell in love with him."

"Hold up...a stranger offered to help you out of the blue and you found that romantic? When was this?"

"About sixteen years ago. Look your dad was very sweet."

"Mom you got pregnant for sweet? You didn't even know the man?" then they warn me about strangers.

"Look I was young okay... I think I was twenty-two."

"So you had me the following year meaning you and dad dated for about a month or two then you got pregnant?" I ask her.

"No, we had you about ten months later."

"I don't understand ten months you got me meaning you were together for a month," I say and her eyes widen as if she just remembered something, "You know you've never said anything about pregnancy or how your experience was with me like other mothers do. Like this one friend of mine her mother always remind her how she carried her."

She quickly stands up, "Enough about that I want to go shopping. Do you want to come with me?"

“You have bad fashion sense mom we are just going to fight all day.”

“Fine, I’ll go alone... are you going to be fine alone?” she picks up her bag.

“I’ll be fine plus I am not allowed out of the house, you know your husband.”

She kisses my forehead, “I will talk to him when he comes back.”

I stay in her room after she leaves. She left her laptop open so I go to close it but end up sitting on her chair and I google Lerato Montsho. She’s very pretty and she owns a fashion company. I leave google and search the deep web – well Mr Garcia had me take computer lessons and learnt how to hack the system. When I search into the deep web it makes me love this Lerato woman more. She was the bossy lady as mother defined her.

One article catches my eye. There was a ten billion bounty on Lerato Montsho. I also come across Mxolisi Majola’s name

“What are you doing?”

I quickly close the laptop, “Dad! I thought you went out.”



“What are you doing on your mother’s laptop?”

I shake my head, “Nothing dad, I was searching through some girl stuff.”

“Open the laptop so we can see then.”

I pick up the laptop and intentionally drop it. I make sure it hits hard on the ground, “Oh my God, I broke it.”

## LORENZO

I look at Ammara and shake my head. Does she always have to be clumsy? Now Zara is going to flip if she finds out that her laptop broke. The funny part is that when Zara is mad at Ammara, she doesn't tell her. She always takes it out on me. Zara is scared of Ammara which I also find funny because she's the parent and Ammara is the child. I don't blame Zara though - Ammara is one smarty pants and always wears facts on her sleeves. I think she would make a great lawyer one day. That's if I'll still be around to see the day.

"Mom is going to kill me," Ammara picks up the laptop and tries switching it on but the screen is damaged. Zara drops her laptop all the time but today the screen just turned into another color.

"That should teach you not to touch your mother's things. What are you doing in our bedroom anyway?"

"Mom left me with her laptop. She asked me to fix something and then switch it off. Isn't you banned me from going out. I could be shopping with mom as we speak," she's still trying to switch it on yet she can see that the screen is damaged. I guess I have to prepare to receive the silent treatment from Zara since 'my daughter' broke the laptop.

"Dad what should I do? She's going to kill me?"

"Maybe she will understand if you tell her nicely," I retort

She shakes her head, "I know mom and she's going to go quiet on us for the next week. Please help me fix this."

"Fix it how? It's broke there's no fixing it."

"There's always a way out, Mr Garcia. We just need to buy a new one and swap the hard drive. She won't notice a thing," she suggests.

"Your mom is not that stupid - she will notice it's a new laptop."

She mumbles, "I did change it once and she never did."

"You did what?"

"Nothing," she takes my hands and leads me out of the bedroom. "I know I am grounded but please help me fix this or I will tell mom that you broke it."

"Do you seriously think she'll believe you over me?"

She smirks, "Wanna bet?"

"I wonder who you take after because I am nothing like you. And change those shorts so we can go."

She kisses me on the cheek, "Of course, I take after you. Mom is too soft." she rushes out of the room. I take out my phone and check my text messages. Mxolisi is on a mission to find his daughter and this time he came in full force. It is as if he knows that we are here. But again, I am always a step ahead of him. It was like that back then and still is. My phone rings and it's a phone call from Jamie - he is my eyes and ears.

Me: What's up?

Jamie: Mxolisi is still onto you and I think it's best if you leave the country.

Me: I am not going anywhere and Mxolisi will never find me.

Jamie: He's working with some guys I once worked with back in the day and they are good.

Me: Then we will play our cards right. I can't just pack up and leave - my family will start asking questions, especially Ammara that kid is very smart and I don't want her to start digging for information.

"Dad! I am ageing here," Ammara yells from the other room.

"I am coming, sweetie."

Me: Keep Mxolisi busy just like we did on all those countries he looked. Try a different approach because he will sense that we are playing him. Give him false hope and let him think he's on to getting his daughter back.

I glare at the door and see Ammara standing there, "Dad are you coming or what?" I wonder how much of the conversation she heard but I know Ammara isn't the type that eavesdrops.

Me: Jamie I will call you back.

Ammara and I head out and she's driving today. She still doesn't have her license but I let her drive sometimes and we avoid places with roadblocks. I glare at Ammara as we drive to the mall. She looks nothing like her parents and even if they were to see her, they wouldn't recognize her. They say if you stay with someone for too long you start to look like them and she looks a little like Zara.

She did inherit her mother's stinking attitude and her father's intelligence. She's such a lovely kid despite how she ended up with me - Zara raised her well.

"So dad, how did you and mom meet?" Ammara questions, "Don't tell me to ask my mother. I want you to tell me how you two met."

I laugh, Ammara knows me better than my wife. I feel like I am more open to her than I am with Zara. I even told her about my line of work and even introduced him to this messed up world. Even though I am not her biological father, I still want the best for her and I want her to be able to take care of herself if something was to happen to me.

"Your mother and I met through my brother. Your mother was close with someone who worked with my brother," I tell Ammara.

"You mean Lerato?"

My heart skips a beat. How does she know about Lerato? Does she know something? Ammara adds, "Mom mentioned that I remind her of a lady named Lerato that she used to work for."

I sigh relief and answer

Advertisement

"Yeah I knew her through Lerato."

"Why do you freak out at the mention of this Lerato lady. You did it earlier too. Did you also

betray her like mom?"

"No, I didn't betray Lerato. We hardly knew each other and I do not panic at the mention of Lerato's name, Miss Smarty pants."

She laughs still focused on the road, "If you say so, Mr Garcia."

"Do you have to be so smart?"

"I blame you, you are my dad after all," she retorts.

We get to the store and buy her mother's laptop and she knows everything. She even knows the tiny little details I never thought to think of. Ammara is right, Zara will not notice that this is a new laptop. After installing everything and putting the same wallpaper that was on, even I am doubting if it is the new laptop. I think Ammara is a lot smarter than I imagined. I keep underestimating her.

AMMARA

It's just after dinner and I am in my room doing nothing since I am not allowed to use my phone or laptop. I am done studying and I have nothing to do. My parents are in the sitting room



watching one of those boring cooking channels. I can't help but think about my parents. Something about how they met is a little off. I know it's none of my business but I have nothing to do but think about other people's businesses.

I reach under my pillow and take out that man's photo. Mr Mxolisi Majola - what my father said doesn't suit him at all. Maybe I should do some digging - it would be fun and it will keep me busy during the two weeks that I am grounded. Maybe if I could help the police do their job and nail this Mxolisi - put him behind bars. It will also prove to my dad that I am capable of taking care of myself.

I quickly hide the photo under my pillow when someone knocks on my door. I permit them to come in. My father walks in.

"Are you sleeping?"

I yawn and sit up, "No, just bored to death."

"You're always bored so it's nothing new. I have something to take care of tomorrow and your mother won't be around. Please Ammara, I beg you to stay in the house."

I nod, "I won't leave the house, I promise."

"It's not safe out there and I will be at ease knowing that you're home."

"Relax, dad. I will behave but just for tomorrow," I retort.

"Thanks."

I wake up in a quiet house, proof that I am alone because my mother always plays her songs that I never understand what they are saying. I go to my father's study - I need to use his laptop but today he changed his password and if I was to hack it, he would know. I twirl sitting on the chair. It must be fun being my father, he just snaps his fingers and people run around.

I open one of his drawers and there's a gun - I am not surprised. I open the other one and there's a yellow envelope. I open it and see the inside. It's a couple of pictures of that Mxolisi man. Pictures of him at the airport and his address. There's is a bounty on this Mr Majola - a ten million dollars bounty.

I take a piece of paper and write down the address then go back to my room. I check the time and it's just after eleven am. I pace up and down the room - why am I thinking about this

Mxolisi man and why does it look like he's not the bad guy in this situation. You know what, it's none of my business. My dad told me to stay away from him and he knows best. I get in bed....argh I hate this. I get out of bed and wear something comfortable then jump out the window. My dad left the front door locked and I have the gate key that my family don't know about. My father will hate me for this but he knows that I never listen to anything he says. I used the phone landline to call for a taxi.

\*\*\*

"Ammara!" Majola says after opening the door. He still remembers my name and still looks harmless. "What are you doing here?"

"Do you traffic children?"

He looks shocked by my statement but shakes his head, "How did you find where I live?"

"It doesn't matter. Leave the country, there's a bounty on your head."

He answers, "I know there's a bounty on my head but why are you telling me this?"

"I don't know but I feel like you're not the bad guy and my instincts never lie."

"Thanks kid but I can handle myself. Go home okay."

I nod, "Take care, Mr Majola."

He pulls me back before I can walk away. "What is your second name?"

## MXOLISI

"What is your second name?" I ask Ammara. She pushes my hand off her and stands a little further away from me.

"I am afraid I cannot tell you my second name because I only know little information about you. I am not convinced which side you're on," she answers boldly.

I don't know if it's because my daughter is on my mind but there's just something about this little girl that I can't quite put my finger on. Do you know that one person you meet and feel like you've met before? That's how I feel with Ammara. But, right now I am more worried about how she knows where I live, how she knows my second name and most importantly how she knows that there's a bounty on my head. She looks young and I doubt she's working for anyone. Or maybe she is - maybe that day when I met her it wasn't a coincidence.

I grab her by her jacket and pull her closer - she does not look intimidated at all, "Who are you?"

She stares back into my eyes, "I told my taxi driver to call the police if I am not back in thirty minutes. If you don't let go of me - you could spend the night in a cell."

I let go and watch her fix herself, "Who are you?"

"I told you I cannot tell you that and I am leaving. I hope you take my advice and disappear because ten million is a lot of money."

I shake my head, "I am not going anywhere but thanks for the heads up, Ammara."

She reaches into her jacket pocket and takes out a little rubber listening device and tosses it at me, "Nice try, so much for trying to help you. Maybe I should take the bounty and kill you myself."

She turns around and walks away. I meant no harm, I am just curious about her.

"Ammara wait!" I try to walk up to her but she yells.

"Help! This man wants to kidnap me." I quickly go back into my house before people walking in the streets notice me. She's smart I have to give it to her. As much as I want to look into her, there are many people with the same name as her. I take out my phone and call Jasper.

Jasper: Miss me already?

Me: Shut up and listen... There's a little girl that just came to my house warning me about the bounty.

Jasper: Where is the girl and how did she know about the bounty?

Me: My question exactly but she is gone.

Jasper: Come on Mxolisi do you have to be slow in everything. The bounty is to lure Lorenzo and only Lorenzo thinks there's a bounty on you meaning that girl got the information from Lorenzo. Two things, that girl could be working for Lorenzo or she is your little girl.

Me: No it can't be... there's no way Lorenzo can send my daughter to me.

Jasper: It's not like you can recognize her if you see her.

Me: Are you suggesting that's my daughter.

Jasper: How am I supposed to know? You're the one that met her and if there was a worst father award, you'd win.

Me: Pardon me for not knowing how to be a father, I never got the chance to be one.

Jasper: Cut me the bullshit Mxolisi it's been a week since you went that side and you're telling me that you have no clue where Lorenzo is?

Me: I am trying my best - do you think I enjoy this?

Jasper: It's been 16 years. If it was money you'd have spent sleepless nights.

Me: Why do I get a feeling you're on a mission to piss me off today?



Jasper: Maybe that could help you wake up. Mxolisi you're in the same country with Lorenzo - come on don't disappoint me.

Me: (sigh) I am trying my best Jasper.

Jasper: Try harder the problem is that you play fair. It's not a matter of how you play the game it's all about winning. Don't be scared to get your hands dirty because Lorenzo isn't and he knows you will play by the rules. It's about time we end all this mess. I heard Lorenzo is staying with Zara - use her.

Me: Zara... as in the Zara I know?

Jasper: No it's another Zara with the same name.

Me: No need to be harsh Jasper. What is your problem today?  
How did Zara and Lorenzo become close?

Jasper: That's what I want to find out too but the information I got states that they stay together and I will send you Zara's work address.

AMMARA

Luckily my parents are not back when I get home. I get started on dinner that way I won't look suspicious. I know my dad will ask questions about my day.

"I think you should be grounded more often - you're cooking?" father walks into the kitchen. He opens the fridge and takes out a can of beer.

"This is why I never do anything because you people always find it suspicious when I do something nice."

He answers, "It is suspicious because you never agree to do anything. Zara, come see who is cooking!"

Mom walks into the kitchen and also gasps as if she's never seen me cooking before. Okay, she has never seen me cooking but it's nothing to gasp about.

I harshly throw the spoon on the sink, "I will stop if you two act like this."

"No, no need to stop. Do you need help?" mother asks.

"No, I am almost done."

"Where did you get the recipe?" she asks and I wave the magazine. I have always ignored them but they have some useful information.

Even with instructions, I cooked rubbish so we end up ordering pizza.

"You should stay away from the pots

Advertisement

" father say as I clear the table after eating.

"These hands are meant to hack computers and hold guns not chop carrots."

"Hey...not so loud, you know how your mother is," he whispers. I noticed he never mentions guns or his line of work when she's nearby.

After cleaning up the mess I made in the kitchen, I head to bed. Too bad I don't have my laptop, I would have searched more about Lerato. She's quite an interesting character.

LORENZO

"May I come in?" I walk into Ammara's room. I know she snuck out of the house earlier today. There was no way I would leave her unattended so I had someone watch her. Of course, Ammara is smart and the person failed to see where she was going because she first went to her boyfriend's house. From there the person who was following her lost her and only saw her back at the house.

Someone sent me a photo of Ammara and Mxolisi together - it was taken before I warned her about Mxolisi. Her not telling me that she had already met him got me thinking.

What if Mxolisi said something to her? But there's only one way to find out.

"Ammara can I come in?"

"You're already in, there's no need to ask for permission,"  
Ammara sits up, leaning onto the headboard. She is already in  
her pajamas meaning there is no sneaking out today.

I sit in on her bed and ask, "How are you doing?"

"Bored to death."

"I have something to keep you busy. Remember when you said  
you wanted in on what I do? I have an assignment for you - if  
you pass this, I will let you in on my business and give you 25%  
shares," I propose. She looks at me for a moment as if she's  
thinking hard.

"I thought you said I will join the business when I am eighteen?"

I nod, "I know but I feel you are ready and if you prove me  
otherwise then I promise I will never bring it up again."

She exhales heavily, "What is the assignment?"

I hand her a brown envelope. She opens it and reads the  
information. I cannot tell her reaction to this news since she's  
good at hiding her emotions but this will prove where her  
loyalty lies

"You want me to kill a person? I thought you said Mxolisi is dangerous," she whispers.

"He's on a mission to kill you so it's either him or you."

She asks, "Why does he want to kill me?"

"Because you're my daughter and he hates me. He'll try to hurt me using you."

"But don't you think sending me, the target is a bad idea?" she questions. Does she have to be so smart?

"Don't you want to kill the man that wants you dead? He won't see it coming if you do it."

She nods and reads the file again, "Can I read this overnight?"

"Sure and sweetie if it's too much tell me, okay?"

I kiss her forehead then exit the room. I hate doing this to her but I need to know how much information she knows. My phone rings on my way to my room, luckily Zara is bathing.

Me: Jamie, what's up?

Jamie: I am calling about the bounty on Mxolisi. Are we taking that ten million?

Me: Relax, Ammara will do it for us... after she reads the rest of the document, she will loath Mxolisi.

Jamie: I'll leave it all to you.

## AMMARA

It's past noon. My eyes lids are heavy and these sleeping pills I took are not helping me sleep. I have read the file my father gave to me but still, a part of me believes that Mr Majola is innocent. I read a lot of bad things about him like how he betrayed his boss and how he once deceived my mother into helping him kidnap a child but still, nothing makes me hate him. He is bad and I still don't hate him. Like my boyfriend, Jeremy always says - I am attracted to toxicity.

I sit up and switch on my bedroom lights. It's summer so I am in my pajama shorts and a simple top. I put on my shoes and head out. I find my dad in the kitchen drinking a can of beer.

"Hey, dad!" I open the fridge and take out some milk, pour it into a glass then sit next to my dad.

"Can't sleep?"

I nod then rest my head on his shoulder. He wraps his arms around my upper body and pulls me close letting me rest my



head on his chest, "I am scared, dad. I don't know why but I am suddenly scared. What if I mess up?"

He gently rubs my shoulder, "It's okay, you don't have to do it. I don't know what got into me, you're just a sixteen year old and it's my fault."

"I am sorry for disappointing you."

He frees me from his arms and cups my face, "I am not disappointed at all. Like I said before - you are the best thing that ever happened to me. I just thought you were ready and I'm sorry too."

"Dad, can I ask you a question?"

He permits, "Anything."

"Why does Mxolisi Majola hate you? You said he will do anything to hurt you."

He sighs heavily and leans back on the chair, "Mxolisi and I go way back. Back when the big boss Alexander was still alive. You know the saying there can only be one king? The same goes with this messed up business. There's can't be many bosses so some have to be eliminated."

"Why was Lerato eliminated?"

He shifts uncontrollably, "How do you know that?"

"I read somewhere that she died and I know it wasn't a natural death. She was the boss lady so they have to have killed her. As you say, there can only be one king and she was the king in her castle. They eliminated her because she's a woman, isn't it?"

He looks at me with an expression I cannot read, "Lerato wasn't eliminated because she's a woman. She was killing the business for everyone that's why she had to go. She was taking all the business and everyone wanted to work with her."

"Is Mxolisi Majola doing the same? Is that why you want him dead."

He clenches his jaw but quickly composes himself, "I told you he's after me."

"Why dad? Your reasons are not valid and something doesn't add up. I am sorry and this doesn't mean I am taking Mxolisi's side but something is a little off."

He stands up from the chair, "Go to bed."

"I am not sleepy."

"Ammara I said go to bed...why do I always have to repeat myself when it comes to you. Gosh, you're annoying sometimes," he yells.

"I'm sorry," I stand up, toss the glass into the sink and storm to my room. I lock the door behind me and get under the covers.

I was just asking, my dad didn't have to be so harsh. Well, now I am convinced something is up and he's just given me more reasons to dig further. Something is off and I will find out.

The following morning

Advertisement

I wake up fix my bed then bathe. I put on my headphones and join my parents for breakfast.

"Good morning," I sit next to my mother and dish up for myself. She kisses my forehead and grabs her bag - she's leaving for work.

I glare at my father who is reading his newspaper and ignore him. I am not going to speak to him first - he lashed out at me

for no reason at all. He's the one that introduced me to this life so he should answer all my questions.

My father pushes my cellphones and laptop at me. A smile involuntarily escapes my mouth as I take my phone and switch it on. Not taking his attention off his newspaper he says, "You're still grounded."

I stand up from my chair and hug him, "Thank you and I love you."

"I am sorry about last night."

"Let me see my friends and you're forgiven," I say sitting back on the chair.

"Don't push it."

"Thank you for the gadgets," I say already replying to my text messages. His phone rings and he excuses himself. I follow him and stand by the door.

'This is a joke, right?'

'I swear to God if you ruin this for me, I will kill you.'

'Ammara won't do it, she's scared.'

'Fix this!'

I rush back to the table. I wonder what he was talking about. Wait, I have my phone and laptop now. I can hack into my father's cellphone. I take my gadgets and food to my room.

ZARA

They say it's easier to judge when you're not in the situation and I see it now. I used to call Lerato all kinds of names and call her ruthless but now I see why she was like that. I run my fashion house and it's not easy being the boss. People only care about their paychecks. I wish I had done my business back home...I think it would have been great back home.

"Mrs Garcia!" Nikita knocks letting herself into the office. "You have a visitor ma'am."

I close my laptop, "Did I forget a meeting?"

"No, but the person claims to be an old friend."

An old friend? I tell Nikita to let the person in. I stand up waiting for my old friend and it's a face I recognize but I cannot remember his name.

"Zara!" he beams widely and his name instantly pops in my head. It's Mxolisi Majola, the reason I ended up meeting the love of my life.

"Oh my God, look at you... How did you find me?" I offer him a seat and then ask Nikita to bring him something to drink.

"My wife talks a lot about you and the other day she showed me your picture so I had to come and see you myself," he answers still wearing that grin. He ages like wine - it is like he's not a day over forty.

"Aww, I would love to see your wife. Did you marry Lerato?"

He shakes his head, "Lerato died sixteen years ago."

"No! What happened?"

He shrugs, "We still don't know up to this day."

"Man that's bad...may her soul rest in peace - she was a lovely woman. Who looks after Quinton?"

He answers, "His grandparents and I help where I can."

"That's kind of you Mxolisi and I am glad you were able to find love even after losing the woman you love."

"So... I heard the receptionist referring to you as Mrs Garcia. Are you married?" he questions and I nod.

"Yeah....married this lovely man."

"Is he from home or you wanted a citizenship like me," he laughs.

"He's from home."

He nods lightly, "I am glad you found love...any children?"

"One....her name is Ammara and she is the best thing that ever happened to me."

I see his jaw tightening. Did I maybe say something to piss him off? He quickly smiles and I am sure he notices that I saw that, "I am sorry it's just that I lost a daughter a couple of years ago."

"I am so sorry."

He smiles, "It's okay and may I say you don't look like someone who has once had a baby. You should tell the secret to other ladies."

"Actually, I have never had a baby, Ammara is adopted."

Speak of the devil my phone rings and it's Ammara. I ask Mxolisi if I can answer it and he permits.

Me: Hey, baby!

Ammara: Can you please buy me a pack of tampons on your way home.

Me: Sure baby I am sorry I forgot to get them this month.

Ammara: Hurry home...I have stomach cramps and Dad left the moment he received a call from his people that seem to be more important than family.

Me: (laughs) okay I am coming.

I hang up and turn to Mxolisi, "That was my daughter."

"Let's me give you my number," he snatches my phone from my hands before I can protest. He hands it back longer than I



expected but I kept quiet because I didn't want to come across as rude.

The door opens as if it has been pushed with force. Lorenzo walks in and he's wearing a frown on his face.

## AMMARA

I have been searching for hours trying to dig up information on Mxolisi Majola and Lerato Montsho but I am only getting the information I already have. Obviously, the information will not be lying around so I have to dig deeper and find a way to get to the information. I will have to talk to one of my father's minions and I know they will give me the information I need. But, how will I do it? I put on my shoes and rush outside - my parents are not around but I know my dad always leaves someone to watch me. I get outside the house and walk towards the gate - I know they are going to come out the moment they assume I want to leave the house.

"Miss Garcia!" a male voice calls. It's a young man who looks like he's in his late twenties. I don't know why my father has young people working for him. I mean a twenty years old taking care of a forty-year-old.

"Hello," I smile at the man, "Where's Mateo?"

"I don't know. Did you need something?"

I retort, "Can I have his number - my dad told me to tell him when my laptop starts giving me trouble."

He takes out his phone and calls Mateo's number for me. I thank him and then go back to the house. I call Mateo.

Mateo: Miss Garcia is there a problem?

Me: Where are you? I need you.

Mateo: Today is my day off - did you need something?

Me: My dad said I should call you if I need help. Please come over to the house.

Mateo: Okay but first let me call Mr Garcia...

Me: Do you want me to tell my dad that you refuse to help me? I can call me right now.

Mateo: I am on my way.

Me: Thank you.

I wait outside waiting for Mateo. He's taking longer to get here. How far from here does he live? I don't want my parents to find him here. I stand up when I see the gate opening that must be him because a taxi just drove in.

"Miss Garcia!" he greets me again. I don't know why they never use my name.

"I am sorry for calling you on your day off - I will pay you."

He flashes a smile, "Your father pays me enough. What do you need?"

I look around and take his hand leading him to the house. He protests about going to my room but ends up giving in - we sit on the bed and I tell him that I need information on Mxolisi and Lerato. I also ask him to find information on how they are related to my father.

"Miss Garcia I want to help but digging information on your father could get me in trouble," Mateo says after I showed him the information I have gathered so far.

"I will give you ten million dollars."

His eyes widen then he answers, "I will see what I can do."

I lock hands with him, "Can this conversation stay between us - our little secret."

"Your father will want to know what I was doing in his house on my day off and especially in your room. If he senses I am not telling him..."

I kiss him. Mateo is twenty-five which makes him nine years older than me, "Are you also going to tell him that we kissed?"

"Fine it'll be our little secret," he stands up and leaves the room.

I told him to call me when he gets the information I need. I log into Facebook messenger to check if I don't have any new messages - I contacted Lerato's son. I don't know why I am bothering myself with people I don't know but it's not like I have anything to do. About the ten million I promised Mateo, I

don't have it. I am just sixteen where could I have gotten ten million.

I log into my WhatsApp and talk to Jeremy. He's been acting weird these days and I have a feeling he's avoiding me. I have one week until I go back to school and I am no longer grounded.

'Mom! I need those tampons.' I send the text message. She does not respond so I text my father

'Dad I need tampons. I am going to the shops. You can scold me when I come back.' I send the text message but he also doesn't respond.

I take my car keys and head out. I lie to the person by the gate that my father permitted me. I get to the mall and buy what I need then use the bathrooms at the mall before I mess up. On my way out of the bathroom - I bump into a man and this is the third time seeing him. I saw him when I was driving out of the house then I saw him at the shop now he's here. It can't be a coincidence. I walk to the parking lot and see that the man is

still following me. I take out my phone and call my father but he's not picking up.

LORENZO

I look at Mxolisi and our eyes meet. So he thought he could target Zara since she's the weak link. I wonder if he said anything to her but I doubt it because she wouldn't be smiling if she found out about what I did to her.

"Lorenzo Babongile Nxumalo or should I use Garcia?" Mxolisi beams at me. We would have made a great team but he just had to involve his heart and ruin everything.

"Do you know each other?" Zara asks.

Mxolisi nods, "Your husband and I are very close friends. Or should I say were - that was before..."

"Can we talk outside?" I interrupt him.

He scoffs

Advertisement

"You don't want honey dearest finding out the kind of psycho she's married to? I thought we were on a mission to ruin each other's lives."

"Let's talk outside, Mxolisi," I say through my teeth.

"Lorenzo what's going on?" - Zara.

Mxolisi answers, "It's nothing, I am just messing with him. After you, Mr Garcia."

I lead the way to the parking area and the moment we get there Mxolisi starts punching me in the face.

"You piece of shit!" every punch is accompanied by a curse word and he's not giving me the chance to defend myself luckily my team is nearby so they pull him off and I see he also brought his team as anyone has their guns out and pointing at the nearest person.

"How could you, Lorenzo? You killed my woman?" Mxolisi yells almost jumping on me but one of his men holds him back.



I spit out blood and answer, "I did what I had to."

"You killed my woman and the took my daughter."

"Ammara is mine," I retort earning another punch but this time I block it and punch him in the stomach and another blow to the face, "Mxolisi I could end you if I chose to. I suggest you leave and let me be."

"I want my daughter, Lorenzo!"

"I told you she's mine and you will never get her. You know what am capable of and I suggest you up to walk away when I am still asking nicely." I warn him.

"If you think I am going to give up without putting a fight then you're fooling yourself."

Our men still have their guns up and they are waiting for the instruction to fire but this is Zara's workplace and innocent people could die. I take out my phone which has been vibrating nonstop. It's Ammara - Mxolisi snatches the phone from my hand and answers it putting it on loudspeaker,

'Dad someone is following me...dad I need you...I am at....'

Gunshots go off followed by Ammara screaming. I snatch the phone from my Mxolisi

"Ammara!"

A voice replies and there's a voice changer, "Say goodbye to your daughter, Mr Nxumalo."

Three gunshots follow and the line goes dead. I quickly log into the app I use when tracking Ammara. As long as her heart beats then the tracking device works but it's not working.

"This is all your fault!" Mxolisi jumps on me throwing hard punches. I can hear a female voice screaming for him to stop but I think my brain shut down the moment Ammara's tracking device did not respond. I can no longer feel the punches Mxolisi is throwing.

NATALIE

"Hey wake up!"

I place my foot on Ammara who is sleeping on the floor yet the bed is next to her. Well, she fell off and I don't get paid to watch her so I left her there. I shake her with my foot.

"That is not polite, Natalie. Why is she sleeping on the floor?"  
Quinton walks into the room. He lifts Ammara and gently places her on the bed. I roll my eyes and sit on the floor with my back against the wall. I slice my apple into four pieces and help myself watching Quinton check on Ammara.

"She's fine," I tell him.

He checks his wristwatch, "She should be awake by now. I think we should wake her up."

He lightly shakes her, asking her to wake up but it's not working. I watch them, eating my apple. When I am done, I wipe my hands on my jeans and walk to the bed.

"Let me," I say to Quinton and he shifts away from Ammara. I slap her across the face and she wakes up instantly.

"Seriously?" - Quinton.

"Well she's awake now," I go back to my spot.

"What was that for?" Ammara groans sitting up.

"I am sorry about that. Are you okay?" Quinton asks her.

"I am thirsty."

Quinton reaches for the jar of water that is on the floor and pours some water for princess Ammara. He helps her drink and asks her if she's okay again.

"Where am I?" the princess asks.

"Home," Quinton retorts. They make me want to throw up. I stand up and walk to the bed again.

"Hey, Ammara," I beam at her and she chokes on the water she's drinking. Drama queen. She quickly gets off the bed yet still coughing and may I say she's energetic for someone who was unconscious for 72 hours.

"Who are you people?" she looks at me, "Who are you?"

"I am the grim reaper and I have come for your life." I laugh.

"Please stop," Quinton stands on his feet, "We don't want to hurt you. How do you feel? Any pains?"

Ammara looks at me then Quinton. She looks at me again,  
"Where am I?"

"You're home, stupid." I retort and Quinton shoots a stare at me. I add, "You're in South Africa."

Ammara's eyes widen, "South Africa? How did I get here and who the hell are you?"

I exhale heavily, "Long story short, we kidnapped you from Benin. Faked your execution to make it seem like we killed you then injected you with something that made your heart stop long enough for us to take your tracking device off."

"Why do you look like me?" It comes out as a whisper.

"Because you're dead, Ammara. I am you in the afterlife. I am the flesh and you're the soul."

"Natalie shut up and leave the room if you have nothing nice to say," Quinton warns and I raise my hands and go back to my spot. He continues talking to Ammara.

The door opens and I stand up, "Uncle Miguel!"

"Hey, cutie...I see you've found her," he walks to Ammara who is still on her feet as if we want to eliminate her. She won't stop looking at me and every time I look at her, our eyes meet. She must think she's losing her mind which is hilarious of course. Uncle Miguel sits on the bed and asks Ammara if she's okay.

"Why am I here?" that's her response.

"Sit down and I will tell you everything," Uncle Miguel pats the bed as a signal that she must join him. She looks at me.

"Why are you looking at me?" I ask and uncle Miguel shoots a warning stare at me. I exhale heavily and utter

Advertisement

"He won't hurt you."

Ammara slowly walks towards the bed and sits on the far end causing me to chuckle. If we wanted her dead then we would have done it while she was sleeping.

"Hi, Ammara." Uncle Miguel greets her and she nods, "I know you're scared but don't be. We are not the bad guys."

Ammara looks at me and I roll my eyes and look away. Don't tell me she thinks that she's dead. Uncle Miguel puts her out of misery and says, "She's your twin sister."

"My...my what?" Ammara asks with her eyes looking like they are going to pop out of the sockets.

"Natalie is your twin sister. Your mother gave birth to twins and it's a long story," Uncle Miguel.

"Sup twinnie, it's nice seeing you," I wave sarcastically. I hate sharing and now I share a face with someone. Ammara and I are identical twins

"I...I don't understand. How do I have a twin sister and why doesn't she live with us?" - Ammara.

I answer, "Because the people you live with are not our parents, duh."

"Natalie get out," - Uncle Miguel.

"I was getting bored anyway." I exit the room.

AMMARA

I watch as the Natalie girl exits the room. She looks just like me and the only difference is how we did our hair. I can't believe my mother didn't tell me that I have a twin. How did I even get here? The last thing I remember is me calling my father when I was being followed at the mall then I wake up here with these people I don't recognize and a girl that looks like me.

I look at the man that gave me water and he smiles at me and excuses himself. My eyes follow his movements until he exits the room. I dart my eyes back to the man that told me I have a twin. Is this a test and my father wants to know how I handle it or I am kidnapped. Was that girl wearing a mask making her look like me? How did I get to South Africa and if I am kidnapped then why hasn't my father come for me?

"My name is Miguel and you're not kidnapped."

"If I am not kidnapped then let me go home." I retort.

"I will let you go but there's something I need to tell you - a message your mother asked me to pass on to you. I am not talking about Zara, she's not your biological mother. Your mother is Lerato Montsho."

I laugh, "Is this because I was searching into Lerato? Did you kidnap me because of that?"



"No, and we did not kidnap you. We rescued you from the man that was trying to use you. We rescued you from the man that kidnapped you."

I stand up from the bed and walk around the room, "What do you want from me? Do you want money?"

"I don't want anything from you. As I said, your mother asked me to pass a message to you."

I scoff, "Why doesn't she do it herself."

"She died sixteen years ago. There was a bounty on her head and Lorenzo took it."

I shake my head, "You're lying. You're just looking for a way to turn me against my father and you're just wasting your time."

"Lorenzo is not your biological father. He took you from your mother after birth."

I scoff, "Why didn't he take that other girl too. Isn't she my twin? How come she's here."

"Lorenzo doesn't know she exists. Tumie took her away because Lorenzo didn't know that your mother was carrying twins."

I stop pacing and look at him, "What are you hoping to achieve with your lies. My parents are home and since you said I am not kidnapped then let me go."

"I know this is a lot to take in but we are the good guys, Ammara."

I fold my hands to my chest, "Good guys do not kidnap people. So if this Lerato is my mother then who is my father?"

"Mxolisi Majola."

"And my grandfather is Obama. Look there's no need to lie to me. If you want money then call my father and he will give you what you need," I say.

"Let me handle this, uncle Miguel." my so-called twin sister walks in.

"Take it easy on her," Miguel exits the room.

"My name is Natalie, someone who doesn't tolerate nonsense so sit down and listen to me." she sits on the exact spot that Miguel was sitting.

"I don't want to sit down."

"Sweetie I am country and ghetto trust me you don't want to mess with me," she utters boldly. I sit on the bed. She comes to

sit next to me, "Do you know that I spent the past year looking for you and uncle Miguel wasted sixteen years of his life looking for you?"

I slowly raise my hand and touch her face. She's not wearing a mask. It's her face, "Find what you're looking for?" she asks.

"So you're my sister?"

She nods, "I am the oldest."

"She's lying," a voice yells from outside the room

"Shut up Quinton."

## MXOLISI

It's been five days since Ammara was executed, something I refuse to believe. I know she is somewhere out there. They can't kill her. These people want something and I know they will use Ammara to get it. As much as I hate to admit it, Lorenzo and I have been working together trying to find Ammara. It's like searching for a needle in a bag of sand. I am using every connection I have and so is Lorenzo but still no sign or clue of where Ammara might be.

I blame Lorenzo for all this. If only he had been patient that I was going to get the money, Lerato would still be alive and I would have my daughter. As much as I hate Lorenzo, I need him for this one and punching him will not bring back my Ammara. I can't believe she was in front of me and I couldn't recognize her. What if those people killed her. Are they after me or Lorenzo?.

I feel like God is punishing me for betraying Lerato. Maybe I am getting my karma because just when I had found the woman I love, I lost her and when I had found my daughter - I lost her too. When will I rest? Haven't I suffered enough?

"You should get some rest. Lorenzo will find her," Zara hands me a cup of coffee and sits on the couch opposite me. I am in my apartment and that idiot Lorenzo left his woman here. Poor Zara is worried about Ammara - she will die when she finds out that Ammara isn't hers. She seems to love her. I can't believe Zara is naive to be with a man like Lorenzo. If Lorenzo could betray me and his blood brother then what will stop him from betraying poor Zara. I don't know why Zara has to be so naive. She was naive back then and still is naive.

"I can't sleep." I sip on the coffee Zara gave me. I am more of a tea guy but I don't want Zara to feel bad. I wonder where her husband is and I hope he gets hit by a train wherever he is and dies. I also put a tail on Lorenzo just to be sure if he's not putting up a front and just wanted to take Ammara away from me.

"I can't believe they took Ammara. What if they hurt my little girl. I wonder if she's scared wherever she is. Why is she involved in these matters? She's just an innocent child," she says and a tear falls on her face but she quickly wipes it off. "I pray that she's fine and I hope these are not the same people we fled from sixteen years ago."

Only if she knew that they were fleeing from me. I wish I had known that Lorenzo was going to use Zara. Only if I had known and just maybe I would have my daughter with me. I wonder how she will take the news of me being her father. I wonder if she's going to call me father as she calls Lorenzo.

Zara squeezes my hands and utters, "Thank you for helping look for my daughter it means a lot to us."

"Does your husband have enemies?" I change the subject because I might end up blurting out that Ammara is my daughter and that her so-called husband stole my child. I am scared I might strangle her to death just to make Lorenzo feel what I felt when he executed Lerato.

"I am going to bed," I stand up from the couch and take my laptop with me. I was checking the CCTV footage I got from

Lorenzo's house and the one from the parking area to see if there's any clue I can get. I think these people had everything planned and I feel like they had help from someone close to Lorenzo. There's no way they just predicted that Ammara was going to be alone.

I call Jasper. I asked him to get his team to look out for any planes and trains that came in the day Ammara was kidnapped. As impossible as it sounds, I am desperate. I just need to know if she's still alive. Only if these people could provide me with proof of life.

Jasper: The team is on it and we will find her.

Me: It's been five days man and I can't help think what if. What if she's gone? I just found her yet I am losing her again

Jasper: You need to be strong for your little girl. You owe it to Lerato to find her. Don't give up yet.

Me: Have you talked to your brother?

Jasper: Not yet. We have bigger problems to worry about. And Lorenzo is the least of my worries.

Me: He's still your brother.

Jasper: He betrayed us. Can we please focus on finding Ammara? I won't rest until I know she's fine because I feel like this is my fault. If I hadn't introduced Lorenzo to you then everything would have gone as we had planned

Me: It's not your fault. Let's me call you later.

Jasper: We will find her, Mxolisi.

AMMARA



"Do you want some water?" Quinton asks. I cannot believe my ears. Miguel just told me what happened between my parents and Lorenzo. At first, I didn't believe that Lorenzo is who they say he is until they made me do a DNA with Quinton and Natalie. They are my siblings. Of course, Quinton's genes are different from mine since we only share a mother but Ammara is my blood sister.

My whole life is a lie. All those years I spent with Lorenzo and Zara yet they were lying to me. All those times I called Lorenzo my father and told him I love him. He was just using me. He even tried to make me eliminate my father. He knows that Mxolisi is my father and asked me to kill him. Was it a test too? Does Mxolisi know that I am his daughter? This is all too much for me.

"I need some air," I tell Miguel and he nods. I exit the room and head outside. I take a walk - I need to clear my head and I need to know what the way forward is from here.

I bump into someone on my way out, "Oh sorry."

"Miss Garcia."

I gasp, "Mateo! What are you doing here?"

"How do you think we found you? I knew it was time to get you home when you started asking about your mother."

I shake my head, "You knew all along?"

"It wasn't my place to tell you and it's not like you would have believed me."

I say

Advertisement

"I wouldn't have believed you."

"Let me get going and I want my ten million."

I chuckled and head out the gate. I need to clear my head.

"Hey ugly," Natalie holds my hand.

"We have the same face."

"But you're uglier," she retorts and I laugh, "So Mrs Garcia, how is it like in Benin."

"It's nice."

She nudges my shoulder with hers, "Come on, I want to know everything. It was my first time that day when we took you."

"I have a lot on my mind, Natalie. I am surprised you're so calm."

She shrugs, "Well they told me the truth when I turned twelve. At first, I didn't understand but as time went on, it started making sense. I hate what they did to our mother and it's not fair that she died just like that."

"Lorenzo is a very powerful man and even if we wanted to avenge our mother's death, we won't succeed."

She smiles, "You're his daughter and he doesn't know that you know what you know. That alone makes us a step ahead of him. Tell me you do not want to punch him in the face?"

"I do but he raised me and he's my dad."

"He's the reason our mother is dead. He kept our mother locked up when she was pregnant and took you away from her and you're telling me he's your dad? I hate him, Ammara and I want him to pay for what he did."

I wipe the tear that just fell on her face, "I didn't mean to hurt you and I am also mad at what he did."

"You don't look mad to me."

"Unlike you, I don't wear my emotions on my sleeves. Lorenzo will pay for what he did to our mother and then we will deal with Mxolisi." I promise.

"So how are we going to do it?"

I smirk, "We are going to make him wish he was never born and we don't even have to lift a finger."

"What do you have in mind?"

I wink, "Buy me that Kota first."

## LORENZO

I am pacing up and down the house making phone calls. I will turn this country upside down if that's what it takes to get my daughter. Yes, I said it, she's my daughter. I am the one who raised her all those years. I meant it when I said I can take a bullet for that little girl. I love her as if she were my own - I have been with her for sixteen years after all.

"Lorenzo you're making us dizzy can you please sit down," Mxolisi yells. We are at my house and Zara did not go to work today. She hasn't gone to work since Ammara went missing.

I ignore Mxolisi and continue yelling at the person I am talking to on the phone, "I am paying you so do your job and if you don't find my daughter in the next 24hours I will have your head."

I harshly throw my phone on the couch and continue pacing up and down. Zara is quiet, all she does is cry all day. I love her but right now she is annoying the heck out of me.

"What are they saying?" Mxolisi asks.

"No sign of her." I sigh and throw myself on the couch. What if they eliminated her? What if my little girl is gone?

"Lorenzo if anything happens to her, I swear on Lerato, I will kill Zara."

Zara's eyes widen and she quickly shifts away from Mxolisi,

"What did I do?"

"Ask your husband and you better pray my daughter is fine." - Mxolisi.

The door opens and we all stand. Oh my God, it's her. It's Ammara and she's wearing the same clothes she was wearing that day when I left her at the house. "Dad!" she runs towards us and throws herself in my arms. I look at Mxolisi who had his jaw clenched. I know he wants to punch me but Ammara knows me as her father.

"Hey baby, are you okay? Did they harm you?" I ask checking her face and checking if she's not bruised.

"I was scared, dad," she says with tears clouding in her eyes, "They wanted to kill me."

I wipe the tears off her face and hug her, "It's okay...I am here now."

"Are you okay?" Mxolisi asks her. I can sense the pain in his voice. Ammara looks at me then back at Mxolisi. I forgot I told her that he's a dangerous man.

"It's okay sweetie he's on our side."

"Hey baby," Zara hugs her, "Did they harm you?"

"No, they didn't do anything to me they told me to tell dad that this was just a warning."

I look at Mxolisi and he still looks like he wants to punch me in the face. I know he will not do it in front of his daughter.

"How did you get here?" I ask Ammara. She sits down and Zara hands her a glass of water.

"They took me that day at the mall. I don't know why they took me but they told me that you would know, dad. They didn't

hurt me they just kept me locked in a room and brought me back today."

I nodded lightly, "Did you see any face you recognize?"

"They had their faces covered most of the time."

"Are you okay though...do you want to see a doctor?" Mxolisi asks her and she shakes her head.

"I am tired and I just want to be alone."

Zara stands up from the couch, "Come, I will run a bath for you."

"No, I want to be alone."

I look at Zara and she gets the message. Ammara must be a little traumatized and wants time alone - she leaves the room.

"Something is a little off," I tell Mxolisi, "I know Ammara and she's not a crier."

"Maybe they hurt her and she's scared to talk," Zara states. "I think they did something to her. We'd just have to wait until she has rested."



NATALIE

I get into Ammara's room and close the door, locking it. I can't believe her parents did notice that it wasn't her. I open the window and let Ammara climb in.

"What took you so long do you know how long I have been there?" she half shouts but making sure she keeps her voice down.

"I had to make it look real, remember you just came back from being kidnapped."

She rolls her eyes and goes to the bathroom. I hear the shower running and take out my phone to call Uncle Miguel.

Me: We are in and they didn't notice that I am different so the plan is on.

Miguel: You girls be careful. All those years hiding you would be in vain if something happens to you.

Me: Relax uncle Miguel - you taught me well and we will never get caught. Ammara and I are very identical - only God can tell us apart.

Miguel: Keep me updated on everything that you do. Take care of your sister.

Me: I will.

I hang up and throw my phone on the bed. Someone knocks and it's Lorenzo. I rush to the bathroom and yank Ammara out of the shower and toss her a towel. She wraps it around her body shouting at me

Advertisement

keeping her voice low of course.

"Dad I am bathing," I overhear Ammara say. I am standing behind the bathroom door.

"Sweetie are you okay. I am worried. Did they hurt you...maybe abuse you sexually?"

Ammara chuckles, "Dad you know I tell you everything and if they had done something to me, I would have told you."

"I was just checking."

"I know you were worried and I am sorry for not staying in the house. This is my fault," - Ammara.

"It's not your fault. We will talk later...let me let you rest." I hear the door opening and closing. I get out of the bathroom and join Ammara who is lying on the bed on her back.

"You good?" I ask her.

She sits up, "He's so clueless and he won't know what hit him when we are done with him."

"We need to toast to this."

She gasps, "You drink alcohol?"

"Sweetie I was born in South Africa. Do I breathe?"

"Well that changes today because I hate the smell of alcohol and my dad will sense the difference if you show any interest in it," she tells and I roll my eyes. "And stop rolling your eyes at everything, I don't do that."

She does.

LORENZO

'When am I getting my daughter?' - Mxolisi.

I ignore the text message and focus on making myself a cup of coffee. I am stalling telling Ammara the truth - I don't want to lose her and I know she will hate me when she learns the truth about how I got her.

"Morning, dad!" Ammara walks to the fridge and takes out a can of soda.

"Hey, sweetie. How are you today?"

"Dad I am fine, stop worrying about me. What happened is in the past and stop blaming yourself," she kisses me on the cheek and walks out of the kitchen.

I sit on the kitchen chair and drink my coffee while reading the newspaper.

"Hey, Dad." Ammara kisses me on the cheek and places a bowl in the sink

"Didn't you just come in minutes ago?"

She shakes her head, "No, I haven't seen you today."

"That's weird...okay."

"I'm be in my room...I am reading so don't disturb me," she exits the room.

I hear the television playing and go to the sitting room to check, "Ammara didn't you say you're reading?"

"What are you talking about?" she takes a sip of the soda she took out of the fridge. "And when did I say that?"

"In the kitchen - just now." I retort and she shakes her head.

I sigh, "Nevermind." I walk to my bedroom and Ammara calls me standing by her bedroom door. How did she get there so fast?

"Dad my laptop is acting up."

I look at her trying to make sense of everything. She was in the sitting room. I left her there just now. I look at her then take a few steps and peek at the sitting room - the TV is off and there's no one.

Deep breath.

"Are you okay?" she asks.

"Yeah, my head is a little all over the place. I am going for a drive." I head back to the dining room and look for my car keys. The door opens and Ammara walks in, this child is freaking me out today. I need to get out of the house before I lose my mind.

I go for a drive and when I get back to the house, I find Zara watching television with Ammara. I greet them and go to the kitchen to get a beer.

"Hey sweetie, can you pass me a beer," I say to Ammara who is getting something from the fridge. She hands me the beer and

then leaves. I choke on my beer. Ammara is in the sitting room. I quickly rush to the sitting room.

"What's wrong?" Zara asks me.

"I just ran into Ammara in the kitchen yet she's here with you."

Ammara and Zara look at each other, "I am not crazy I saw her."

Ammara replies, "Dad what's going on? I never left mom's side"

"Nevermind." I head to the bedroom.

"You good?" Ammara passes me and goes into her room

"Why are you everywhere today? It's messing with my head." I yell and she slams the door behind her.

"Who are you talking to?" Zara comes from behind me.

"I am talking to Ammara."

She looks at me weirdly, "She is in the sitting room."

"No, she went into her room."

Zara shakes her head and calls Ammara who joins us looking as shocked as Zara.

"I saw her walk into her room just now." I walk into Ammara's room and no one is there.

What is happening to me?

## LORENZO

I feel like I am losing my mind. I feel like I am seeing double yet there's only one Ammara. Ammara came back from being kidnapped acting weird. Maybe it's my conscious eating me up but it is messing with my head. I still haven't told her about Mxolisi being her father and I don't know if I can. It is a lot and Ammara hating me is the last thing I need. I would lose my mind if she hates me. That kid means the world to me and as it is I feel like I am losing it.

"Going somewhere?" Zara asks.

I ignore her and put on my shoes. I feel like staying at the house will only make me crazier.

"Lorenzo I am talking to you."

I grab my phone and car keys, "I am going out, Zara. Why do you ask the obvious?"

"What's going on with you lately? You've been moody and lashing out at me every chance you get."



"I am tired and please just leave me alone." I head out of the bedroom and leave her calling my name. She can be annoying at times.

I walk towards Ammara's bedroom and hear giggling. I open the door and find her talking on the phone.

"What happened to the saying knock before you enter," she asks looking slightly annoyed.

"I am going out. Come straight home from school."

"Okay," she answers then shifts her attention back to the phone.

"Come straight home, Ammara. I don't want last time repeating itself."

She stands up from the bed and walks toward me, "I know you care about me but nothing will happen and last time they caught me off guard. I have Mateo keeping an eye on me so don't worry."

"You and Mateo are pretty close these days. What's up with that?"

She smiles and shifts away from me a little, "Mateo is someone that gets paid to be around me and he happens to be cute so pardon me for being friendly."

"He's older than you and you have Jeremy."

She sighs and goes to sit on the bed, "Jeremy and I broke up. When I came back from being kidnapped he had found someone else."

"He broke up with you and you didn't punch him in the nose? That's the first."

She chuckles, "I aimed for the gut as you advised last time."

"I am going - don't be late for school." I kiss her forehead and head out.

I pump into Zara but ignore her. I will deal with her when I am calm because I know I will just lash out at her. A message pings in just after I drive out of the house.

'Hey, old friend.' - it's a phone number I don't recognize.

'Who is this?'

'Someone who wants your head,' - anonymous

'Stop playing games, who are you.'

They reply, 'You have a very lovely daughter.'

I try calling the number but it's not going through. I drive back to the house. Ammara has already left for school. I just left the house how did she leave so quickly? I try calling her but her number is not going through.

I call Zara and luckily she picks up.

Zara: So now you want to talk?

Me: Not now, what time did Ammara leave for school.

Zara: I don't know, check her room. Why are you calling me when we are in the same house.

Me: Haven't you left for work?

Zara: Lorenzo I am telling you that we are both in the house. I just saw your car drive-in.

Me: Ammara is not in her room and her car is still here.

Zara: Maybe Jeremy picked her up. You will see her after school.

Me: Jeremy and Ammara broke up. I will go to her school.

Zara: She is fine, stop exagge...

I hang up before she can finish and drive to Ammara's school. I find her waiting outside the school and she's talking to one of her friends. I sigh with relief when she waves at me. Maybe Zara is right, I am exaggerating and I need to find this person that sent me text messages.

From Ammara's school, I drive to Mxolisi's place. I know I am the last person he wants to see but this is concerning his daughter and I know he would love to be involved.

"Are you ready to give me my daughter?" Mxolisi asks when he sees that it is me at the door.

"I think those people are after me again."

He steps aside and invites me into his house, "What people are you talking about?"

"The people that kidnapped her last time. I think they are after her again."

"I don't care who is after her - give me my daughter and I will take care of her myself," he retorts.

"We still have to break the news to her meaning I am still her dad so are you helping me or not?"

"I prefer punching you in the face," he says. Does he have to be so childish?

AMMARA

"Ammara in the house," Natalie walks into our bedroom and shuts the door behind her. She went to school for me - I wonder what her teachers back home think since she's this side. Was she even going to school?

"I sound nothing like that."

"You do...so I met your friends and may I say your school has the cutest boys (screams) can we swap lives and I go to your school every day?" she throws herself on the bed.

"Weren't you going to school back in South Africa?"

She nods and answers

Advertisement

"I was but your school is high maintainance and shit. I love it here and I will make sure to twist uncle Miguel's arm. I am moving here."

"I liked South Africa. I would also love to spend some time with our brother."

She groans in annoyance, "Quinton is boring. Come on we have to convince uncle Miguel into moving here."

"Don't you have friends that you're going to miss back there?"

She laughs, "No, I forgot about them the moment we got into the plane."

"Anyway, how did school go and I hope you did not embarrass me."

She smiles, "We kissed a guy named Jeremy."

"Natalie I warned you to stay away from him. I told you I broke up with him."

She shrugs still smiling, "In my defence, he caught me off guard and I had no choice."

"Please don't tell me he begged you to take him back?"

"He's so persistent," she gets out of bed and takes off the school uniform, "Still on the school topic, expect a fail in History and you got detention whatever that is."

"Argh Natalie what did you do to get detention?"

She replies, "As I said, we kissed Jeremy then the Math teacher walked in on us."

"Stop saying we..."

I don't get to finish talking, my father calls me and he pushes the door open. I run to the bathroom and lock myself inside. Why didn't Natalie lock the door?

"Who was that?" I overhear my father ask Natalie.

"No one and don't you knock? I could have been naked."

"This is my house and you left the door open - who is that girl that ran to the bathroom?" I lean on the door with my heart pumping fast. I hope Natalie doesn't tell him the truth, "Ammara who is in the bathroom?"

"Fine, I'll tell you," says Natalie. I look around and there's no way out. The bathroom window is very tiny, "I am a lesbian dad and that girl is my girlfriend."

WTF.

"You're... how? I thought you were with Jeremy?"

Natalie sighs, "I also thought I love him but it is what it is and please leave my room you're making my guest uncomfortable."

"Well...uhm...you're... I'll call your mom," I hear the door close and someone knocks on the bathroom door

"Come out." - Natalie.

"Lesbian? Seriously?"



She wraps her hands behind my neck and says, "Come on sweetie don't tell me you don't love me?"

"Stop being weird and no one is lesbian."

She laughs, "Prepare for the talk with your mother young lady."

"Why do I have to talk to her?"

She answers, "I went to school so do the other part."

Great!

## AMMARA

"He likes you," says Natalie. We are in my room, I am doing homework and she is sitting by the window gossiping about everyone she sees. My father tightened the security around the house so Natalie spends the whole day drooling over guards.

"Who likes me?" I close my book and textbooks shoving them in my satchel.

"Mateo...he likes you and is scared to tell you."

"I didn't know you're his spokesperson. Mateo is almost the same age as Quinton." I say.

"It doesn't matter how old she is as long as you love him and I think you two would make a perfect couple."

I retort, "Love makes people weak and the moment I fall in love with him it's going to take my focus from our mission."

"There's nothing wrong with falling in love, Ammara. Don't tell me you don't have feelings for him."

I shake my head and go to the window. Mateo is standing with his back against the wall. He's wearing black formal trousers

and a white chinese collar shirt. He has his hands in his pockets and the way he's not looking at us is as if he knows we are talking about him.

"He's cutes," Natalie nudges my arm.

"Why do I get a feeling you like him?"

She shakes her head and goes to sit on the bed, "Nah I am more into Jeremy than him."

I see a car drive in and it's my father's. Another car drives in after his, "We have a guest," I tell Natalie.

"Do you want me to take this one?"

"I got it," I put on my shoes and head to the sitting room. I find my father with Mxolisi. I hug my father and politely greet Mxolisi. He likes looking at me, more like staring.

"What did you bring for me?" I whisper to my father and he takes out a chocolate slap from his pocket and hands it to me. He kisses my forehead and asks me to get a beer for Mxolisi. I wonder how long they are planning to keep from me that Mxolisi is my father. Speaking of Mxolisi I would love to hear his

side of the story. Why did he betray my mother and did he love her?

I get a beer for my father and Mxolisi or should I say both my dads. I give them their beer and sit on the couch opposite them. Lorenzo clears his throat, I have a feeling they want to break the news to me meaning I have to prepare to look shocked.

MXOLISI

We are in Lorenzo's home and today is the day Lorenzo breaks the news to Ammara. I wonder how she will take it. People are threatening Lorenzo and I need my daughter on my side in case things get ugly.

"Ammara there's something I want to tell you," Lorenzo starts, "Firstly, I want you to know that I love you and I didn't know things would turn out this ugly. I hope you don't hate me after this."

"Dad you're scaring me," Ammara whispers. She looks at me and looks at Lorenzo, "Why would I hate you?"

Lorenzo takes a deep breath, "Sixteen years ago a misunderstanding took place between me and your mother so I took you from her."

"I don't understand." - Ammara.

Lorenzo stands up, paces up and down the room, "Mxolisi is your father."

Ammara looks at me, "How is Mxolisi my father?"

"I stole you from your mother after you were born and I am sorry." - Lorenzo.

"Are you trying to get rid of me?" Ammara asks, "Do you want him to traffic me since you said he traffics children?"

I look at Lorenzo and frown. Why would he tell my daughter that I traffic children? How will she trust me when she thinks I am the bad guy. How will I make amends with her when I am a bad person in her eyes.

Ammara stands up from the chair, "Mxolisi is not my father."  
she storms out of the room.

"I'm sorry

Advertisement

" Lorenzo says. I punch him in the face.

"Apologizing won't fix anything. You kidnapped my woman and kept my daughter from me and now she hates me."

NATALIE

"This changes everything," I say to Ammara pacing up and down the room. Why did Lorenzo have to tell her that he's not her father? This ruins our plan - why didn't he tell her sooner?

"It changes nothing, he still killed our mother and he has to pay. The plan goes on as planned." Ammara answers.

"What about Mxolisi? I get that he deceived our mother but uncle Miguel states that he loved her."

"I don't care about him, my main focus is Lorenzo. That man has been lying to me all these years. I need to clear my head," she takes her phone and goes out through the window meaning I have to play her while she's gone. I wear the same clothes she's wearing. We try to wear matching outfits these days and I hate it.

I open the door and find Mxolisi by the door. It looks as if he was about to knock.

"Hey...may I come in?" he asks and I let him into the room.

'Mxolisi is in the room don't come back yet.' I send the text message to Ammara.

Mxolisi sits on the chair that is in front of the table Ammara uses when studying.

"How are you?" Mxolisi asks.

"I don't know how to feel. I just found out the man that raised me isn't my father."

He comes to sit next to me on the bed. He takes my hand and cups it with his, "I have been looking for you for sixteen years. You have no idea how long I imagined the day I will meet you. The day I would hold you in my arms. I know I cannot make up for the sixteen years I spent absent but I promise to make the coming days the best. Please give me the chance to be your father?"

I can't make any decisions without talking to Ammara so I answer, "I need time, I need time to process everything. This is all too much for me."

"I understand and I will be around in case you want to talk."

I nod. He stands up and leans over kissing my forehead. I wonder if he knows that there is two of us. Unlike Ammara, I didn't grow up with a father and I never got to feel that love as she did.

"How did you meet mom?" I ask him before he can walk out of the room.

He chuckles and says "Our parents arranged everything. My mother, your grandmother set me up with Lerato."

"Did you love her?"



"More than anything," he answers then stares into blank space as if he's thinking about her, "I was kind of hoping you look like her."

"Don't I?"

He shakes his head, "Surprisingly, you don't."

We go quiet for some time until he decides to leave the room.

'He's gone.' I send the text message to Ammara.

She still hasn't responded to the first one. The day goes by quickly - Ammara is still not back. I eat dinner with 'my parents' and then take some food to the room for Ammara but she's still not back. I try calling her but can't reach her.

'Uncle Miguel I need your help. Ammara is still not yet back.'

'Where did she go?' - Miguel

'I don't know but she left in the afternoon and she still isn't back. I am getting worried.'

'Let us give her until morning, did something happen?' - Miguel.

'Lorenzo confessed that's he's not her father.'

'Maybe she's just upset. She was close with Lorenzo. Give her time,' - Miguel.

I go to bed with a heavy heart. Something is wrong and I can feel it. I wake up the following morning and still no sign of Ammara. I call uncle Miguel and he assures me that Ammara will come back. I go to school and when I get back home, still no sign of her.

Another day goes by and I am getting worried. Two days go by, still, no sign of Ammara and Uncle Miguel keeps telling me to calm down. How can I calm down when my sister is missing.

"Mom where's Mateo?" I ask Zara.

Lorenzo walks into the kitchen, "He quit his job three days ago."

Mateo works with us, why would he quit without telling me or Miguel?

I spend the rest of the day in the bedroom and I keep looking at the window in hopes that Ammara might climb in. Screw this, I put on my shoes and head downstairs. I find Mxolisi and Lorenzo together - it seems Mxolisi just got here

"I am not Ammara," I blurt out.

## LORENZO

Mxolisi and I look at each other confused by what Ammara just said. What does she mean she's not herself? I hope she didn't take anything that is making her crazy because what she just said is pure madness. If she's not Ammara then who is she?

"Are you okay?" Mxolisi asks her, "Do you want to sit down and talk? I know it must be hard to accept that Lorenzo isn't your father but we can talk about it."

And the father of the year award goes to Mxolisi. I walk toward Ammara and ask her, "What's wrong sweetie?"

She answers with much urgency, "Ammara is missing and I think she's in danger."

"But you are Ammara!" - Mxolisi.

I sigh heavily - kids need patience and that is something Mxolisi needs to learn, "Okay why don't we sit down."

"No, Lorenzo I don't want to sit down. My sister is missing and you want me to sit down?" she pushes my arms off her shoulder.

"Listen, young lady, I might not be your father but you still need to respect me," I warn her.

She mumbles, "You raised Ammara, not me."

"What's with the crazy talk? If you're not Ammara then who are you?" Mxolisi asks.

"My name is Natalie and I am Ammara's twin."

"Ammara we have bigger issues to handle and we don't have time for your games. Go to your room or go see your friends," I tell her.

"This is not a joke, Lorenzo. There are two of us and I came here weeks ago. Ammara has been hiding me in her room. I swear I am telling the truth."

Mxolisi whispers to me, "How many children did Lerato give birth to?"

I reply, "Don't let her get to you - she's just bored and looking for a way to keep herself occupied. Ammara loves attention. And you Ammara, go play with your dolls or do something."

She groans loudly, "What do I have to do to prove that I am not Ammara?"

Mxolisi asks, "Where are you from then, Natalie?"

"I am from South Africa and uAmmara kakwazi ukukhuluma isiZulu (Ammara doesn't know how to speak Zulu)"

It's not her. How is this possible? I look at Mxolisi again who seems less shocked than I am. How are there two of them? It also explains why I was seeing double lately.

"How do we know that you didn't just learn that online?" - Mxolisi.

"Please come with me," she pleads that we follow her to her room. We watch her search for God knows what and we wait patiently. She hands me a passport, Ammara doesn't have a passport and this is a South passport. Natalie Mazibuko yet on the picture its Ammara. Seriously what is going on?

"So you're Natalie?" I ask her and she nods, "You're Ammara's twin sister? How?"

She answers, "They say my mother gave birth to twins and you were only given one."

"I don't understand, how did you get here then?"

She says, "I was part of the team that kidnapped Ammara - we took her to South Africa and told her everything."

I swear if I was drinking something I would have choked on it,  
"She knows everything as in everything?"

"Yes, we know that you killed our mother and that you have been hiding her from our father but right now what's important is finding my sister," - Natalie.

Mxolisi looking confused as I am asks, "Who raised you?"

"Uncle Miguel

Advertisement

" she retorts, "And Quinton was around too."

"Quinton? And he kept you from me all that time I was looking for you?" Mxolisi asks.

"I didn't know you and Quinton are close," - Natalie.

Mxolisi adds, "I raised Quinton after your mother's death and I thought he's in the UK where he works as a gynaecologist."

"Quinton works with computers," Natalie corrects.

Mxolisi takes out his phone, "See this picture of Quinton at his workplace."

Natalie shakes her head, "That's not Quinton."

"You say Miguel raised you, describe him," I say

"He's about Mxolisi's height, chubby and dark complexion."

I look at Mxolisi who shakes his head, "What's his wife's name and how many kids does he have?"

"He doesn't have a wife and no kids either," she retorts.

I walk to her and stand in front of her, "Sweetie the person who raised you is not Miguel. Miguel is Latin, has two daughters and his wife is Jennifer. That person that claims to be Quinton is not Quinton either."

"No! Those people raised me. Why would they hide their real identity?"

"Because to them it's a game and money is the prize. They used you to get Ammara - they knew she would let her guard down when you're around," Mxolisi states.

"I don't understand - they were nice to me and they planned that I come here."

I hold her hand, "I am sorry but I think it was all part of their plan. I promise to find Ammara and fix everything. I started this mess and I will fix it."



Natalie says, "But what do they want from Ammara? They already had me."

"They know you were going to tell the truth if Ammara went missing and they know that Mxolisi and I won't sit around knowing she's out there. They are using her as bait to get what they want."

"Do you maybe have a photo of this Miguel impersonator?" - Mxolisi.

Natalie shows us a picture on her phone and it's Tumie. He used to work for me but I lost touch with him when I left South Africa.

"Do you know him?" Mxolisi asks.

"Yes and he's after Alexander's volt. He knows I will do anything for Ammara."

"Lerato was the key, we can't open the volt without her fingerprints," - Mxolisi.

"I have her fingerprints and Tumie knows that. I think that's why he took the twin. He's after the money."

AMMARA

"I brought you some food," Mateo places a tray of food next to me and I push it away. I should have known that he was not to be trusted when he betrayed Lorenzo. He pretended to give me a lift to the mall only to drug me and bring me to this place. I cannot wait to twist his neck when I get free.

"Where are we?" I ask Mateo.

"Relax we are still in Benin," he retorts wearing a wide grin

"Why are you doing this - I thought we are friends?"

He changes the subject, "Ammara please eat and I won't leave until you eat."

"Why not let me starve. You're going to kill me anyway."

He looks around to check if there's anyone nearby, "He promised not to harm you. As soon as Lorenzo gives up the location of the vault then you and I are free to do whatever we want. I asked Tumie to let me have you as my payment. I don't want money, I want you."

I laugh, "Do you seriously think I would want to be with you after this?"

"It will take time but you will grow to love me. We will go someplace far from everyone and everything. You will have no choice but to love me."

"I will never love you but one thing I could love is giving you a handshake on the neck, several times," I retort.

"Tumie says your mother was feisty just like you."

Tumie used to watch my mother when Lorenzo held her hostage. It feels like history is repeating itself.

"Don't talk about my mother," I warn him.

"Cut the crap you don't even know her to get upset."

I grab the tray with food and hit him with it. The plate goes crashing on the floor and I pick up the broken glass and stab it into his chest. He falls on his back and get on top of him and hit him with the tray until he loses consciousness. I get off him and search into the wardrobe and take a shirt that I put on - changing the top I am wearing. I am in shorts that Mateo got for me when I got here. I take the gun on his waist and head out. It seems we are the only people in this house. I shove the gun on my waist and look for a phone around the house. I find it in the sitting room but quickly run out when I hear voices. I

get into one of the rooms and hide in the closet. It is only a matter of time until they find Mateo's unconscious body.

I dial my father's (Lorenzo) number, I know it by heart.

Me: (whispering) Dad I need you!

The closet door opens and the phone slips from my hands.

## AMMARA

"Who are you?" a female voice asks. The person is wearing what I suppose is a cleaner's uniform. She looks in her early thirties. I slowly walk out of the closet - pull down the shirt so that she does not notice the gun tucked into my waist.

"Hi... I am with Mateo," I nervously chuckle.

"But what are you doing in the closet?"

I roughly scratch the back of my neck trying to think of a reason why one would hide in the closet. The only thing that comes to mind is, "See Mateo and I are playing hide and seek."

Someone yells 'Agnes' from outside the room and I pull out the gun from my waist and hit her in the back of the head. I make sure to apply force that it knocks her out. I search her pockets looking for something that might help me get out of this place but she only has her cleaning clothes in her pockets. I drag her into the closet and lock her inside - which almost drains the soul out of me since she's twice my size. The phone rings

making a lot of noise and I start looking for it. It's in the closet and Agnes is lying on it. I push her off and answer it.

Me: (whispering) Hello.

Mxolisi: Ammara where are you?

Me: I don't know, I was unconscious when they brought me here. Can't you try tracking this phone?

Mxolisi: It's a landline phone but we will try and sweetie you will be fine, okay.

Me: There's something I want to tell you.

Mxolisi: Your sister told me everything. We will talk about it when you're safe.

Someone snatches the phone from my hands. It's Miguel or should I say Tumie. He is with two men who hurriedly come to

my side and hold me by my arms. They search me and take the gun.

"Hello," Tumie speaks on the phone. His lips curve to a smile, "Ahhh it's Mxolisi. I didn't know you and Lorenzo kissed and made up." He looks at me and winks, "Don't worry I will take good care of little Lerato."

He walks across the room and seems to be enjoying the conversation he's having with Mxolisi, "Let's meet for drinks - come alone or your daughter dies."

Tumie nods, "I will send you the details."

He hangs up the call, tosses the phone on the bed then walks toward me. He slaps me hard enough to knock me to the floor but his men hold me up, "That's for what you did to Mateo. You just ruined things with the one person that cared about you."

I spit in his face earning myself another slap, "Your father will find you without a tooth," he warns and I kick him hard in the private part. His men pull me back and I kick the other one but fail to fight off the last man standing. He pins my arms behind my back, pressing me to the bed.

"Lock her up," Tumie groans his voice barely coming out.

MXOLISI

I hand Lorenzo the phone after Tumie hung up. I toss myself on the couch and bury my face in my hands. This is sixteen years ago repeating itself and I can't lose Ammara the same way I lost Lerato. I look at Natalie who is standing at the far end of the room with her back against the wall. I have two beautiful daughters - they are pretty just like their mother.

"He wants to meet up," I tell Lorenzo, "I am going to give him what he wants." My eyes are fixed on Natalie the whole time. She walks to me and says, "No, we can't let them win."

"I know but they will kill your sister and I cannot have that. They already killed your mother and I don't think I'll be able to live with myself if Ammara was to die."

She shakes her head and turns to Lorenzo, "There has to be something we can do. Come on you're a man with influence. Call someone but don't surrender."



Lorenzo exhales heavily, "Tumie knows all that and he will do whatever it takes to make sure he hits us where it hurts most. It's better to trade the money for Ammara."

I stand up from the couch, "I will try to find Alexander's lawyer."

"No! You guys shouldn't surrender. Uncle .... I mean Tumie was working with someone on the inside. It just wasn't Mateo. He knew your every move. You guys need to find that person."

"A person on the inside?" - Lorenzo.

Natalie nods, "A woman was helping him with your whereabouts. He linked up with her a year ago when we started working on the plan."

LORENZO

"Mr Garcia, your wife is in a meeting," Nikita runs after me as soon as I walk past the reception. I don't care if she's having a conversation with God himself. I kick the door open and several eyes look at me. I fix my eyes on Zara and say, "We need to talk."

She speaks through her teeth, "Honey I am in the middle of something."

I bang my fist to the table

Advertisement

"I said we need to talk."

She frowns and then dismisses her team. I close the door and lock it, pull down the blinds and fold my shirt up to my elbows, "How could you?"

"What are you talking about?"

I bang my fist against the table and yell, "Don't fuck with me, Zara. I know you're working with Tumie. How could you betray me like this?"

She laughs sarcastically, "Look who's talking about betrayal. You betrayed your brother. You even shot me and lied about it."

"At least I loved you, Zara. I never lied about my feeling for you. And so you know, I don't take betrayal lightly. No one betrays me and gets away with it."

She smirks, "Seems we are getting away with it."

I pull out my gun and plug the silencer, "I should have killed you when I had the chance."

"We both know you can't kill me, not with all these people around."

"Watch me," I pull the trigger five times.

I take my phone and type, 'I need a cleanup man.'

'Send me the location.'

I shove my gun onto my waist. Unfortunately, I am not God and I don't forgive. You mess with me and you pay with your life. I drive back to the house and find Natalie and Mxolisi sitting in the sitting room, doing nothing.

"Was it her?" Mxolisi asks.

"Yeah, she knew the truth and was just acting dumb."

"Please tell me you didn't kill her?" Mxolisi questions and I shrug, "Damn it Lorenzo what is it with you and spilling blood."

"Something I inherited from my family."

Mxolisi shakes his head and utters, "I am meeting up with Tumie today and the lawyer agreed to meet us but at his terms so I am waiting to hear from him."

"So what are we supposed to do while you have tea with Tumie and if you're thinking of going without back up then you must be crazy. He will kill you."

Mxolisi answers boldly, "He needs me to find the volt so he won't."

"Mxolisi this thing of playing fair will get you killed I tell you."

"As much as I hate to admit this, Lorenzo is right." Natalie interrupts.

I kick her legs, "Hey don't call me by my name."

She mumbles, "You're Ammara's father not mine so I will call you Lorenzo and you guys need to dig up some dirt on Tumie. We need to play dirty if we want to win this one."

"Even your daughter thinks better than you, Mxolisi," I tell.

"I am going to get some air," Natalie states.

"Your sister got kidnapped and you want to go out? Please stay indoors we can't be looking for both of you."

NATALIE

I get to my room and close the door. I am tired of being in this house, I need some air. I climb out the window and head out. I am not going anywhere I just need some sun so I stand outside the house. I stand there for about half an hour playing games on my phone. A car comes speeding and parks in front of me. Two men covering their faces get out and grab me. Another car comes speeding and opens fire at the first car. They let go of me, retreat to their car and drive away.

The front window rolls down and the person inside smiles at me, "Hey."

"Who are you?"

"Your guardian angel," she winks and the car drives away.

## NATALIE

I watch the car of the person that saved my life drive until it disappears. I would take their number plate but they don't have one. The gate door yawns open, Mxolisi and Lorenzo rush out - panting. They must have heard the gunshots just like everyone else who is now outside their house and wants to know what happened. I am sure there is a Karen that has already called the police - nosy people. Lorenzo grabs me by my arm and drags me back into the house. Mxolisi quietly follows behind us. I can't believe he's watching Lorenzo manhandle me and isn't saying anything. Lorenzo harshly throws me on the couch. I have a feeling if it was Ammara she would have earned a slap by now.

"Are you crazy? Why would you go outside in times like these? How did you even go out. What is wrong with you," yells Lorenzo.

I whisper, "I needed some air."

"Isn't there air in this yard? We are trying to find your sister and here you are delivering yourself on a silver platter to the bad

guys. I am starting to think you inherited some of your father's stupidity."

"Now you're insulting me, she said she needed some air. Give the child a break." Mxolisi defends me. Lorenzo should give me a break. I am going through a lot. I just found out that the person who raised me isn't the person I think he is.

Lorenzo unbuckles his belt, "Since she's a child maybe we should treat her like one. Next time she will learn to listen."

Mxolisi stands in front of me, "I will not let you hit my child, Lorenzo."

There's a little bit of a staring competition but Lorenzo throws in the towel. He clicks his tongue and sits down, "You'd be singing a different tune if they had shot her in the head.

Mxolisi shifts his attention to me, "What happened out there?"

"I was standing by the gate and a black van came speeding. It parked in front of the house and two men came out and grabbed me. Another silver Volvo came speeding and shot at the van. They let me go and retreated."

Lorenzo asks, "Did you see the person in the silver Volvo?"

"It was a woman and when I asked who she was she claimed to be my guardian angel."

Mxolisi comes to kneel next to me, "Describe this woman?"

"It's not mom. I would recognize her if I saw her. The woman looked mixed race."

Mxolisi sighs and sits on the floor, "It's not a coincidence that this guardian angel knew that you were going to be in trouble. They are keeping an eye on you. Have you and Ammara been out in the public together?"

I shake my head, "We took turns."

"I think we should find another place to stay in. Many people have been in Lorenzo's house and we don't know if Zara planted listening devices here." Mxolisi tells, "I have a place we can go."

AMBER

"Sup," I walk into the kitchen and sit on the stool.

"Where have you been?" he opens the fridge and takes out a beer then pushes it to me.

"You know me, running errands."



He shakes his head and stops chopping lemons. I wonder what he's making. He makes the best cocktails, "You lie like a dog lying on the floor."

"Ask no questions and hear no lies, sir."

He stabs the knife into the cutting board and lifts his face to look at me. He has an eye patch covering one eye. It feels like yesterday when I walked in on him with a gun to his head.

'Till bullets part us, baby," he had said before pulling the trigger on himself luckily I pushed the gun off his hand but still the bullet hit him in the eye. Now he has one eye for trying to be Romeo. I still can't believe he wanted to end his life because his woman was dead. Who would have known that the mighty and ruthless Alexander Brown would try to end his life because of a woman?

"What happened today?" Alex asks.

"They are still after Lerato's daughter but don't worry I saved her as you know I am awesome," he rolls his one eye at the word awesome, "Someone is after the volt now and they contacted the lawyer. Do you want me to handle it?"

He shakes his head and tosses a piece of lemon in his mouth. Yikes, "Let them continue searching. Wait until they realize what's in there and they are all going to regret betraying me. Just make sure the girl is fine - I owe it to Lerato. I dragged her into this mess."

"Uhm still on that, it seems Lerato gave birth to twins and the other one has been kidnapped."

"Hmmm," he looks like he's thinking hard, "Find the kidnapped twin and bring her to me. I have a plan."

"Aren't you going to tell me the so-called plan?"

He winks, "You focus on slaying the bad guys and I am permitting you to kill."

"Ohhhh that's the first and I am going to enjoy it."

"Don't harm the twin

" he exits the room leaving his lemons. What was the use of cutting them then?

MXOLISI

I walk into the restaurant and do a quick scan of the room. My eyes land on Tumie, who nods at me - he is with Ammara. I look

at the staff in the restaurant and they are all armed. Of course, he brought back up. I take a seat opposite Tumie and Ammara.

"Mxolisi Majola!" Tumie tosses a fry in his mouth and chews it as if his life depends on it.

"Are you okay, baby?" I ask Ammara who nods but her eyes say otherwise. I want to hold her tight in my arms, "Tumie let her go. I will tell you where the vault is only if you let her go."

Tumie laughs and wraps his arm around Ammara's shoulder, "You see Ammara is all I have on you. I knew taking her will get your attention. Without her, I know you won't agree to anything I say."

"Then let me take you to the lawyer right now and we get that vault open. Lorenzo is on board."

He laughs out loud, "You're desperate...that could work to my advantage."

"Cut the crap, Tumie," I bang my fist on the table, drawing everyone's attention.

"Calm down Mxo before you get the little one killed. I have a gun to her stomach as we speak."

I breathe in and out trying to calm myself, "I would do anything, Tumie. Please let her go. I am begging you."

He laughs hard again, "Look how the mighty have fallen."

My phone rings. Tumie says, "Answer it, maybe it's your buddy Lorenzo and he wants to be a hero and save you."

I place the phone downwards and keep my eyes on Ammara.  
"Seriously, that thing is annoying, answer it. I permit you."

I answer the phone and put it to my ear with my eyes on Ammara.

Me: Mxolisi!

Voice: Hey, babe.

Me: Who's this?

Voice: Someone be who is about to make your problems disappear. Do me a favour and duck.

Me: I don't understand.

Voice: Get down Mxolisi your head is blocking the view.  
Pretend to be picking something.

I intentionally drop the spoon and duck down to pick it up. I hear Ammara scream followed by everyone in the restaurant running around like headless chickens. I look at Tumie who has been shot in the head.

'You're welcome,' says the female voice on the phone. I grab Ammara's wrist and pull her to the floor. I flip the table as Tumie's men start firing at us.

"Do you know how to shoot?" I hand Ammara a gun.

"Do I know how to breathe," she takes the gun, cocks it and starts firing at Tumie's guys but they are too many for us. We hear a machine gun go off for about two minutes then stop. Silence follows. I peek to check what's going on and find a woman wearing a skin-tight black, leather jumpsuit carrying a machine gun worse she is in heels.

"Who are you?" I ask her.

"Her guardian angel," she points at Ammara with her head then points the machine gun at us, "I am here for the little one."

"You'll have to go through me first," I stand in front of Ammara and the woman shoots the gun out of my hand and points at Ammara who is also pointing the gun at her, "Drop the gun princess or Daddy dies."

Ammara doesn't hesitate she shoots her in the head and we jump when someone shoots at our feet. A lady dressed the same as the one on the floor walk in with five armed men. Ammara tries to shoot but her gun is empty. The lady that walked in sounds like the voice I was talking to on the phone.

She smiles, "You know I had a feeling you or your daughter would try to kill me."

She signals her boys to take Ammara. "Bye, Mxolisi." she shoots me in the stomach.

## NATALIE

"Is he dead?" I ask Lorenzo as we walk into the restaurant where the shoot out took place. Lorenzo let those people take Ammara and did not try to save her. His excuse is that he can't risk exposing me and that we have to check on Mxolisi before the police get here. I don't care about Mxolisi or the police - I care about my sister and I recognized the lady that took her. It's that lady that saved me the other day. Maybe the lady thinks Ammara is me or she knows that there's two of us. How did this lady know that Ammara was going to be here?

"Lorenzo! Is my father dead?"

He shoots that annoying stare at me. He hates it when I call him by his name but I can call him whatever I want. He didn't raise me. Lorenzo kneels next to Mxolisi, "I wish he was dead."

He tears Mxolisi's shirt buttons open and unstraps the bulletproof that Mxolisi is wearing. Thank God, he's wearing one. Mxolisi wakes up gasping for air and coughing - he looks like he's been to hell and back. Veins are popping on his forehead and his eyes look like they are going to pop out of his face. Lorenzo hands him a bottle of water that is on the floor

and survived the shootout. We hear police sirens and quickly rush out through the back door - we get lost at the back but eventually find the exit. The movies makes it simpler than it is.

"Do you know how to drive?" Lorenzo helps Mxolisi into the back seat. I don't know how to drive so I jump in the backseat with Mxolisi.

Lorenzo also gets into the car and drives away at full speed. I don't know why we listened to Mxolisi when he said we should leave back up. We could have my sister as we speak.

"Are you okay?" I ask Mxolisi who nods, groaning in agony, "Do you need the hospital?"

Lorenzo laughs at the front seat, "Relax princess - wearing a bulletproof doesn't mean you don't feel the pain. He'll be fine."

"What now - what's the plan and who were those people that took Ammara?"

"I don't know but I am sure we are going to find out soon. They are going to contact us," Lorenzo retorts.

"What if they don't? We can't just sit around and do nothing - they could kill my sister!"



"They won't kill her. They rescued her from Tumie for a reason and they will contact us." Lorenzo drives into the yard. We are staying at a new place and this one does not have any guards. We no longer know who to trust and who not to.

I watch as Lorenzo helps Mxolisi into the house. I wonder if we'll ever have a normal life. I never thought I would say this in my life but I miss school. I miss having to only worry about new shoes and having a pen. Now I have to think about having men with guns following me around. I can't even go to the mall without worrying about being kidnapped. For some reason, I feel like I was better when I was in the dark. I was better not knowing about my mother and things like that.

"Hey," Lorenzo sits next to me. I am still outside, sitting on the stoop, "Are you okay?"

"Yeah...just thinking about everything that is going on. People keep dying and one may never know who's next."

He smiles at me, "You don't have to worry. I and your father will take care of you even if it is the last thing we will do. We will find your sister too."

"So how's your relationship with Ammara and how did you end up stealing her?"

He laughs at the stealing part. "At first, I was in it for the money. I kidnapped Lerato because of the two billion dollars bounty that was on her head. Two billion was a lot lot of money back then and still is. I also used Lerato to try and get the location of the volt from Mxolisi. It was like hitting two birds with one stone. What I didn't know is that Mxolisi would be stubborn and that Lerato was pregnant. I was devastated that my plan wasn't going well and I used to get crazy back then - I was crazy and reckless."

I mumble, "You still are."

"Hey I am still your senior but what I am trying to say is that your sister changed me."

"How?" I question.

"Lerato being pregnant ruined my plan. I was going to kill Lerato whether Mxolisi gave me the location of the volt or not. But, finding out that she's pregnant ruined my plan because I couldn't bring myself to kill an innocent child. I waited until she gave birth then tried to use the child against Mxolisi but he still wouldn't barge so I continued with my first plan and that was to kill Lerato and take the bounty."

I exhale heavily trying to control my anger because a part of me wants to go crazy on his face. He goes on to say.

"I got my bounty money but now I was stuck with Ammara. I thought of dumping her at an orphanage but couldn't bring myself to do it. I felt guilty, I felt guilty for killing Lerato whom Mxolisi loved so much and I felt guilty for betraying the only people that were close to me. Even though I felt guilty, I couldn't get rid of the child. Looking at her brought everything bad I had done - I had her mother's blood on my hands. So when Ammara turned a month old I found a way to lie to Zara so we can keep her. It was tough having to live with Ammara and guilt was eating me up. The worst part is that Zara was very fond of her. For the first two years

Advertisement

I stayed away from the baby but one day she called me daddy. That was her first words and from that very moment, I fell in love with her. From that very moment I knew I would take a bullet for her and I knew that if we would get under attack, I would use Zara as a shield to protect her."

I swallow the lump growing in my throat and blink away the tears in my eyes, "You must love her."

"More than anything."

"Ammara is one lucky girl," I force out a smile.

He gently squeezes my hands, "You're also lucky. You have a sister and you just got reunited with your father."

I suck my teeth and say, "Still doesn't change the fact that you killed my mother. I get that you like Ammara and all that but you killed our mother. Maybe we wouldn't be in this mess if she was alive."

"And I apologize for that. I promise I will fix everything."

"Can you raise my mother from the dead?" I ask, firmly. He doesn't respond, "Do you know the saying, blood answers blood?"

"What are you talking about?"

I pull out a knife from my boot and jump on him stabbing his in the chest and I do it as many times as I can. I stab him until he stops moving and when I am sure he's dead. My father might be able to forgive and forget but I am not God and karma doesn't exist in my world. If God is delaying then I do it myself.

"What's with the..." Mxolisi stops talking when his eyes land on Lorenzo who is lying lifeless on the floor. I am sitting next to him with all the evidence that I just killed him. My face and clothes are stained with blood and I am still holding the knife.

"Natalie, what have you done?" Mxolisi checks on Lorenzo's pulse, "He's dead."

"I know!"

"Do you know what you have done? It's war when the Nxumalos find out that we killed their own. What is wrong with you?"

I retort, "God was taking longer and in my world, blood answers blood. He killed our mother meaning he has to pay with his life."

"We have to get rid of the body. Go change your clothes and meet me here."

I go into the house and straight to the room I am using. I take off the clothes I am wearing and toss them in the washer. I wash my face and arms then change into clean clothes. I head out and find Mxolisi putting Lorenzo's now covered with a blanket body in the car boot. I silently get into the car and wait for Mxolisi who joins me in a few minutes. We drive for about

an hour until we reach a place that looks like those forests in horror movies.

"Let's go," he gets out of the car and I do the same. He opens the car boot and takes out two shovels. We start digging a hole to dump Lorenzo's body.

"Nice bonding session," I wipe the sweat off my forehead with the back of my hand.

"Next time please leave things to me. You're too young to have blood on your hands."

I roll my eyes, "You can relax this isn't my first kill."

"We will never speak of this," he retorts

## AMMARA

"Are you okay, little one?" the lady driving, asks. We have been on the road for a while and I swear on my dead mother, if my hands weren't tied up I would have killed me and this lady next to me by making the car crush. I wonder who she works for because it seems everyone wants a piece of me now. First, it was Natalie and her team then the fake Miguel now it's this lady. I wonder if my father is okay. He might not have raised me but he is still my father and I care about him.

The lady driver removes the cloth covering my mouth and murmurs, "I am Amber."

"What do you want from me?"

She glances at me, wearing a smile then fixes her eyes back on the road, "I am not the one that wants you and may I say you have your mother's eyes."

"A lot of people say I look nothing like her."

She giggles yet I seem to have missed the joke, "You look like neither your parents but I know your mother's eyes because I used to look at them all the time."

"Sounds like you knew her on a personal level."

She clears her throat, "We could say that."

"What was your relationship with her?"

She exhales heavily, "She was someone we were in the same line of work. We were close but hardly spent time together. As they say, the best of friends are the ones that check on each other after a year."

"Back at the restaurant you said you're my guardian angel - what does that mean?"

She retorts, "When your mother was still alive, I made a vow that I will keep an eye on her kids if something was to happen to her. I keep an eye on Quinton and do the same with you. It seems I have been doing a terrible job because I found out you have a twin a week ago."

I clear my throat and look out the window, "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Ohh Ammara...no need to pretend, I have already met her."



"What do you want from me? Why did you shoot my father?" I ask her.

"Mxolisi is annoying and that was for betraying Lerato. As I said, I am not the one that wants you. I am just the delivery guy."

The rest of the drive is silent until we reach our destination. It's a three-story house in the middle of nowhere. I have never been to this side of the town and I never knew such a place exists.

"We are here," Amber announces getting out of the car. She goes around to open the door for me. She helps me out of the car and unties the rope off my hands and ankles. I massage my sore hands while looking around the place. It is heavily guarded and the gate requires a key remote to open.

I rub my eyes for a while - it has been long since I have been in the sun.

"This way, Miss Garcia or do you use Nxumalo. Maybe I must use your original second name which is Majola."

"Ammara is fine," I follow her into the house. The house looks ten times more beautiful than the outside. I can't help but look around - everything looks amazing and it is making me think of home. I am sure Zara is worried sick about me. She's always been a crier.

"Xander!" Amber yells and her voice echoes. Who lives in such a big house.

"People have a cellphone for a reason, Amber no need to scream." A man who looks like he's in his late forties walks down the stairs. He is wearing royal blue formal trousers with a white long-sleeved shirt that is folded to his elbows. His hair is neatly trimmed and he has an eye patch on one eye.

"You must be Ammara," he stands in front of me making me look smaller with his broad shoulders but I do not let myself be intimidated by him.

"Who are you?"

He stretches his hand to me, "Alexander Brown."

"What do you want from me?"

He smiles and walks to the table that is across the room. He pulls a chair and signals I join him but I don't move from my position. Amber pushes me a little.

"Amber!" Alexander frowns.

"My bad," Amber retorts then whispers to me, "Go sit your behind down."

I quietly walk to the table and sit on the chair Alexander pulled for me. He pours a glass of water for me and hands it to me. I thank him but don't consume any of it. There could be a drug and I don't trust him or this Amber lady. Alexander also takes a seat and Amber sits at the far end of the room with a glass in her hand that I assume has alcohol.

I ask Alexander once more, "Who are you and what do you want from me?"

"All I can say is that my money is the reason many people have lost their lives including my wife."

"What has that have to do with me?" I question.

"You and I want the same thing, revenge."

I heave a sigh, "I just want to go home. I am tired of the killings and guns. I just want to sleep in my bed

Advertisement

wake up the next morning and go to school."

"I wish the same for you but we both know you can't do that as long as there are people after the volt."

I ask, "So what do you mean by getting revenge?"

"Mxolisi betrayed your mother and he's the reason why she's dead. Don't you want him to pay?"

I sip on the water but regret it afterwards. I curse causing Alexander to laugh, "Relax, kid. I didn't poison you."

"Let's say I do want to get my revenge from Mxolisi...what do you want? You can't be doing this out of kindness."

He answers, "I also want to avenge my wife's death and Mxolisi betrayed me too."

"So you thought it would be best to use a sixteen-year-old?"

Amber laughs, "I like this kid."

"It's okay if you don't want to do it but either way I am going to kill your father. I was just allowing you to be on the winning team."

"I hate him for what he did to my mother," I say.

"Don't you think your mother deserves justice?"

I exhale heavily, "What do you want me to do?"

NATALIE

"Hey, Dad!" I open the fridge and take out a bottle of water. I sit on the kitchen chair and watch my father who is frying beef

patties. It's been three days since that lady took Ammara and they still haven't contacted us. It also marks three days since I butchered Lorenzo. I don't regret a thing and if his black arse was still alive, I would stab him to death again. He was speaking about my mother as if she's nothing, call me reckless but he had it coming. There was no way I was going to smile at a person telling me that they killed my mother for money

"What are you wearing?" Mxolisi asks. I politely mean this but for someone in this very dangerous line of work - Mxolisi is a little too slow.

"A school uniform."

"Natalie come on, how many times must I tell you not to go out," he washes his hands, dries them then sits next to me, "Your sister is missing and it's not safe for you to be going out alone."

"You didn't even notice that I was gone. I needed some air and relax I was very discreet."

His phone rings and he switches it off, "Is that one of your suitors?"

"It's Jasper... Lorenzo's brother and I don't know where to begin to tell him about his brother."

"Then don't tell him," I say.

"He will find out eventually."

Let me educate this old man, "Only you and I know the truth and I plan on forever holding my peace so how will Jasper find out? Lorenzo has many enemies just tell Jasper he died with Tumie."

"You're smart," he smiles.

"I got it from my mother."

He chuckles, "I worked at the bank and I do not belong on the battlefield."

AMBER

I watch Ammara shoot. This kid is a professional. Lorenzo taught her well I am sure Lerato is turning in her grave proud of her offspring. This child is good with guns, good with computers and she knows about banks. I swear if this shit with Alexander

doesn't work out. I am kidnapping this child and we are going to start a new life somewhere far.

As much as I am impressed with this little girl, she also worries me a little. Will she be able to take her father out? At the end of the day, blood is thicker than water and there's a thin line between love and hate.

"Don't tell me you're now crushing on Lerato's child the same way you were doing to her mother," Alex speaks from behind me.

"She's a beauty."

"She's a child, Amber and don't try anything funny with her," he warns. I turn to face him.

"Why are you fond of this child?"

"I told you I owe it to her mother that I protect her," he answers firmly.

"Or maybe you think having her close will cover the void you have of losing your child. You did mention that Kimberly was pregnant when she..." a slap lands on my cheek.

"Never speak of my child."

"Even if you make her kill her father you'll never be a father to her," I say and earn another slap.

AMBER

"Are you okay?" Ammara asks and I nod. "What are you two fighting about?"

"Grown-up stuff," I attempt to walk away but she blocks my way, "Get out of my way, Ammara. I don't have time for games."

"I know that you and Alex are fighting about me. You mentioned that you're my guardian angel, right. Let me be your guardian angel too."

I look at her for a couple of minutes waiting for the punch light but Lerato's child is serious as a heart attack. She wants to be my guardian angel. She thinks this is all a joke.

"This is not a game, kid." I walk away but she runs after me and blocks my way, "Ammara what now?"

"What's your relationship with Alexander Brown?"

I sigh and fold my hands to my chest, "He's my boss, you already know this."



"He just slapped you and you are still covering for him. You must be a very loyal servant."

I grab her by her neck and tighten my hand a little, "Watch what you say, kid. I can end your life if I choose."

"Then go ahead, I am tired of this life anyways. Oh wait, your boss would kill you if you hurt me."

I tighten my hand on her neck but let go. I quickly walk out of the room. I hate to admit that she's right. Alexander seems to care about her more than me. This child has been with us for six days and she's the only thing he talks about. They spend time together and he treats her like his own. He's forgetting that he owes me his life. He's forgetting that he has the energy to slap me because I saved his life.

Maybe I should have let him die. I sit in front of the mirror and inspect my cheek. I am light-skinned so Alexander's hand left a mark. I take a deep breath and someone knocks on my door.

"Go away, Ammara," I yell. The door opens and before I can yell at her to get out, Alexander walks into the room.

"Have you come to slap me again?" I stand on my feet.

"I am here to apologize and I did it because what you said hit close to home. I do wish Ammara is my daughter. I had found the woman that loves me and they took her away from me."

I shift towards him and hold his hands, "I am sorry for mentioning your daughter. I know you hate talking about your late wife. But, don't you think it's time to move on. You can still find someone and have kids with them."

He chuckles

"Who would want to be with me?"

"I do."

He glares into my eyes, "I am a very complicated man, Amber. You deserve better."

He lets go of my hands and goes to sit on the bed. I go to sit next to him. I hold his hand and say, "Who are you to decide for me what I want?"

He smiles and looks aside. The problem with Alexander is that he treats me like his little sister and all these years I tried to make him notice me but he never looks my way. When will he see me? When will he notice that I am here and I can be anything he wants. I know I like both men and be women but

he and I would make a great couple and I can give him the kids he wants so much.

I stand up from the bed and sit on his lap. Surprisingly, he lets me. I wrap my hands at the back of his neck and pull him closer. I peck his lips and then glare into his eyes. He places his hands on my back and pulls me closer, kissing me. He captures the top lip and gently sucks. I follow his lead as we gently kiss, with no urgency whatsoever. He lifts me, letting me wrap my legs around his waist and not breaking the kiss. He lays me on the bed and gently kisses my lips.

He kisses me from my jawline to my neck. He brings his face back to mine and kisses me. He gets up and takes off his shirt and trousers - I also take off my clothes. He gets back in between my legs and kisses my lips to my neck and downwards. I bite my lower lip when I feel his warm tongue on my nipple while his finger rubs on my clit. The fun part is that he's taking his time and wants me to enjoy this as much as him. He replaces his finger with his shaft and rubs it on my cookie. I lift my hips to meet his halfway causing him to chuckle.

"Patient woman," he murmurs as he slowly inserts himself. I gasp as my walls stretch to accommodate his anaconda. He kisses my forehead and starts to move in and out of me. He's looking into my eyes as he thrusts in and out of me. His hands are locked with mine, he's whispering how beautiful I am - he's making me giggle and he's making me lose all my senses. At this moment I would give or do anything he asks. He kisses my lips and flips me so he can have me from behind. He kisses my back and fills me up.

NATALIE

It's day six and still, the people that took Ammara haven't contacted us. I wonder how she is wherever she is. I feel bad that I am enjoying spending time with our father when she's not here. I feel like I ruined her life because she seemed to be doing great before I showed up. Maybe if I had stayed hidden everything would have been fine. I wonder how she will feel knowing that I eliminated Lorenzo. He killed our mother but still to Ammara he's her father.

Then there's Mxolisi. I feel like he's not trying too hard to get Ammara. He should be turning the county upside down just for my sister. Maybe I am used to being around people who are not afraid to take risks.

The door flies open and a man I don't recognize walks into the room. I stand up and look for anything I can use in case I'd need to defend myself.

"Who are you?" I ask the man reaching for the side lamp next to the couch.

"I'm Jasper, where is your father?"

"Dad!" I yell and he comes running. So this is Jasper - he has his brother's gigantic forehead. Mxolisi storms into the room and relaxes when he sees Jasper.

They fist bump then Mxolisi asks, "How did you get here and how did you find me?"

Jasper answers, "I tracked your phone and why aren't you answering your phone?"

"I have been busy." - Mxolisi.

"He tracked you, dad. Your phone has a tracker knowing how bad things are?" I yell. Seriously of all the fathers in the world, Mxolisi had to be my father?

"I wanted to tell you that I know who has Ammara and we have to move, now," - Jasper.

"Who has her?" Mxolisi questions.

"We will talk in the car old people - let us move. Get the guns and wear your bulletproofs." I yell rushing out of the room and I hear Jasper say.

"She is Lerato's daughter no DNA needed."

ÀMBER

I loud noise wakes me. I sit up and yawn. I bite my lower lip and look at Alexander who is sleeping next to me. The door flies open and I quickly reach for my gun in the drawer.

"We are under attack and you're shagging? Put on some clothes." Ammara throws guns on the bed. I shake Alex awake and update him on what's going on as Ammara looks out the

window avoiding seeing out nakedness. We get dressed and put on the bulletproofs.

"What's going on?" I ask Ammara.

"I heard gunshots outside."

"Do you think it's your dad?" Alexander asks.

She replies, "Yes."

"Are you up for this? Will you be able to take him out?"

She nods.

## AMMARA

Guns are blazing outside and men running around shouting things I cannot hear, throwing grenades left, right and centre. People are dying, innocent people. All just for money. Just a couple of months ago my life was perfect. I was daddy's little girl and I got everything I wanted. Lorenzo might have killed my mother but he never mistreated me - I can even label him as the best father in the world. Lorenzo and I were the best of friends then Natalie and Mxolisi show up and turned my world upside down.

"Ammara!" Amber snaps her fingers in my face. "Now is not the time to daydream."

I exhale heavily and hold on tight to the M25 in my arms - and may I say these boots are killing me. Alexander and Amber are all geared up. I peek outside one more time in hopes to see my sister one last time in case something was to happen to her or me.

"Are you okay?" Alexander asks me.



"You and Amber owe me your lives."

He chuckles, "I have always been a heavy sleeper but thanks, kid."

"Clear," Amber yells. Alexander and I quickly follow her out. Our goal is to leave this place before things get ugly but it's not easy since it's a three-story house or must I call it a mansion. Rich people just love wasting money. What does one need a seven bedroomed house for? Especially someone who is living as a ghost. I did my homework on Mr Alexander Brown by the way.

"This way," Amber opens a door that leads us to another passage.

"We have to get the money, Amber cover us." Alexander commands and Amber checks the coat as Alex opens a secret door because it was a wall when I looked at it.

I purse my lips to stop myself from gasping when the door leads us to a large vault. So this is the vault. Alexander puts his thumb and it recognizes him.

"Put your thumb too," he tells me and I do as commanded. Wtf? So this is why he needs me. His lips curve to a smile and he looks at Amber who is also smiling.

They open the vault and there are large bags inside.

"What's in the bags?" I ask

Amber answers not taking her eyes off the bags, "Money."

"Why did it need me to open it?" I ask and no one answers me.

"Why did it need me?" I yell.

Amber laughs, "Because sweetie, the money doesn't only belong to Alex...some of it was your mother's. She inherited it from the late Mr Brown but we happen not to have told her."

"So you used me?"

Alex answers, "Sorry kid but you know how things work in this line of work. My father left me a huge sum of money but I couldn't get access to it because it needed two people's DNA. I am sure you're wondering how your mother locked it biometrically. Too bad she's not alive to tell the tale but all I can say is that your mother slept with every living thing and..."

I shoot next to him, "Don't talk about my mother."

"Your mother was a whore and it's no secret kiddo. I am rich but the vault has hundreds of billions. Tell me who do you think

put a bounty on your mother? I wanted your mother alive but Lorenzo ruined my plan by killing her. I never knew you exist until Mxolisi started looking for you and I knew I was back in business."

"You have been staying with me for six days why didn't you do this days ago?"

He answers, "Because I needed to take care of that parasite you call your father."

NATALIE

(THREE HOURS EARLIER)

"Jasper and I need to take care of some things, please Natalie do not leave the house. I am begging you," says Mxolisi standing by my bedroom door.

"I do not plan on sneaking out today, not when there's someone that knows the location of my sister. You can relax old

man I won't do anything funny but note that I might change my mind."

He shakes his head, "And I thought Lerato was the only stubborn one."

I smile, "I love you too now go do what you and Jasper need to do so we can go kick ass."

"Never say that word again."

I laugh, "You mean ass?"

He shakes his head and slams the door behind him. I shift my attention back to my cellphone. I am talking to some boy who is back in South Africa and I told him to meet me in town. I even told him what I am going to be wearing. I know it's not cool but I am trying to kill time because a part of me wishes that we are out there shooting bad guys and getting my sister. But, my father and his friends think we should plan this and take a team with us for backup. I hear a noise in the window and open the drawer next to the bed where I keep the gun. I point it at the window that opens.

"It's just me

" Ammara climbs in.

"Ammara!" I hug her.

"Keep your voice down, I am not supposed to be here," she whispers and goes to lock the door. She turns to me and asks, "Are you okay?"

"I should be asking you the same question. We have been looking for you for the past six days. How are you here."

She retorts, "I am not staying for long."

"What do you mean?"

"I want to end this once and for all. Alexander, Lorenzo, Jasper and our father are the reason many people are dead and it ends today," she says firmly.

"Don't tell me you're planning on killing them? Mxolisi is our father."

"He's also the reason our mother is dead. As long as they live people will always try to kill us, Natalie." - Ammara.

"But he's the only family we have left."

She holds me by my shoulders, "We'll have each other. Lorenzo saved up some money for me to last me a lifetime. We can start a new life far away from everyone."

"I hear you but unlike you, I didn't grow up around a family that loves me and I'd love to experience that."

She lets go of my arms and goes to sit on the bed, "What do you have in mind? Because we have to end this so that people stop killing each other."

## CURRENT TIME

"This way," I tell Jasper and Mxolisi. We are at the Brown Mansion.

"Where are you leading us?"

"Just follow my lead," I say following the tracking device on Ammara.

## AMMARA

"So you're going to kill me?" I ask Alexander.

"Not if you kill Mxolisi. If you get rid of him I'll let you and your sister live."

The vault door opens wider- Mxolisi and Natalie walk in with their guns pointed at us. I look at Alexander and look at Natalie.

"I'll take the deal," I say to Alexander and point the gun at Mxolisi. I pull the trigger without hesitating. I shove the pistol back in my holster.

"Good job!" Alexander pats my arm.

Natalie points the gun at me, "How could you?"

"It was him or you." I point the M25 at her. Jasper walks in and he has his gun drawn too.

"He's with us," Amber announces. So I was right Jasper is in this too. All that calmness was suspicious to me.

"You're outnumbered, Natalie," I say and she throws her gun on the ground and raises her hands.

Alexander, Amber and Jasper turn around to get the money. I look at Natalie and she nods. We both grab each of Mxolisi's arms and drag him out of the vault.

"Ammara help carry..." Amber stops talking when she realizes that Mxolisi and Natalie are no longer in the room. And I am carrying a grenade in my hand.

"Do you know the saying, blood is thicker than water?"

Alexander points his gun at me, "Stop playing games."

"I'm not and that gun is fake - I gave it to you remember and you didn't bother to check it. I guess you'll be joining your wife in hell." I remove the pin on the grenade and throw it at Amber then run out of the vault. Natalie and Mxolisi help close the door and we all run towards the exit. I spent the past six days studying this house so I know the ins and outs. And that little show we put out outside was just to fool Jasper. I found out he's working with Alexander when I heard Alex talking on the phone. They planned to take out everyone who knows about the vault including me and my sister.

A loud explosion follows and we all rush to the car and I jump into the driver's seat. The grenades we planted around the house all go off at once and I step on the accelerator keeping the car as steady as I can.

I reduce the speed when we get to the main road.

"Are you okay?" I ask Mxolisi who is in the back seat taking off the bulletproof. The pistol had rubber bullets.

"I'm fine."

"Where to from here?" I ask.

"We are going home." - Mxolisi.



A message pings into my phone, 'I'm proud of you, guardian angel.'

I smile and shove my phone in my pocket then step on the gas.

.....**THE END**.....

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you guys for downloading this book from my site please keep visiting <https://novelsguru.com/> for supporting me and also don't forget to share it with your friends.

Dear Friends please download these books direct from <https://novelsguru.com/> bookmark this site for latest African books, and also supporting me Thanks.

\*\*\*\*\*