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## **Told Through Her Eyes by Ndumiso**

### **Chapter 01**

Her sweet voice echoes making me turn, I don't know how many times I have seen her smile yet my heart always fills up with same joy each time. She twirls around giggling there it is the glow in her eyes she has always been a giggler and free at heart. I walk around the garden my eyes still on her I don't want this moment to end it can't end it is too soon. I call out her name but it seems like my presence just sets her of, her eyes fill up with sorrow and anguish and her giggles come to a stop. I wish she hadn't stopped why would she stop? When she knows her smile lights up my whole world, she turns and looks at me her tears falling down her cheeks I move up closer to her but she seems to drift away with each step that I take. I can't reach her no matter how hard I try I just can't seem to reach

her. Blood starts coming out of her mouth as I watch her helpless beg and try to stop it. I reach out my hand but she looks at me shaking her head suddenly everything is dead quiet.

“you did this us Mthethwa” she says walking towards the pool.

“Thando please don't” I say putting my hands together I know what's coming I have seen this before.

She walks towards the pool and looks at me blood still coming out of her mouth

“You couldn't save us” she says jumping in I rush to her aid and hold her hand, the pool seems to be waterless and only a big dark hole.

“I am not letting you go not now not ever” I say.

Her hand starts slipping from my grip and out of nowhere the baby starts crying, I turn and there she is wearing her pink baby grow walking away from me. In a blink of an eye Thando let's

go of my hand and falls deep into the hole calling my name. I try standing up searching for the baby but nothing I feel my head spin and my heart racing this it is the end of me I can't breathe.

"Zano" I scream out her name but nothing.

"You couldn't save us" Thando says turning her back on me walking away, I look at my hands and they are dripping with blood.

I wake up drenched in sweat catching my breath as if I was under the water and just came up for air, I sigh rubbing my forehead every night and it is the same dream over and over again no matter how I wish things turn out differently she always turns her back on me. I pull my gun under the pillow and just then my phone rings I look at the screen and it is my brother.

"Mkhulu" he says

“Kwenzenjani” I ask looking at the time, I hate people who call late at night and expect to hold a conversation he knows this and shouldn’t even be trying it.

“Nothing I just wanted to talk to my brother and ma called asking me to check up on you” he says.

“ And let me guess you couldn’t wait so you decided to call this late just to annoy me right” I ask irritated.

“She is worried about you” he says.

My mother worries a lot these days I think staying at home is starting to get to her maybe her husband should get her something to do

“I swear you sound like a woman right now” I say getting out of bed.

He sighs on the other end and clears his throat.

“Babu says you haven’t been sleeping okay lately what’s wrong” he asks.

Trust Babusisiwe to tell her father what goes on in this house kids these days are more alert and vigilant it scares the hell out of me.

“I don't know what you are talking about nothing is wrong” I say.

“I am your brother and I am worried about you talk to me” he says

“I am ending this call before I say something I will regret and if I need to talk I know good stripper bars with lots of naked women and you are none of that” I say.

I put the phone down and look around my bedroom walking towards the sliding door I find myself standing out as the cold breeze hits my face. A flowery scent hits my nostrils making me

open my eyes I find Thando standing in front of me looking beautiful as ever. I breathe in closing my eyes telling myself this is just a dream I am still sleeping.

“This is not real” I say opening my eyes to find her still standing before me smiling.

Her hand trails my face all the way down my beard tears forming in my eyes. I hold her waist holding my breath and with each finger print embedded in her smooth skin her giggles fill the outside balcony. Her soft lips touch mine while my hands carefully go down on her bare back, she pulls away and looks into my eyes dammit I never deserved neither her nor her love. Just as I am about to say something she disappears into thin air if this isn't torture then I don't know will I ever find peace? Mama said with time things would get better she said I was going to be okay but I don't think she was right. I hate feeling like this waking up to nothing but memories that seem to do nothing but haunt me but then a man like me who is no saint doesn't deserve peace maybe this is me paying for all my sins.

I quickly get up from the floor when I hear some noise coming from the inside the door to my bedroom opens up and Zibulo walks in looking more like a hairy bugler, he lowers his gun when I lower mine and laughs guess he chose to drive up here seeing that I wasn't answering his calls anymore.

"When I gave you my key I wasn't giving permission to waltz into my house announced and try get self killed" I say

He looks at me and laughs

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0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"Need a hug" he asks making his way to me.

"Touch me and you are dead" I say

He laughs following behind me we both settle on the floor without saying anything, he pulls out a pack of cigarette passes on to me then giving me the lighter this brings back old



memories when we were both innocent and had no blood on our hands.

“You are going to be okay” he says nodding his head.

I know he has my back but this time it's different and I feel he knows it too, he can't take it away or make it go away and that gets to him. For the first time my brother cannot take away my pain.

“And before I forget you have the girls the whole week so better get one of your jobless sisters to come clean this house” he says.

I think for a while having those lazy three clean the house would be cheaper but they will only add to my troubles and ask for money then finish my food.

“I think I will stick to one of the cleaning services” I say.

“More efficient I guess” Zibulo says shrugging his shoulders.

“And less whiny” I say.

He turns and looks at me laughing

“You have never been one for complications” he says nodding his head.

I wanted to kick him out for coming all the way here and leaving Zenkosi and the girls alone but he assured me that they are fine and the thought of dressing up and playing tea party with Babu gets my head hurting.

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The sun was scorching hot and I couldn't keep up with the other kids so I slowed down and walked at a slower pace dolling Philile.

I knew I had to be home before dark but I wasn't in the business of getting home all drenched up in salty sweat and smelly armpits, I had told Philile that I was but the truth is that I needed someone to pick me up and get me home so I could have my mother's warm meal. A car strolled down the heel and stopped right next to us and the window rolled, we had no choice but to bow down to show respect we were in the presence of royalty after all. I could feel all eyes on us when one guy stepped out of the car and came to where we stood. My knees felt jelly I didn't think they could hold but they did and my eyes were on his just like his were on mine.

"Zobu" Philile said nudging me, she was right to do so I was staring and was seen as disrespectful.

"Ngiyaxolisa bekungeyona inhloso yam ukukwedelela" I said moving my eyes from his.

"If don't leave now baba will have our heads for dinner ngena emotweni sihambe" The one in the car said his eyes fixated on me.

"Its okay bafu you can go home ngizobaphelezela" the one standing next to us said as he grabbed his phone in the car.

"Akwenziwa njalo Sbani" the man said stepping out of the car .

"Kahle ngamatshe Mhlaba its not everyday a man meets his wife and lets go just like that" Sbani said looking at his brother then back at me.

"Sbanesihle Nxumalo" he said looking at me.

"Zobuhle Mbatha" I said smiling,that was the begging of us and probably the end of us I will never know.

I was young,impressionable and easily taken I remember how we spent that day getting to know each other but somehow it felt as if I had known him all my way,that he has always been there waiting for me to find him. I also remember getting a whoooing that left Sbani begging my father not to lay his hand on me ever again and if he ever wished to discipline me in any way then he would come and bare it all for me. He told my father that he would rather be the one beaten but my father would never dare lay his hand on a prince,Sbani was there till he wasn't anymore and my whole life came to a standstill everything I knew and believed in was nothing but lies. The world Sbani showed me suddenly vanished and I got to the world for what it truly was cold,unkind and cruel to. Not once did I ever imagine life without him but I found myself standing next to his moist grave with my mother holding me because I couldn't bring myself to do it,I couldn't say goodbye to the love of my life it wasn't right and we still had so much to do and

accomplish. I look at his picture and wipe my tears it's nights like these where I just wake up watch the stars and cry till I can't anymore.

I clean my nose up and grab my phone after it beeps.

“School trip next week please don't forget “ a text from Nqaba says.

“I haven't forgotten and please tell baba that I love him so much” I text back.

“Why don't you come visit and tell him yourself we miss you” he texts.

“Nqaba you know I can't come home” I text back.

“But baba said that he would protect you he promised and if he can't then I will” he says.

I want to laugh trust Nqaba to act all manly and protective over me

“I will see what I can do” I say trying to ease his mind, this is my family we are talking about and I really miss them but me being here is best for everyone and baba knows .

Things are not as they used to be anymore when I was in my last year in high school my father lost everything he had worked hard for so much so much that he had to sell off some of his land, he lost all his cattle and everything that ever brought money home. But truth is he was never really the same after the death of his twin brother who happens to be my biological father see this was not my life, Mdabu and I had two parents who loved each other so much so that when mama got sick with cancer things changed she had to be taken to the hospital and life changed. The doctors said there was no more hope but my father wouldn't give up and he didn't but one day my mother gave up for the both of them. I think that killed him and he couldn't take living without her. The three of us were in the kitchen Dad, Nqaba and I baking when suddenly baba kissed Nqaba and held us both close to his chest that was his way of saying goodbye . I tucked Nqaba in and joined my father in the kitchen only find him holding a gun to his head, I stood there and begged him not to do it but he said he couldn't live without

her and just like that my father pulled the trigger and killed himself. I locked my brother in his bedroom I couldn't let him see that or have that last memory of our dad but I stayed there in the pool of his blood begging him to come back and open his eyes and he didn't. I held his warm body till it was cold and there was no one there to tell me what to do I was alone and my hero had just taken his life my mother's body was not even cold yet we had already been orphaned. Do I blame him for leaving us and not being strong enough? Yes. Do I hate him that he put us through the pain of losing two parents? Yes. His actions caused a lot of turmoil and heartache for everyone his brother lost control of the car when he heard the news he was in the car with his family, he lost two of his children in that accident and only Vusimuzi and Zinzile survived. Baba raised us when his brother chose to kill himself and I will forever be grateful to him for taking us in and never treating us differently but as his own children, My name is Zobuhle Mbatha and I am a part of his story.

## TOLD THROUGH HER EYES

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Ever dreaded waking up well that's me every day when I have to get to work, I have nothing against mornings I think they are refreshing but the problem starts when you have to remove that warm blanket and get out of bed. I don't like my job that much the pay is peanuts and well the customers don't tip and not to mention that they are rude and would do just about anything not to pay. I rush through my morning and only realise when philile opens the door that she didn't sleep home last night. She walks past me hardly looking my way this could only mean one Sabelo did it again.

"Morning Philile" I say making a cup of coffee one for me then her.

"I am not in the mood Zobu" she says heading straight to her bedroom. I follow behind holding two polishes in my hand the brown and red one. You might be wondering why these two



well they speed up the healing process and in a week or so the bruises should be faded.

“he did it again huh” I say sitting next to her.

She scoffs takes the polish and looks at herself in the mirror.

“Please don't tell me to leave him” she says dropping her shoulders.

“When are you leaving him “I ask, she gives a look and shakes her head. “You said not ask you to leave him” I say.

“You don't understand Zobu I love him and he loves me too” she says.

“A person who loves you would never do this to you” I say holding her lip.

“ You don't have a man so please don't judge me” she says.

“ Philile one day he go too far and kill you then what huh” she shrugs her shoulders making me made.

“If I die then that means it is my time” she says.

“Well let me tell you what will happen he will kill you and will be nothing but another statistic to the number of women killed by their partners, we will cry and mourn you but the pain of losing you will never go away Philile leave him before it is too late” I say.

“ Tell me Zobu if I live him who will love me huh, who is going to feed me and how am I going to send money home every month so they can eat and not beg from the neighbors . we both know that I am not clever as you so tell me how am I going to make it if I live him’ she asks.

“ Philile don't say that because I know that is him talking and not you” I say

She shakes her head and smiles.

“I know you mean well but I am not leaving Sabelo and beside I can’t” she says.

“Because he has money and you think by sticking around and holding on he might change” I ask

Tears fall of her beautiful face while she shakes her head.

“ I am pregnant Zobu and he wants to marry me” she says. “I know I should be excited because this is all I have wanted to get married but now I fear for my baby’s life” she says standing up.

I guess coffee is off the table then I stand up and give her a tight hug.

“ I should be getting to work but I love you’ I say.

I walk out of the house furious who does Sabelo think he is beating up a pregnant woman his fiancé at that, I suck and click my tongue all the way to work with people starring at me and I am not crazy if that is what they are thinking I am just livid that woman have to go through so much and still expected to be perfectly sane. You know what to hell with being sane these man turn us into barbarians and see us as nothing but pieces of meat, I arrive at work and the first thing that happens I get called to the bosses office another male specie that rubs me up the wrong way is this one my boss Mark. Not only is he a pervert but he is also a daylight cheat, I don't know why or how but I pick up and sense on energies quicker than I can say name “Hi my name is Zobuhle ” growing It was a lot stronger but when as I grew older it seemed to fade along with the years.

“Please sit” he says the moment I walk in.

He stands while I settle down and strolls all the way to where I am, I clear my throat when his hand slightly brushes my neck down my shoulder.

“I have been watching you Zo and I must say your work is impeccable and you are one of my promising staff he says.

“ Thank you sir’ I say shifting uncomfortably from my chair.

“Someone like could be anything they want in this world, you can easily be at the top just like that I mean look at you Zo you deserve only the best and I can give you that make you a queen that is” the word queen makes my stomach turn.

“I am not following sir are you implying that if I sleep with you then I can easily be the queen of this castle” I ask raising my eyes, he swallows hard and clears his throat.

He narrows his eyes and I can't help but think I stepped on his toes, what was I thinking this man is my boss and I could get fired me if he wishes.

“Smart people don't often make it in this world Zo just a reminder” he says stepping back.

“That will be all Zo” he says getting back to his chair.

“Before I forget one of the cleaning ladies is not here please do see to her duties Sophie will show you the ropes” he says with a smirk on his face, I should have kept my mouth shut now look I have been stationed to cleaning duty.

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26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">I doubt I have ever been this tired in my whole life its like Mark was trying to prove a point and he did because I didn't even get a chance to sit down or eat. He kept hovering over me and inspecting my work but because mama taught me how to clean so it wasn't all bad till I had to clean the toilet and I wished I had been more reciprocal to Mark. Things only got better when Sophie came around and was able to help me being a boss she believes in being present and getting it done yourself.

“It doesn't happen often you know getting my hands dirt that is” she said

“My husband wanted me to stay at home spend his money and raise kids but I couldn’t see myself standing in the kitchen bare foot and running a tight ship” she said laughing. Although I could see myself raising kids and being a stay at home mother I joined her and laughed because I understand the need to be independent.

“Tell me about yourself” she said after taking a hard look at me.

I thought for a while and I was lost.

“My name is Zo and I came to the city to better my life” I said shrugging my shoulders.

“Would you like a better paying job Zo” she asked. “ I run a cleaning company and I could use some help see I empower women to better themselves and try balance the salary scale between men and woman” she said.

“I would love a job but there’s someone who needs it more than me a friend of mine” I said thinking about philile.

“I want you but because we are hiring I can take you both” she said smiling.

“Thank you so much” I said.

“Serve your notice and call me once that is done” she said giving me her business card.

I took the time to look her up and the woman is loaded she started small but now runs the biggest cleaning company, she gets contracted by big companies because of her work and high profile people use her. Working for her could change my life for the better I know I would mean less job for my parents this will mean I can take Nqaba to school and finally give thanks to my father for taking care of us. And the best thing is that I get to leave this place and its people I sure can't wait to resign in be rid of Mark of his male chauvinistic comments.



The taxi drops me right across the road making it easier for me to get home rather than to walk. It is a nice and safe complex and it is affordable plus the security is great I greet bab khumalo and walk past him this man wants Philile to marry his son and they would make an amazing it a shame Philile only has eyes for Sabelo. I find the door to flat open and hear some commotion coming from Philile's bedroom I put my bag down and find Sabelo on top of her strangling her.

"Sabelo" I say calling out his name and pushing him off her, she manages to get away and runs to the lounge.

"Move out of the way Zobuhle or I swear " he says.

"What uzokwenzani " I ask blocking the door.

He moves closer and wrestles me out of the way finally elbowing me I fall but manage to stand and run for the knife pointing at him just as he pulls Philile by her hair.

"Let her go" I say pointing knife at him and moving closer.

“I have stabbed a man before and if you don't leave right now abakini bazokulanda usufile” I say.

He lets go of her hair and raises up both his hands looking at me then at a sobbing Philile.

“No one leaves me just know this isn't over” he says walking out.

I didn't realise I was holding my breath till I breathe out heavily and lock the door behind him, I can't believe Philile after what he did to her she still let him in. I look at in disbelief what was going to happen had I arrived a few minutes late her cold bruised body would have been the last thing to remember her by.

“Ubezoxolisa but I told him that I want nothing to do with him anymore” she says sobbing.

I kneel next to her and wipe her tears brushing her belly this is no longer about her but the baby she is carrying, she holds my hand and its only now I realise that I still have the knife when she takes it.

“You’re bleeding Zobu” she says .

“Its nothing let me make you a hot cup of milk I brought you some cookies “ I say.

She laughs and gives me a hug.

“ I wish Sbani was here and I wish you could go home” she says.

I clear my throat and help her to the couch take my bag and head to my bedroom. I immediately dial my mother number it rings a few times before her voice comes through.

“Zobu” she says sounding excited.

“Ma I almost stabbed a man” I say breaking down.

“Zobu buya ekhaya” she says on the verge of also breaking down.

“ I love you and I miss you” I say getting myself together.

“Zobuhle buya ekhaya umama ezokwazi ukukunakekela “ she says pleading.

“Ma I have to go okay Philile is calling me I will call you tomorrow” I say.

I end the call and take off my shoes slipping on my sleepers seeing Sabelo beating up Philile like that brought back bad memories, memories I wish would stay eMahlabathini and stay buried like its name sake.

## QHAWE

I have the girls for the whole week because their parents need some time to their selves, I don't get why people have kids only to have them be other peoples problem who am I kidding though I love those two with everything in me . If it's not the club then it is the company and people who mess with me and think they can get away with it a person goes away for a short a while and mice come out to play. I see my mother's car parked outside just as I arrive and it dawns on me that she called and said something about passing by and it somehow slipped my mind, I pass by the garden and pluck out three sunflowers and walk inside the house perfect these should do. The smell of pastry and species hits my nostrils and waters my mouth her humming takes me way back to when I was a child, she drops everything the moment she sees me and gives me a hug.

"Mfana wam" she says still not letting go.

She pulls away after a long time and puts her hand on my cheek.

“How are you” she asks looking at me.

“It’s good to see you too mama” I say kissing her cheek.

“ I picked these for you my garden is as beautiful as you” I say.

She smiles and closes her eyes.

“You haven’t changed still mischievous as ever” she says laughing.

“Go get changed I made all your favourite” she says.

I walk to my bedroom and as I predicted Nontle’s clothes are nicely put in a black refuse bag my mother is sweet but she doesn’t take no nonsense, I change into something comfortable

and join her in the kitchen my father is one lucky bastard for ever having ma look his way.

“I hear the girls are coming and I decided to make things easier for you by putting her clothes where she will find them” she says.

“You didn’t have to clean ma I was going to call a cleaning lady” I say.

“Qhawe why would you call cleaning people when you already have what is her name” she asks snapping her fingers.

“Nontle ma” I say.

“Whatever her name is why can’t she clean huh didn’t her mother teach her how to clean oh let me guess the only thing she knows how to clean is your bank account” she says plating up

“She has other talents too ma like bending” I say coughing in between, she reaches for the dish cloth and hits me with it.

“Ngim’dala Qhawe futhi ngizokushaya” she says holding her chest.

“Imagine hearing such things from my boy” she says shaking her head.

“Before I forget your father asked that you call him” she says.

I nod my head digging in on my food this will be the longest afternoon of my entire life

Nontle came and let’s say she saved the day because my mother left but not without having a go at her first, I even promised I would call my father not sure when but according to my mother the man wants to hear my voice. Nontle walks back to the lounge and stands in front of the tv folding her arms I



look up raising my eyebrow and that makes her move out of the way.

“Yini” I ask.

“Why are my clothes folded and put in a plastic bag like I am some trash” she asks

“What’s going on Qhawe are bringing some skank into this house is that why my clothes are in that plastic” she asks raising her voice.

“Nontle” she looks at me and shuts up.

“I am glad we understand each other firstly you don't raise your voice when talking to me, secondly this is my house and I don't remember asking you to move in now tell me why are you mad” I ask.

She looks at me ready to blow up

“The kids are coming over and my mother doesn’t want you near them” I say.

“But to put my clothes in a plastic bag that’s disrespectful does she even know how much those fur coats she folded cost” she asks. I move close to her towering over her.

“I could buy you a whole fur coat factory and it still wouldn’t dent my bank account but let me warn you this better be the last you talk about my mother like that” I say.

She puts her hands on my chest and smiles biting her lip she’s good in bed I won’t lie one of the reason’s she’s still around.

“Ayidle izishiyele Mthethwa” she says gently pushing me back on the couch, she drops her dress on the floor and strip teasing me when taking off her undergarments. She pulls my pants down and her hands moving up to my shaft playing with my balls.

“I have been a naughty girl” she says using her tongues to lick the head of my cock.

“Fuck” I say closing my eyes and grabbing her hair she goes down and deep throats me while playing with my balls. Her mouth is warm but she pulls away and licks me for the last time before standing up and getting on top of me, she pushes herself down gasping till she finds it comfortable to move. Her lips move to mine while she works and shakes her ass on top of me. I move my hands to her boobs and suck on them gently biting to increase her pleasure she throws her head back when I use my thumb to massage her clit.

“Oh Qhawe” she says digging her nails on my shoulder as I keep on spanking her arse.

I get up from the couch with her still in hold and place her on the table with her legs wide open, I use the tip of my cock to brush up on her pussy and slam inside having her release a scream and holding on to the table. I pull out and place her on the couch getting a full view of her round fat pink arse as she bends and puts it all out there for me, she grabs on the couch and bites the pillows as soon as I start thrusting inside her and

deep stroking till I release having my cum run down her leg. I pull out and carefully lay her on the couch getting a warm towel to wipe her clean while I run her some bath.

“Spend the night I will drop you off at home in the morning” she nods her head drifting into sleep

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ZIBULO

MaButhelezi made her way to me dressed in nothing but a towel I took my time to stare and just love her body from a distance.

“Uyangilinga MaButhelezi” I asked swallowing hard.

She innocently shook her head and got behind me with her massage oil kneading my stiff shoulders I closed my eyes as her soft hands worked their way all over my back.

“Talk to me I know something is troubling you” she said.

“What do you think about Qhawe spending time with the kids’ I asked?

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“I think it’s a great idea and the girls miss him” she said.

“Don't you think it’s too soon and that we are putting pressure on him, he’s my brother and I know something is bothering him but he won’t say” I said.

She moved and sat next to me.

“Knowing him if he can’t handle the girls or has other priorities then he would have told us and beside he needs this it will do him good” she said smiling.

“And if we canceled knowing your daughter she would way all the way to his house and use my Augy as a horse “she said holding my hand.

“Just give him some time don't push Zibulo just let him be” she said talking some sense into my head.

“And stop calling him at night you know how he hates that” she said.

“ And that’s why I married you as clumsy as you are, you are also clever sthandwa sam” I said pulling her for a kiss undoing her towel.

“Baba” Aphile shouted making her way into our bedroom followed by Babusisiwe.

Zenkosi laughed and fixed herself up while I looked at the monsters we brought into this world.

“You know what abahambe” I said looking at my wife.

Babu looked at me and smiled making one of her cute dangerous faces.

“She’s starting she’s doing it again” I said looking at Zenkosi.

“Close your eyes Nyambose” she suggested.

“Too late she’s got me” I said looking at my princess.

“Baba can we bake” she asked sweetly I couldn’t say no, Aphile looked at me and laughed.

“And it works all the time” she said taking her sister.

“You just got played” Zen said laughing, I pulled her closed and locked her between my thighs grabbing her ass.

“Are sure those kids are mine” I asked teasingly.

“Shame on you Nyambose “ she said hitting me on my chest.

I rubbed her belly and kissed it.

“It a good thing you’re a boy I could really use some help in the house” I said standing up.

“Kanjalo nje no quickie” she asked like I just committed the biggest crime by standing up.

I looked her and nodded my head.

“I love you Zibulo” she said in her most needy voice.

“Aniboke nithande inkosi Zenkosi” I said laughing making my way to the kitchen.



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QHAWE

I made my usual stop to Marks restaurant to get my morning coffee and cupcakes for the girls, their mother is a great chef but there is something about these cakes that makes one to come back each time. One of the waitresse's behind the counter gives me my coffee order and smiles.

"Would like anything else" she asks.

"Six of your cupcakes" I say looking at the young lady who walks past me coming from an office tightly holding on to her skirt her head bowed if someone was in the way I bet she would have knocked them over, her intoxicating scent hits me it draws me in and I only get the pleasure of seeing her back.

"Here you go sir have a good day" the waitress says smiling.

“The sprinkles it’s a signature thing” she says.

“I doubt my girls will notice” I say still looking inside the box.

“That is where you are wrong most lovers notice and between you and me they have been complaining” she says.

I nod and turn to walk away but have a change of heart.

“That girl who walked past here her name, what’s her name” I ask.

She looks at me puzzled and shakes her head.

“I am sorry I didn’t see her’ she says attending to another customer

This is not the first time I have smelled such a scent I just don't know where, I make a call to my brother asking him to meet me

at the club I need to move some money and snow since the girls are coming over.

“I thought I wasn’t supposed to call you” he says the moment he answers.

“If I didn’t know better I would say you and I are not related” I say.

He chuckles and sighs.

“Ufunani” he asks

“Meet me at the club we need to discuss a few things and bring Augy with you” I say.

I end the call and walk back to my jeep.

## ZOBUHLE

A few weeks passed and finally Philile agreed to press charges against Sabelo and had a restraining order against him that maniac came to the house again and tried to hit her but we called the police although they took their time they arrived and took him away. Bab khumalo was ready to kill him but some of the neighbors helped out and held him back reminding that he would lose his job if anything happened to Sabelo. I also told her about the job opportunity and she was excited this means her being able to stand up for herself and being able to do things with her own money. On other news I told Mark that I was resigning and serving my notice and he wasn't happy about the news to point of threatening to ruin me and the scariest thing was when he groped me and tried to forcefully kiss me, I was on the verge of crying but he stopped and decided to let me go and I rushed out of that office before he could say I change my mind. I don't want to see myself in this place anymore and I can't wait for this week to pass with it passing means my notice ending.

I have been doing everything and anything in this place and that's okay with me I wipe the tables and notice the door opening and a man walking followed by two girls, I carry on with my business but this man's voice holds me putting my whole to a stop. I try to get a glimpse of his face but I can't because he has a cap on and that prevents me from having a good look at him, one of the girls tugs at him and but he keeps his focus on the counter and ignores her I keep looking and the young girl's eyes land on mine she waves her small hand at me and smiles. I think I hear my ovaries calling I want to be a mother her eyes are beautiful this child just hypnotized me she carries on with her business till her father pays attention to her and lift her up. she whispers something in his ear and the man laughs putting her down, he then picks up the other girl and she get to point behind the counter. I get called to the side by Sam one of the waitresses to help her move a few books we get that done and by the time I get back to my table the three people are gone.

"Sam" I call her out

"Sure what's up" she asks making her way to me.

“There was a man here with two girls” I say.

I don't even know why I am asking but I was really hoping to see his face and put a face to that voice and have something to tell Philile about, I don't remember the last time we talked men and this was going to be one long night with a cup of hot chocolate and topped with marshmallows

“You mean the tall handsome one, the one who had a cap on and reeked sexual appeal on a dangerous level” she says.

“You know what forget I even asked” I say walking away.

I get a call from Sophie just as I am about knock off and settle on one of the tables taking her call.

“Hey Zo” she says on the other end.

“Hey boss lady” I say.

“I know I shouldn’t be calling but I wanted to ask how are things with you and your current boss’ she asks .

“Things are a bit shaky but I managed to talk to him and I should be able to start work soon” I say.

“That is great because I need you girls as soon as in yesterday” she says.

“A dear friend of mine needs someone who is trust worthy and reliable” she says.

“I can recommend Philile she’s great and knows when to keep quite” I say.

“Reason I called is because I need you to work for him” she says.

“Are you sure” I ask.

“He is a private person and with you yes I am sure” she says.

“I will send you the details for a meet up okay” she says.

“Thank you so much for doing this it means a lot” I say.

“It’s nothing” she says.

I end the call and find Mark standing behind me.

“I thought everyone had left” he says settling next to me.

“I was just taking a call but I am on way home” I say standing up.

“ Zo” he calls out.

“Yes sir” I say.



“Tell me what’s your story” he asks.

“I am not following” I say.

“You never talk about family or where you come from in fact if didn’t know better I would say you’re shadow or someone running away from something” he says.

“My parents died when I was young I only have a brother who lives in boarding school and that is the only family I have” I say clearing my throat.

I just lied but people like Mark don't deserve anything not even the slightest glimpse of the truth especially after the stunt he pulled in his office.

“I am sorry I didn’t know” he says.

“I am not” I say walking out.

I get home and find Philile fast asleep being pregnant seems to be talking its tall on her the morning sickness has her by the tits , I close her bedroom door and head to mine going straight to the mirror to look at myself I close my eyes and smile thinking of the night I had my first kiss.

“Amehlo akho kanye nezindebe zakho” he whispered in my ear.

“Sbani” I said running out of breathe being with felt like running a marathon.

He held my chin and looked deep into my eyes kissed my nose then my lips his were warm and sweat I didn't know what to do but he walked me through it and soon enough we were flowing but not before I bite his lip.

“You'll get there ungakhathazeki” he said moving his hands to my waist.

“I love you” I told him.

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26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">“Uthandwa yimina Zobu” he said pulling away and held my hand kissing it.

“Ngishade Zobu” he asked and without thinking about it I said yes.

I was young he knew it but he treated me like an equal we were inseparable.

In that moment his brother walked in and looked at us.

“Uvumile bafo” Sbani said not taking his eyes off me.

“Uvume wena noma imali yakho” his brother asked looking at me.

Back then I could never really understand why he never liked me his brother that is but after Sbani passed I knew and I wish I didn't, I look at my ring finger and shake my head .

“You still wear it” Philile says snapping me out of my thoughts.

“I will never take it off” I say.

She moves closer and settles next to me.

“I know you still think about him but Zo you have to move on” she says.

“I am trying Philile but I can’t its hard” I say.

“He loved you and you should hold on to that but one day you will have to let him go” she says.

I wipe my tears if letting go was simple then I would do it with all my heart trying to smile.

“You know I am seeing Muzi during the weekend his sentence is being reviewed” I say clearing my throat.

“You father must be happy to know he is coming back home after such a long a time” she says.

“And I think I should call him” I say.

“You still believe in his innocence” she asks.

Although it’s complicated I still strongly believe that he didn’t do anything my brother would never hurt anyone let alone hurt Sbani.

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QHAWE

The girls and I have been staring at the box of cupcakes and I don't see the problem but they do, I even went as far as buying sprinkles but Aphile wasn't having it. By now you would think we would be watching a movie or be in bed because it is way past their bedtime but I have listening at a conversation between Babu and her Bunny.

"He's trying to trick us" Babu says looking at Aphile then Bunny.

"I knew it baba didn't buy them at our usual spot" Aphile says dropping her shoulders.

I feel like I am in an interrogation room being held captive by two little people and right now I don't have their answers.

"What do you think bunny" Babu asks looking at her bunny stuffed toy.

They look at me then at the box again and shake their head I swear they are one person.

“This is wrong it’s not fair I want my sprinkles” Babu says sulking.

“I did buy you guys sprinkles” I say pointing at them.

“It’s the principle baba okay principle” Aphile says titling her head.

“How about we bake and make our own sprinkles filled cupcakes” I suggest.

I have been using the word sprinkle and cupcake I am staring to feel sweat myself but if it’s going to get them to sleep then by all means we shall bake.

“I get to mix” Aphile says getting the pans.

“And I am the boss baba get working this is my kitchen I don't want lazy people around” she says putting a hand on her waist

showing her toothless smile. I think she just channeled her mother perfectly I need to warn Zibulo we might be harboring two Zenkosi's in the house, I sit back and watch in amusement as she orders her older sister around like the boss that she is Zano would have been a perfect fit with these two. I feel a hand on my lap and Babu's face gets all up in mine her eyes wide open she's the child and trust me she gets away with everything all the time.

"I want to fly" she says raising up her arms.

"I thought we were baking" I ask puzzled.

"I changed my mind I want to fly like a bird" she says making me laugh.

"Aphile what do you think" I ask, she comes and sits next to me.

"Why can't we eat I am hungry" she says.



I reach for the meat pot in the stove still warm and place it on the table, if there's anything they love is meat which I sod because they are kids.

"Shonani Khona" I say, they look at me and dig in mercilessly with their hands that's it they need to leave as soon as their parents get here.

## ZOBHLE

I sat in the waiting room with the other people who were here to visit their loved ones, I haven't been inside prison walls in such a long time that my hands were sweating and my heart beating so fast I almost turned back. I stood up when it was my chance to give out my details and state the person I was there to see. I gave out his name and prison cell number so they could find him quicker, I went back to my seat and braced myself to see him after such a long time of not.

“Vusimuzi Mbatha” the prison guard called out

My mind was so far away I only heard him on the third time when other visitors were standing up, as always men were searched by male prison guards while women were searched by female guards . I will never find this to be comfortable not now not ever and I am glad that he is coming out soon to save us all from this ordeal. The searching process was quick and smooth that I got enough time to get him something to eat and drink

then went to the bench area to wait, I stood the moment I saw him make his way to me and gave him the longest hug and the tears didn't stop they kept flowing. He pulled away looked at me and laughed then gave me another hug and finally we sat down and it was only after he had sat that I noticed the sadness in his eyes. Muzi was imprisoned back in Mahlabathini but because of the system he was moved from prison to prison till he landed here in Leeuwkop maximum prison, I didn't even know he was here till he called and told me. I extended my hand across the table and held his hand smiling.

"Hey" he said wiping my tears.

"How are you" I asked.

"I'm okay as you can see" he said.

His lips said the words but his face said the opposite and he looked tired.

"I am sorry Zobu" he said shaking his head.

“Its okay bhuti you don't have to apologise I know what they say but also it's not true, the young man baba raised would never harm anyone” I said.

“I don't know about that anymore Zobu I am a change man prison did that to me” he said looking down.

“That's life it changes us sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worst” I said.

“How's everyone I miss the so much” he said smiling.

“Everyone is okay” I said nodding my head.

“No matter what happens Zobu don't go back to that place because if you do then it would be the end of you” he said.

“I was thinking about that a lot and I think it's time I went home” I said.

He banged the table causing one of the guards to come to our table

“Sboshwa” the prison guard said giving a warning look.

“What part of don't go back there don't you understand huh ufuna ukufa” he asked.

I had never seen him this angry and he was scaring me.

“But I miss home” I told him shrugging my shoulders.

“If anything were to happen to you then I would never forgive myself it would kill our father if anything happened to you” he said.

“Uyaphuma nje we can go back together” I said getting excited again.

He shook his head and ran his hands over his head.

“My application was denied Zobu” he said tightening his face.

“What no they can’t do that” I said raising my voice, the guard looked at us and shook his head.

“Why” I asked.

“I don't know but it is what it is” he said.

I looked at him and tears welled up till they spilled.

“Don't cry I am okay” he said.

I think he practiced the words “I am okay” so much that he is starting to believe them even though he is far from being okay.

“You are not okay and what I am going to tell baba when he calls” I asked.

“I will tell him you don't have to worry about anything, just make sure you take care of yourself” he said holding my hand.

“You don't know what seeing you here means to me thank you” he said.

“Times up” one of the guards said circling around the tables.

I stood up and gave him a tight hug.

“I love you” he pulled away and kissed my forehead.

“Ndlovukazi” he said walking away.

I walked out of that prison and my heart was shattered to pieces I don't want this idea in my head but something is wrong someone is playing with my brother's life. Sophie called earlier and asked to meet with Philile and I to discuss a few things concerning our contracts and when we start work Philile looked at me and put her hand over mine and tilted her head.

"You haven't touched your juice" she pointed out the obvious.

"Was it that bad seeing him I mean" she asked.

"Philile wehla nini ukuya ekhaya" I asked.

Her eyes widened and she blinked.

"Angazi why" she asked.

"I want to come with you" I said.

"What happened back there exactly" she asked.



Sophie walked in and just like that I was saved from answering her.

“I am glad we could meet these are the contracts and then if you look carefully there’s “I cut her short.

“There is a non disclosure form meaning what happens behind closed doors stays behind closed doors” I said going through the contract then looking at Philile

“Don't worry about me I know how to keep my mouth shut” she said looking at Sophie.

“Good I want you girls to read and if there’s something you don't understand call me both of you, Zobuhle told me that you pregnant” Sophie said looking at Philile.

“I am a harder worker and I promise that the baby won’t be a problem” Philile said softly.

“Oh please that baby is not a problem in fact I have a mommy and baby program that I am running for struggling mothers and new mothers” Sophie said.

“Zobuhle told me your story and I would really love to help where I can and don't worry I have already discussed your pregnancy with your boss and she's fine” she told her.

I could tell everything was overwhelming for my friend she started crying.

“Zobu thank you” she said.

“Awukahle nawe you know we are sisters” I told her.

“Maybe if you told me your story then I would be able to help” she said looking at me.

Philile looked at me her eyes begging me to say something but I chose not to because even if she offered her help it would still not make a difference.

“I am a patient woman Zo and I will wait” she said standing up taking her leave.

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“Order whatever you girls feel like it’s on me” she said.

“Where did you find this woman” Philile asked still in shock mode, I couldn’t help but laugh at some point I was this shocked and amazed that there are still good people out there. We sat there and ordered the most ridiculously over priced meals and drank some things we didn’t even know exist in the world. One of the waiters came to our table and asked if we were still okay and just for the fun of it Philile cleared her throat and asked for desert.

“Very well mam” the young lady said walking away.

“Imicondo kodwa akasho ngani simuhlephulele” Philile said laughing.

“Ususuthi phela wena” I said laughing.

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QHAWE

I was in the office when Zakhele made his way in still holding the bag I gave I immediately stood up and looked at him raising my eyebrows he better have a plausible explanation before I go crazy.

“I gave you one task Zakhele just one” I said.

“Before you get angry which you are they don't want the money” he said.

“What do you mean they don't want the money ” I asked.

“That woman is crazy and she told me that if you pull that again she will call the cops” He said.

“I am the cops Zakhele” I said.

“I think we should just inject the money into the business” he suggested.

“I don't remember asking for your opinion” I said getting back to my chair.

“Donate that money to whatever charity that does good for kids” I said.

“Yonke yonke” he asked pressing my last button.

“Zakhele thatha imali uphume before I do something to you” I said.

I reached for my phone after he had left and dialed Thando's mother she didn't pick and neither did her sister, I looked at the time and stood up the girls are with my parents and said I would pick them up. I drove home and when I got there Thando,s sister also pulled up behind me, I stepped out of my car and so did she. She raised her hand and tried hitting me but I held it midway.

"What the hell do you think you are doing" I asked still holding her hand.

"Confronting my sisters killers" she said raising her voice.

The front door opened and my parents walked out followed by the girls.

"Ya ningababulali vele" she shouted.

"Keep your voice down" I said.

“What you don't want the whole world to know how you and your brother murdered my sister and your father covered it up” she said looking at my mother.

“How do you sleep at night knowing you gave birth to killers” she said. I raised my hand ready to hit her but my father warned.

“That’s enough asiwenzi loyo dodi lay’khaya” he said.

“Do it I know you want to do it mbulali ndini, I don't know what you think that money will do but we don't want it and trust me it will not erase what you did and it will not make you feel better” she said walking to her car,.

“The sad part is that we warned her about you and your filthy family but she wouldn’t listen” she says.

“I pray you don't find peace and that you see every day of your life” she said getting inside her car.

I also walked to my car and looked at babu holding her bunny close to her chest they heard all that.

“The girls can spend the night” I said looking at my father.

“Musa ukuhamba Qhawe you are not in the right state of mind to drive” he said.

My mother came to where I was removed my hand from the car door took my keys and pulled me for a hug.

“Wena uyingane yami wavunda kwesami futhi ngiyakuthanda Qhawe what happened is very unfoturnate and I know yourself blame yourself kodwa hurting yourself and pushing us away is not the answer, it hurts me a your mother to see you like this don't let what she said get to you” she said pulling away.

“Khuluma naye babakhe” she said looking at my father.

“Mamakhe take the kids inside” my father said making his way me.



He punched me so hard I stumbled back looking at him in shock he then gave me a hug.

“No matter how angry you get you never lift your hand on a woman” she said still holding me.

“I raised you and your brother to good better men” he said.

“But what good man fails his own child and the mother, what good man spills blood and sleeps like nothing is wrong at night” I asked pulling away.

“You didn’t fail them Qhawe had you known what was going to happen you would have stopped it” he said.

“Ngenzeni baba to get rid of this pain” I asked him.

“There’s nothing you can do let time heal you” he said.

I ended up staying and not leaving but the girls joined me and their grandfather in the lounge changed the tv from the sport channel to a cartoon one.

“You want to talk about it” I asked looking at Aphile and she shook her head and sat next to me.

“Baba yini umbulali” Babu asked.

I looked at my father and he cleared his throat.

“That is another word for bad person” he said making me look at him this old man just lied to the kids.

“Does that mean baba is bad person” she asked now looking at her grandfather.

“No that lady was just upset and drunk she didn’t mean all those things” he said looking at them, as serious as this was I couldn’t laugh along their conversation.

“Mkhulu what is a killer” babu asked.

“Another word for bad people and I put them away remember” he said looking at her innocent face.

“Does this mean baba should be away I don't get it” she said huffing then shaking her head.

“Good’ baba said hoping that was the last question man was he in it.

“Mkhulu why was the lady drunk baba always says drunk people are the worst’ she said shaking her head.

“That’s it I am going to sleep” baba said standing up.

Babu follows behind dragging bunny with her.

“When said I am going to sleep I meant alone” baba said  
turning to look at her

“I want my granny” she said walking past him.

I looked at Aphile and kissed her forehead.

“I am sorry that you had to see that” I said,unlike Babu who is  
still young to fully grasp everything that goes around Aphile  
notices and see things.

## ZOBUHLE

For the first time ever I dreamt about Sbani in such a long and he was smiling and somehow I felt better and wanted him stay I did want to wake up he was right there standing in front of me telling me that he loves me, I woke and prayed for his ever beautiful soul and prayed for my first day at work. You heard that right today Philile and I are starting work it's funny how I always thought I would be a doctor but that dream didn't happen. I had this thing in my mind that I would be one of the greatest doctor's in the whole world and save lives I watched my father take his own life without even thinking about us, he denied Nqaba the chance to know him for the great man that he was and not for the coward he turned out to be in the end. But I take heart in knowing that my uncle is around and raising him to be a better man and that's is why I love that man so much and calling him baba was natural. The time seems to be passing by slow and my stomach is in knots Philile made breakfast and called it a celebratory one trust her to use any

excuse just to show off and cook. She gives me my coffee and smiles shaking her head while sipping on her warm milk she has a thing for milk.

“What” I ask still looking at her

“Nothing” she says.

“That’s a lie and we both know” I say.

“I just want to say thank you for everything” she says.

“It’s nothing all we have to do is work hard and stay out of peoples business” I say.

“I love you Zo so much” she says giving me a hug.

“I love you too Philile and thank you for always sticking with me even when it was hard “ I say.

“You know I would do anything to see you happy” she says.

“And I will support you in anything you do” she says.

“And I packed you some lunch box” she says smiling.

“Uyakuthanda ukudla Philile” I say.

“It’s the baby not me” she says laughing.

I look at her brush her belly and smile.

“Has he called” I ask, she shakes her head standing up walking towards the sink.

“No and I want nothing to do with him” she says with her back facing me.

I nod my head although I am sensing some hesitation from her and trust me I understand how she feels it's not easy walking away from someone you love and who happens to be the father of your child.

I find myself standing outside what looks like a fortress because of its high walls I give the security at the gate my identification and wait for them to make a call letting me through after. I walk down the drive way admiring the beautiful garden I have never seen something so breathtaking I can see myself watching the sunset and the stars all the days of my life. Sophie opens the door before I can knock letting me in I blink and pinch myself to make sure I am still in the land of the living this house is beautiful, she lets me walk around and admire everything till I hear her laugh softly.

“He might be a man but he has good taste” she says behind me.

The design is manly but it has a lighter and softer touch to it what makes my heart beat is the file she handed to me a profile of some sort with the name and surname of my employer this man is handsome.



“God he’s beautiful” I say.

Sophie looks at me and smiles

“I mean the house is beautiful” I say biting my tongue.

“Don't worry you are not the only one who thinks he is handsome although you used beautiful which is a totally different eye” she says looking at me.

“The house is beautiful though” I say

She agrees with me and shows me the whole house and tells me everything I should know and where everything is.

“This won’t be hard right” she asks holding my hand.

“No I will be fine” I say looking around, now that my admiring glasses are off the house is quite dirty and there towels on the

floor in each bathroom, socks and clothes food on the table and dishes in the sink.

“The girls’ handy work” she says smiling.

“If you need anything call me or this number” she says giving a paper with the name Qhawe written on it.

“That’s your boss’s name if you can’t find me or the office please call him” she says.

“Sophie stop stressing everything is going to be okay” I say.

She gives me a hug and leaves but not without wishing me luck first I change into my uniform and starts working first with bedroom. I walk inside what I assume is the master bedroom everything is white with a touch of black and grey I reach for all the clothes in the floor and for the life of me sniff one of the shirts like a drug. I put a hand over my chest laughing and go for another sniff I don't remember the last time I smelled a man and my boss smells heavenly. I start cleaning then change

towels and sheets and everything that needs changing, I reach for my phone in my pocket and quickly answer it.

“Zo you won’t believe this I am inside a mansion” Philile says laughing.

“Uzoxoshwa wena” I tell her also laughing.

“kahle wena u madam wam said I could call” she says laughing even more.

“These people are so nice and super rich so tell me have you met your boss” she asks.

“No he wasn’t here when I arrived apparently he had to leave early” I say.

“Don't worry I sure he’s nothing like mark” she says.

“Let me go eat okay the lady of the house said I could have anything I want” she says.

“I know it’s your first day but are they treating you fine” I ask.

“Awazi wena its like being pregnant is the new sick “ she says laughing.

Trust Philile to find everything to be funny.

“Let me get back to work then I don't want the man thinking I am slacking around” I say.

“Wait before you go is he married” she asks.

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“I don't know and even if he’s not married I don't want a man” I say.

“Konje vele uwayazi lento yingakho ukhuluma umbhedo” she says laughing.

“Konje wena kade wayiqala” I say laughing even more.

“Usuyaqina manje hambo sebenza” She says ending the call.

I put the phone down and carry on with my job this house is huge and I doubt I will finish everything in time but Sophie said I will be working from Monday to Friday meaning even if I don't finish today's work then I will finish tomorrow. I take another tour and there is nothing that says I belong to a woman in the house apart from what I assume are family pictures, I shouldn't even be doing this but my eyes and hands seem to be working well together it's amazing they are a tag team using the motto 'we see we touch'.

The day goes by faster with Sophie checking if I am okay and going on about my work, it's close to knocking off time and no one has arrived in this house I don't think they have staff quarters so any shower in the house will do. I am tired and I really can't wait to get home I quickly shower and the water

seems to speak to me “Just a little longer Zobu” I swear I hear the water whisper. I wrap a towel around my body just after stepping out then a pair of man flops next no one will see and beside everyone is at work. I make my way to the bedroom from the bathroom and almost have a heart attack.

“Who are you” they simultaneously ask.

I run out of words see I thought I was alone.

“Those are baba’s shoes” the small girl says pointing at my feet.

“I am so sorry mam I only took a shower to get rid of the sweat” I say.

“My name is Kayise not mam these are my brother’s kids and you are” she asks and before I can answer her eyes light up.

“Are you dating my brother” she asks.

“What’s dating” the one who saw the shoes asks.

“Shhh” her sister says

“No I am just an employee and this is my first day” I say.

“Oh then welcome to the family” she says.

The three of them stare neither one of them blinking.

“Is there something wrong” I ask.

“You are beautiful” Kayise says.

“Thank you” I say.

“We will leave you to get dressed sorry that we barged in” she says taking the girls with her.

I quickly change and put on my clothes leaving the shower clean and the towels I used replaced, I head to the lounge and find them sitting down watching cartoons. I clear my throat getting their attention.

“Come join us” Kayise offers.

“Thank you but I should get home” I say.

She looks at the time and jumps up cussing.

“I am meeting up a potential buyer for my paintings and I should have been on my way there” she says in panic mode.

“Can you look after them for a while till my brother gets here, I promised him that I would but I had totally forgotten but my meeting” she says grabbing her bag.

“Please you don't have to worry about getting home my brother will drop you off” she says clasping her hands together.



I look at the kids then her if I say no then she misses her meeting and a potential buyer.

“Okay so long as your brother won’t have a problem” I say.

“Thank you so much” she says

An hour passed since Kayise left and still there was no sign of her brother I had a chat with the girls and they told me about their parents and their amazing uncle, I made them macaroni and cheese with bacon bits and chorizo for supper because I didn’t want to get comfortable in another woman’s. I ended up calling Sophie and she said she would fix it but that took another hour and she called back telling I shouldn’t worry the man would take me home. I stayed with girls helped them bath and get into their pajamas then we stayed up and watched till the fell asleep giving me time to clear the table and eat.

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QHAWWE

Zibulo called earlier in the day and asked what happened with Thando's sister and when I told him he lost it we talked and the conversation led to me telling him that I was done, I made a promise to her that I would take her of her family even though it bring her back but they wouldn't have to need for anything.

"What do you mean you're done" he asked.

"I am done mkhulu I tried reasoning with them, I tried making peace with them but nothing I do is good enough in their eyes. Thando was my fiancé I was close to making her my wife and that did not happen, they don't even care that I also lost them both my baby girl died with her mother and they don't care so long as I am hurting then its fine with them" I said.

"Shall I come down or ask ma to take the kids" he asked.

"No having them with me makes me sane" I told him.

“I made a mistake thinking they could ever see me as human” I said chuckling .

“You are an anomaly build differently and that’s why you are my brother” he said.

“And you are going all soft on me’ I said.

“Careful what you say brother” he said ending the call.

I asked Kayise to look after the girls and knowing her my house is a mess and they kids are still up I pull over on the drive way and notice that her car is not here she must have used a taxi, I walk inside the garage and make my way to the house and to my surprise the house is clean I walk to the lounge and notice the girls on the couch I almost walk past but stop on my tracks when I see a woman I don't know sleeping next to them. I make my way to them and notice their hair nicely combed and their pajama s on I take Aphile then Babu to their bedroom and put my phone on the charger switching it on. I am still shocked as to why there’s a strange woman in my house on my couch sleeping next to the kids or maybe she’s one of Kayise’s friends.

She turn and looks my way and my whole being awakens the thought of waking her up gets out of my head I have never seen someone so beautiful , the blanket covering her up slips to the floor and mkhulu senior down there slowly awakens this has never happened to me before. She's wearing a dress so long it covers up her ankles I nervously run my finger down her arm and quickly retract it when I realise I am invading her personal space and privacy.

“Sbani” she murmurs.

Who the hell is that I think to myself.

I think she's a heavy sleeper I reach for my phone when it starts pinging off the roof receiving messages a few from Kayise come through I knew I couldn't count on her crazy arse. A picture Sophie sent me pops up followed by a few texts I look at the picture then at this breathtaking creature in front of me. I look at the time and I can't drive her home it's too late so sleeping here will have to do, I scratch my head before lifting her up touching her makes me feel like superman next to a kryptonite. Now I am definitely sure that she is a heavy sleeper she hasn't opened her eyes but rather has her hands on my chest. I reach

one of the guest bedrooms and place her inside I slowly step back from the bed and lean on the door, I know this scent to think I even when to different shops and florist trying to describe it and I still couldn't find it yet here it is right under my food I close my eyes taking it all in I open them up shaking my head man I am screwed.

I couldn't sleep last night and spent most of that time taking a cold shower then a smoke which led to a drink then me going past the guest room to look at her but she was fast asleep. I wanted to call my idiot of a brother but decided against it knowing him my mother would have knocked on that door that very hour. I get out bed and step into my bedroom to freshen up I wear a pair of shorts and sandals making my way to the girls room knowing them Babu is still snoring while Aphile is up but finds it hard to get out of bed.

"Morning drill" I say walking inside their bedroom only to find their bed already made up.

"This must be some April fool shit these two never wake up on their own" I say to myself. "There's a woman in your house think dammit" I say out loud.

I make my way to the kitchen and there she is standing in front of the stove the girls already seated and ready for school.

“Morning girls” I say clearing my throat.

“Morning baba” they both say excited clearly they are having a great morning.

She turns and the small stack of dishes she has in her hand slip breaking on the floor, she quickly tries to pick them up big mistake because she cut her hand. I rush to her side and hold both her hands.

“Mana uzolima” I say inhaling a whiff of her scent.

She lets go of the bloodied broken pieces letting out a small painful cry, Aphile hands me some paper towel and this crazy woman uses it to wipe the floor instead of stopping the blood coming out from her hand. It’s quite an admirable sight but she needs to stop because she’s hurt.

“Stop” I half shout getting her to stop.

Aphile literally kicks me and stares down on me

“I am sorry I didn’t mean to shout’ I say.

“I am just doing my job I am sorry” she says softly.

“It’s okay you did nothing wrong look at me” I say, she keeps her eyes on the floor refusing to look at me.

“She’s pretty just like mommy” Babu says next to Aphile.

“Will you please look at me” I say holding her hand I just want to see her eyes that’s all I want to see her soul and find myself trapped deep inside. She raises her head and looks at me her big brown eyes moist with tears just looking at me.

“My name is Qhawe Mthethwa” I say.

“Ntombizobuhle Mbatha” she says.



“Shandu omuhle” she smiles right after the words leave my mouth.

“Ncane Zo is hurt” Babu says whispering in my ear.

I help her up to the sink and reach for the first aid kit running the water to wash off the blood it is not that deep of a cut but its bleeding I quickly patch her up soon after that.

“You should be okay in a few days” I say.

She closes her eyes when my thumb rubs on the cut.

“You forgot something” Aphile says smiling.

“What” I ask.

“You are supposed to blow air on it baba to make sure it heals faster” she says.

“It’s really not necessary” she says trying to take her hand but I hold on to it.

I move her hand closer to my mouth and rub on the cut and blow cooling air on it looking her straight in the eye.

“I should get back to work” she says taking her hand back.

I clear the broken pieces and wipe the floor clean joining the girls at the table, a full breakfast spread is what I see the kind I get when I am at home or at my brother’s place. I notice her ankles and legs because of the uniform she’s wearing it’s respectable yet it hugs her perfectly I get the shock of my life when I see the ring on her finger when she puts a bowl of bacon on the table so she’s married.

“Eat up girls we need to get to school” i say.

Babu decides to sit on my lap and rests her head on my shoulder.

“Whats wrong nana” I ask.

“My tummy hurts can I stay home so nane can take of me” she says looking so innocently.

I put a hand over her forehead.

“Are you sure” I ask.

“Yes” she nods her head, I start tickling her and the whole house fills up with laughter.

“Yeap you are going to school young lady’ I say letting her go.

“I told you it wouldn’t work “ Aphile says.

I swear with these two it always feels like I am amongst adults what is wrong with these kids what are they being fed.

Zobuhle laughs in the kitchen making me turn to look at her.

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ZOBUHLE

I had the most weird and heart racing morning I thought I was going to pass out right in front of him and those amazingly wired kids, because I spent the night at his place he suggested I only work half the day then go home he also offered to drive me. The longest drive of my life I didn't even know how to seat or where to put my hands I only thanked the lord when he parked across and I was able to jump out of the car and go home. I stole a few glimpse of the man and he is beautiful if ever such a word is used on men, I have seen men have the face but not physique to match it but Qhawe has it all and for

someone who likes cleaned shaved men I couldn't help wish that beard was underneath my hand. There is something about not sleeping in your bed and sleeping in other people's houses the first time around it is uncomfortable and you barely shut your eyes or get some proper sleep but I slept like a baby.

I wake up to Philile shaking me senselessly.

"What" I ask.

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26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"Yey kade ulele vuka" she says.

"Its way past seven and I couldn't wait any longer" she says.

"Wait for what" I ask.

"To get some juice out of you and what happened to your hand" she asks.

“I broke a few plates and cut myself while picking up the broken pieces” I say shrugging my shoulders.

“Ufika nje kamlungu you break things” she says.

“It wasn’t on purpose I saw ... you know what let’s leave this whole conversation it’s not going anywhere” I say getting out of bed.

“Hayi Zobuhle I need to know what happened” she says following behind me.

“Nothing happened” I say.

“Then why didn’t you come home” she asks.

“Did he force you to stay over” she asks.

“What no I had to help out with the kids but he promised it wouldn’t happen again” I say.

“So he has kids and he is married” she asks her excitement dying down.

“His brother’s kids and no he’s not married” I say.

She looks at me smile and shakes her head.

“You are not telling me the whole story there is something more” she says.

“Philile he’s handsome” I say showing him a picture of Qhawe.

She claps her hands and laughs.

“Is he real Zobu” I nod smiling oh he is real I met and I saw.

“I knew it” she says.

“I don't think I can work for him what if I slip and tell him he's handsome and he fires me” I say covering my face.

A knock comes through and Philile walks to the door.

“Ungazobheda lah wena that man wouldn't fire because of that and it's not our fault that he's handsome and that he's not married” her voice trails off for a while.

“Philile” I call out.

She comes back only this time with a man towering over her.

“Someone is here to see you” she says moving out of the way.

“Sir” I say.



“I will leave you guys alone” Philile says walking to her room.

He takes off his cap and clears his throat I don't know what his parents did on that day he was conceived but it worked for them. His eyes are black and his brows so thick I wish he could land me some not to mention his lips, he is so tall I have to look up when looking at him I notice the brown paper bag he is carrying but not before I notice the boots he is wearing ,black jeans, black t-shirt,a hoody and a jacket to top it. If I didn't know better I would say he was once in the military well because he also drives a jeep similar to the one we see on tv used for war..

“Call me Qhawe please” he says.

“Yes sir if I may ask what are you doing here” I ask.

“I came to drop this off I figured you would be in pain” he says.

I look inside and these are pain meds it's a small but I am going to down turn free medicine.

“Ubungamele ngiyabonga” I don't think he smiles much well he hasn't done that since he got here.

“You can stay home tomorrow I mean till you feel better” he says.

“No” I find myself shaking my head.

“No” he asks.

“I mean I would love to come to work” I say.

“And I would love to have you at the house” he says.

“Would you like some coffee” I ask.

“No thank you the girls are at my mother's and I need to go see them before heading home” he says.

I look at how he subtly licks his lips stares down on me and for the life of me wish I was those lips.

“I should leave” he says.

Why does it seem like he draws air from me while I do the same from him I swallow hard when a picture of him rubbing and blowing air to the cut comes to mind. I walk him to the door and for some reason we stand there aimlessly staring at each other till he clears his throat and puts on his cap.

“Ungivalelisele” he says, I nod my head opening the door.

“Usale kahle Mambatha” he says slightly nodding his head.

I close the door and slowly bang my head on it.

“Siyam’qoma” Philile says screaming behind me.

I am not about to get it on with my boss just because he is handsome.

## ZOBUHLE

I don't know why I let Philile put ideas in my mind the thought of me and Qhawe being something other than employer and employee was absurd and beside I doubt he would ever look my way. As for work things are okay and I am doing just fine there isn't much work to be done in this house he lives alone and the girls are back at their parents house but will come back when their parents take another trip which might last longer than the first one. Kayise said her sister in law in the process of setting up another restaurant and her brother refuses for her to take all these trips alone. I saw the woman's pictures and if I was her husband I wouldn't let her out of sight. As I was the saying the house is basically empty I haven't seen Qhawe in two weeks he leaves early in the mornings and probably comes back late at night. I deeply sigh here I am worried about him when I should be focusing on work the work that I get paid to do which is cleaning but I can't pretend as if I didn't feel anything when he looked me or maybe I am reading too much into this okay

now I am getting it my over thinking senses are taking over. I take all the dishes and put them in the dishwasher heading up to the master bedroom that's basically what I clean his bedroom, bathrooms the lounge and the kitchen the rest of the house I do touch ups.

“We msheli wami wangibuka wanginyanya uzongikhumbula mhla uphela amandla.

We msheli wami wangibuka wanginyanya uzongikhumbula mhla uphela Amanda, hayi uzongikhumbula mhla uphela mandla uzongikhumbula mhla uphela amandla” my singing stops the moment I enter his bedroom.

“What the hell Qhawe” the woman laying next to him says.

“I am so sorry I should have knocked “ I say getting out.

“You got a maid and you didn't think to tell me I am talking to you where the hell are going” I hear the woman shouting.

I feel Qhawe grab my arm pulling me to him just as I am about to walk into the girls bedroom.

“Zobu” he says.

I blink away the sudden emotions that try to overcome me and shrug myself out of his hold his body is warm probably still radiating heat from the workout he just had.

“I am sorry” he says, he’s apologizing but why.

“Its okay sir I should be the one apologizing I should have knocked” I tell him.

“Still I am sorry” he says.

“Sir this is your house and I am just an employee I should have knocked” I say.

“Zobu please” he says.

“Sir this your house you can do anything you want and trust me I know when and how to mind my own business” I say.

“May I get back to work” I ask.

He looks at me tightening his face and nods his head.

“Thank you sir” I say closing the door behind me.

I should have knocked but I didn't think he would be home what happened to leaving early but this is his house, I look at myself in the mirror and notice the difference my morning is ruined just like that. The happy couple comes down and I wish I could have the ground open up and swallow me she looks at me and smiles giving Qhawe a kiss on the cheek making my stomach turn.

“I will see you later my love” she says grabbing her bag walking out.

I get back to what I was doing on the in the sink trying my best to avoid him, you know things were better when he woke up and left to God knows where.

“I know this is my house and I can do whatever I want but I respect you” he says breathing down on my neck.

I was so focused on these mugs I didn't notice he is standing behind me.

“Ukahle” he asks.

I nod my head holding on to the sink I swear to God if he doesn't move I will moan and whimper.

Someone clears their throat saving me from the worst embarrassment ever he takes his time to move and when he does I finally breathe looking at the person laughing.

“Uyenzani ingane Mkhulu” his brother asks.



They look alike its baffling you would swear they are twins differently build of course, Qhawe laughs and walks towards his brother giving him hug.

“Bengixolisa” he says looking at me.

“Uqaphele ntokazi akalunganga” his brother says.

“Musa ukungimoshela wena” Qhawe says dragging him to his study.

I grab a chair and settle and down reaching for my vibrating phone.

“Nqaba” I say.

“Thank you for the money the guys are excited that I am coming” he says excitedly.

“And what about you are you happy” I ask.

“I am its just that’ he sighs before finishing his sentence.

“What’s wrong Nqaba” I ask standing on my feet Nqaba hardly complains and when he does it’s usually for a good reason.

“Baba hasn’t been feeling lately and he last night he collapsed” he says.

“What do mean he collapsed why did anyone call me” I ask.

“Sis Zanele wanted to call but baba stopped her you know how he gets” he says.

“Hayi Nqaba yin indaba nidlale ngempili kababa” I ask.

“Give mama the phone” I say, he goes quite for a while till I hear my mother ask who is on the other end.

“Zobuhle” she says softly.

“Mama why didn’t you call me” I ask.

“You know how your father is” she says.

“But mama he collapsed is it his heart” I ask.

He had a heart attack while on the road after receiving news of his brother which led to an accident that left Zanele on a wheelchair but with therapy she now uses crutches

“We don't know yet” she says.

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“I will send some money so he can go to the doctor” I say.

“He won’t take the money you that and he has made other plans” she says.

“What plans” I ask.

“He is going to sell a few cows” she says breathing heavily .

“Ma please give him the phone” I say.

she gives him the phone and my old man resumes the phone call with a laugh.

“I won’t laugh” I say.

“Come on just this once do it for your old man, I laugh even though my heart is not in it.

“Don't allow these people to upset you” he says.

I wipe my tears he loves acting all strong even when he's not.

"I will send money okay don't sell those cows, we bought them to make life easier for you and ma so please don't sell them it will only set us back" I say.

"I am your father Zobu and I know best " he says.

"And with Muzi not around I am the eldest let me take care of you" I say.

"We both know you left your job and only started this new one you gave Zanele and Nqaba money now tell me where are you going to get more money from" he asks.

"Don't worry about the money baba I will make a plan" I say.

"I can take care of my kids all of you and I remember telling you that the money make you should save for school don't you want to go back to school" he asks.

“I do but school can wait your life can’t” I tell him.

“You should stop spoiling these kids Zanele refuses to cook because of that big phone and Nqaba always has huge things on his ear” he says making me laugh.

“Will you use the money” I ask.

“Yes I will but stop sending money Zobu its nit like we need it” he says.

My father refuses money and although his cows are in demand we can’t sell every time there’s a problem.

“I love you Zobuhle” he says.

“I love you too baba” I end the call feeling a lot better, I really hope its nothing serious we can’t lose my dad not now.

“I will give you the money” Qhawe says frightening me. I turn and look at him in disbelief was he listening to my conversation a private one at that.

“That was private and no I don't need your money” I say.

“Take it as a loan” he says.

“I don't want your loan” I say.

“I am trying to help that is all’ he says.

“I need to finish my work excuse me” I say.

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QHAWE

I didn't plan my morning to be this I didn't even think that Nontle would come by and spend the night it just happened. I looked at brother counting the money and stood up to pour myself a drink.

"You have been doing that all day" he said looking at me.

"Maybe you should focus on counting that money I don't trust these boys" I said.

"No one would dare steal from us" he said.

"Stranger things have happened" I told him.

"Enough about the money what's eating you up" he asked standing up.

"Its nothing I can't handle" I said.



“Its her right Zobuhle she’s the one whose got you so messed up” he said.

“Kunenkani mkhulu “ I said shaking my head.

“You never back down from a challenge so what’s really troubling you” he asked.

“Is it because she works for you” he continued.

“That’s not it her working here is not the problem” I said thinking about how seeing her all days lights up my day.

“She innocent too raw mkhulu I don't think I can do it” I told him.

“I have seen how you look at her even ma has been asking me about you two” he said.

“All that doesn’t matter” I said.

“Break her” he said looking at me.

“No... no ways I am not doing that” I said narrowing my eyes.

“The only way we can be certain is if you break her into your world our world “he said.

“Try it and if it doesn’t work then you can let it go but not before you try” he said.

I looked at him and he was dead serious if I introduce Zobu to my world and it back fires then I might lose her before even making her mine.

## ZOBUHLE

It seems like Philile has been having the time of her life while I have to deal with my boss's crazy girlfriend and the nasty looks she keeps giving me all day. I don't know why she insists on spending her days at the house I can't even do my job properly without her telling me that I missed a spot. I walk in on Philile eating from the Tupperware with her head inside the fridge she always does this especially in the middle of the night.

"I couldn't sleep" she says.

"Pass me the yoghurt please" she shakes her head and settles next to me.

"Men problem let it all out I will listen" She says nodding her head.

I don't know what is more disturbing her eating all that grease or being able to take it all in and still be able to breathe.

“I don't have men problems” I tell her.

She finally breathes and licks her fingers going for the yoghurt.

“Do you think I am stupid’ I ask.

“Stupid why who said that” she asks looking around.

Okay now I am convinced she’s half asleep.

“Please me baby turn around and just tease me baby, you’re the one I want and need please me baby” she sings from the top of her lungs.

“That is what you should be saying instead of all that crap” she says.

“Or maybe this is me infatuated with the man this is a silly crush and it will go away” I say

“Yeah right a crush that has lasted for a month and weeks” she says tilting her head.

“What are you saying Philile” I ask.

“What I am saying is you are horny and all messed up wait you can't be horny because you don't know how that feels you know what I am making an sense and its all your fault” she says shaking her head.

There is never a dull moment when I am with and this like things always seems better when she's around.

“I still can't believe Sbani never hit it nakancane nje” she says.

“You know how things are back at home and being with him meant keeping myself and it’s not like you’re a pro you only gave it up to Sabelo “ I say.

“ At least when we die I will not die a virgin” she says making me laugh.

“We are not about to die anytime soon” I tell her.

“You know I loved him so much he was my safe heaven and his smile gave me hope he was kind Philile and he saw me for me that is hard to find” I say.

She moves closer and gives me a hug.

“You are one of the strongest people” she says crying.

“That’s it we should sleep” I say dragging her to her room these hormones are really messing with her.

Philile and I decided to share her bed and let me just say we didn't get much sleep I woke up and my body felt like it needed more sleep. I got to work and the first thing I did was to make myself a strong cup of coffee the workload is not that much just Nontle's clothes that keep piling up each days. She made her role in this house very clear and told me to stay away from her man which is what I intend to do from now on and that is to look the other when he looks my way. I snap out of my thoughts when I hear the door opening and the most amazing person makes her way in looking beautiful as always. This woman has style and just carries herself with grace and poise that's what the rich say.

"I hope I am not disturbing you from your work' she says giving me a hug.

"Not at all" I say.

"Great because I come bearing good news" she says giving me a smiling.

"Pour us something Zobu" she says.

I pour us some juice and give it to her waiting for the news.

“Aninayo I red wine” she asks.

“I doubt the lady of the house would want me going through her wine collection” I say.

“Lady of the house” she asks widening her eyes.

“Long story” I say.

“Mhmm” she says looking deep in thought.

“And what’s the news boss lady” I ask.

“Well I know it hasn’t been long since you started but the company is giving its employee’s early bonuses and I wanted to give you the good news” she says.



“Don't be so shocked Zobu even Philile got the same news” she says.

“I am happy don't get me wrong but it sounds too good” I say.

“Zobu take this as an incentive and nothing more I like to keep my employees happy you ladies work hard it's the least I can do” she says.

“This money will go a long way thank you much” I say giving her a hug.

“You have been so kind to me I don't know how to thank you” I say.

She pulls away and pulls my cheek in a motherly manner.

“You can thank me by working hard hold your head up and make it in this world’ she says..

“Why are you doing this being kind “I ask.

“You remind me so much of me when I was young” She says smiling.

“I should leave before your boss finds me here” she says.

“I know I shouldn’t be this attached and I shouldn’t be saying this but If you need anything I am here always” I say.

“Thank you” I say

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My day went faster and more smoother with news of money coming my way I had sent some money home a week ago but then my mother called and told me that baba needed to stay in the hospital for a few days and have some minor work done to his valves and the medical aid didn’t cover all the expenses. This bonus will really go a long a way and make sure I cover the expenses and still have enough to put on the side, I look at the

time and I should be out of this place I quickly change out of my uniform and into my clothes a text from Philile comes through sending me into panic mode. I grab my bag running out the house but bump into Qhawe dropping my bag and spilling everything on the ground.

“Hey what’s wrong” he asks.

“I need to get home” I say attempting to run.

“Kwenzenjani khuluma nami” he says sounding concerned.

“Uzombulala Qhawe uzombulala” I tell him.

“Calm down and tell me what’s going on” he says.

“I just need to get home now please” I say

“Fine I will take you” he says.

We get to the house and its already dark I know Bab khumalo is not here or he would have taken this trash of a man out, people here tend to mind their business not because they want but because Sabelo's friend owns the building. We find the door to our flat open and Sabelo calling out all sorts of insults not leaving anything behind Qhawe heads straight to Philile's bedroom and drags him to the outside, I rush to where Philile is finding her unconscious damn Sabelo and animalistic way I use her phone to call an ambulance.

"Philile don't close your eyes come on" I beg her.

"Qhawe" I scream.

"Qhawe she's closing her eyes" I say.

He walks back in and picks her up heading towards his car.

I get in the back with Philile asking as not to close the eyes but they are swollen she can barely keep them open, Qhawe drives

to the closest hospital which happens to be a private one the doctors attend to her and tell us to wait. I look at a bloodied Qhawe and just break down he moves where he is standing to give me a hug.

“If I lose her I will be all alone” I say.

“Musa ukukhuluma kanjalo ngikhona mina” he says.

“You don't understand she's all I have” I say.

He pulls away making me look at him.

“She's going to be fine ngethembe” he says wiping my tears his words find a place in my heart just like they did when he said he's here.

The doctor comes back after a while to tell us that Philile and the baby are going to be fine and that the baby shifted during her hard fall.

“Can I see her” I ask.

“I am afraid not she’s heavily sedated and I would like to keep her for a few days just to make sure everything is okay” the doctor says.

I look up to Qhawe who nods his head at the doctor.

“I will settle the bill doc and thanks for everything doc” Qhawe says.

“Ngiyabonga Nyambose kakhulu” I say.

He drives back to my place but not before stopping on the side of the road to meet another car.

“I will be right back” he says stepping out of the car going to boot he drags a person out of there my heart starts racing what the hell is going on here I decide to take a look but realise its

Sabelo, I can't believe he was in the boot this whole time seeing him makes me so angry that I almost get out of the car but Qhawe gives me this look that keeps me in my place.

I think my eyes are deceiving me but his brother steps out of the car followed by another guy they take turns in beating up Sabelo and when he turns to see me in the car he screams my name begging me to help him, I close my eyes and ears shutting everything out but his screams get louder and louder till he whimpers sounding like a wounded dog. Zibulo pulls Qhawe to the side they exchange words while keep looking at the car I shouldn't have seen this just like in the movies they are going to kill me just to shut me up. I look at Qhawe make his way to the car his t-shirt blooded my hand reaches the door my feet touching the ground I run for my life not look back. I feel his hands clasp around my waist lifting me up clicking and all he trips and fall with me to the ground, he gets on top holding my hands over my head pinning them to ground. I try fighting my way out of his hold but that seems to excite him more the glimmer and spark in his eyes come alive.

"I won't say anything' I say breathing heavily.

He looks different from the man I saw there beating up Sabelo.

“Life is not a not a movie Mambatha and I am too old be chasing you down” he says in a domineering tone.

“ I would never hurt you uyangizwa” he says .

“Never and I mean ever try that again ngoba ngizokushaya kubencane indawo” he whispers the last part in a lethal tone I just nod my head swallowing.

“Good” He says standing up and extends his hand so I can get on my feet.

The drive to my place is quiet I feel like a fool for even thinking of running he parks his car in the parking area and looks at me.

“Do you think I am that much a monster that I would hurt a woman my father taught me better than that and I was just teaching that boy a lesson” he says sounding hurt well killers or



don't go around with tags on their foreheads. I don't have come back for that so I resort to saying sorry.

We get to my room and the sight and smell of blood on his t-shirt makes me sick.

“Please take that off” I say.

I can feel his eyes following me everywhere I am going till I come back with a bowl of water mixed with disinfect and a cloth, he looks at me like he doesn't know what to do I slowly move closer and remove his jacket followed by his t-shirt leaving him bare my hands trail down his body I know I shouldn't but they have a mind of their own.

“Thank you for helping us if it wasn't for you I don't know what I would done” I say dipping the cloth in the water then dabbing it on his hand it is bruised and swollen.

“Angisiyo ingane Zobuhle” he says retracting his hand when I try to patch him up.

“Kodwa ulimele nje” I say.

He looks at me and gives me a side smile.

I offer to cook for him but he declines and eats what we had the previous night. I thought he was going to leave but he asked to stay behind to make sure that I am okay his words not mine that was a few hours ago, I wake up to him screaming fighting and pleading in his sleep to someone pleading for them to stop I get out of bed and wake him up he chose to sleep on the floor. He reaches for his gun but my hands gets to his hand first he looks at me breathing heavily looking around.

“I need to go” he says breathing heavily I think he had a nightmare.

“Hey look at me” I say trying to calm him down.

He shakes his head till I place my hand on his jaw.

“It’s okay “I say noddng my head.

“Whatever it is I promise its going to be okay” I say, he collapses into my arms and holds me tight.

“Its going to be okay” he says.

I nod my head not letting him go he has to believe me like I believed him.

Its been a week and Philile hasn't been out of the hospital her boss even made a stop at the hospital just to see if she's okay I could tell they are great people and are really fond of her. The doctor said he needed to monitor her a bit longer because she had bled a few days and the worse scenario was the possibility of her losing the baby. I told her what happened to Sabelo and I could tell she felt something for him as I did when he called out my name but after what he did I couldn't help him. I think she's had enough of the men and this time he crossed the line. I wanted to tell her about the moments I had with Qhawe I don't know if I should call them that but its driving me crazy. I seriously need to call my mother and tell her about this soon or I might burn up and tell Philile and not hear the end of it. I get to the house and quickly change into my uniform for a close moment I wanted to resign but talked myself out of that silly idea. The money is good and as for my blood burning each time I see him that will have to wait and the age difference will we have to discuss that should anything happen? I think most women secretly think about the age and what the outside world might think.

I hear a lot of chatter coming from the girls bedroom and smile the girls must have spent the night here I knock and hear them giggle.

“We are sleeping baba” they say gigling.

“knock knock” I say. I hear more giggles and excitement from the girls.

“Whose there” they ask.

“The cake maker” I say laughing this is silly because I am making it up as I am standing here.

“The caker maker who” they ask.

“The cake maker Zobu with a touch of sprinkles” I whisper.

The door opens up and girls come running and almost tumbling me over.

“How nice the maid happens to be a babysitter” a voice says behind us my stomach turns I can’t get used to this woman beautiful as she is I just can’t.

“Morning” I say.

The girls look at her and smile these kids are sweethearts.

“Please make us some breakfast” She says.

“Yes mam” I say.

“We will help” Aphile says.

“First brush your teeth then come help me” I say.

“What are you playing at” Nontle asks grabbing my arm.

“I don't follow” I say.

“Do you want my man is that it” she asks.

I look at her puzzled her wires must be crossed I don't want her man not after I stupidly thought he would kill me then got chased and tackled, he doesn't see it like that but that's what I saw being chased and fearing for my life.

“If you are having any ideas about taking him or using anything on him then let me tell you something hell will freeze before that happens and I will kill you and bury so deep into the earth your family will never find you” she says.

I see the rage in her eyes and she means every word.

“Then we have nothing to worry about because I am not planning anything” I say walking away I am not about to lose my life for that dark man.

I get to the kitchen and find Mrs Mthethwa senior I didn't even hear her come in.

"Morning ma' I say.

"Morning sisi how are you" she asks.

"I am fine ma are you here to fetch the girls because they aren't even ready" she laughs and starts clearing a few dishes.

"I decided to come have breakfast with my people" she says.

"I am tired of cooking for Babakhe he no longer says the right words" she says laughing.

"Well then let me start on breakfast just for you and the girls" I say.

"No you sit back and I will start on the cooking" she says.



The girls come running down followed by Nontle and their uncle who almost falls dead on the floor when he sees his mother in the kitchen.

“Morning gogo” the two scream.

“Morning girls get the table ready” Mrs Mthethwa says .

“I didn’t know we had a visitor” she says looking at Nontle.

“Ma” Qhawe says attempting to give her a hug but she moves and kisses the girls.

“Are you joining us for breakfast Nontle” Mrs Mthethwa asks looking at her.

“I was actually on my way out” she says looking at Qhawe.

She goes back to their bedroom and comes back with her bag with Qhawe walking her out, I look at Mrs Mthethwa who shrugs her shoulders.

“Girls go see if baba is okay” they sprint to the door leaving it open.

“You don't like her” I say.

“And you care about him” she says smiling.

“It's okay there nothing wrong with caring in fact it's a good thing” she says.

“But as for that one she once accused me of wanting Qhawe to myself when I warned him about her, she disrespected me in my own house and I yes I don't like her” she says.

I head to the master bedroom and lean on the door looking at his bed messed up his clothes on the floor and her lacy underwear hanging on the edge of bed. Cleaning up people's

houses can get to you sometimes look at me now grossed out by what people in love are supposed to do . It is true what they say about women they are complicated creatures and I am leaving testimony to that.

“You don't have to do this I will clean” he says.

“I am just doing my job this is what I get paid to do” I say picking up his clothes.

“Zobu just leave it” he says holding my hand as I am about to put his clothes in the laundry basket.

“I can't do this anymore I am leaving” I say.

His eyes widen and he lets go of my hands.

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26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">“You're leaving me” he asks.

“I am leaving this job” I say.

“Is it because of me am I the reason who want to quit” he asks.

“I will still have a job just not working for you” I say.

He opens his mouth and says nothing but walks to the door and shuts it.

“Its about me Qhawe” I tell him.

“Please don't leave” he says.

“ Its already decided all I need to do is talk to Sophie” I say walking past him.

He gently grabs my arm bringing me closer to him.

“I will end things with her and she will never set foot in this house “ he says.

“We are nothing to each other Qhawe” I say.

“We are more than that and you know it” he says looking at me.

He lowers his head and his hand on my waist using his thumb to brush my lips not moving his eyes from me.

“Don't leave” he says.

How can I say no when he has me this cornered and under his hold he takes a few steps with me till my back hits the wall. The buttons to my uniform fly across the room when he rips the upper part open revealing my bra and just enough skin to show my naval his eyes dance to the feel of my skin when his finger brushes on the twins. I want to blink but if I do these tears that I am holding will only fall.

“Tell me stop” he says still holding my gaze.

My voice won't allow me it just won't

“Very well” he says with a smirk on his beautiful face lowering his face and his lips leaving kisses on my breast down to my stomach.

“Qhawe” I say gasping he can't do this to me.

He stops and comes back the hunger and burning in his eyes leaves my mouth open this man will devour me and the thought of it brings tears to my eyes making my chest heave and my whole body hot, he puts the last nail to the coffin and parts my lips using his the kiss deepens with me closing my eyes and my tears falling. He pulls away and smiles clearly happy with himself he kisses my forehead and lifts my chin up.

“Stay” he says wiping my tears using his thumb.

“Why are you doing this” I ask, this man is introducing me to different sides to him I don't think I can keep up.

A knock comes through before he can answer me with his mother walking in.

“Breakfast is ready” she says looking at me then at Qhawe walking out.

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QHAWE

We sat in my father's study when Zibulo cleared his throat and looked me shaking his head, my father still prides himself in spending time with us in this was one of those days us three having a drink and smoking some cigar the finest in baba's collection.

“Its always good to have you boys come around” he said.

“Well this time we come bearing nothing but good news”  
Zibulo said looking at me.

“Don't tell Nkosi is pregnant again” he said.

“Baba she is pregnant just not again it usually takes nine  
months for the baby to come” I said laughing.

“With those two you never know” he said shaking his head.

“I am still here” Zibulo said.

“Zibulo you should lay off on the babies we have enough  
people in this world and I am sure the poor girl is tired” baba  
said.



“Yet you have five kids” Zibulo said laughing.

“There no come back for that one” I said looking my father.

“Before I kick out two out tell me the good news” he said.

Zibulo looked at me and chuckled my brother can be a woman sometimes.

“If you open that mouth of yours I will shoot you” I said.

“Now I want to hear the good news” baba said looking at me.

“Well it turn out that your son over here has found himself in a sticky situation and for the first time ever he doesn’t know what to do” he said.

“How sticky Qhawe” my father asked.

“The she’s beautiful and feisty sticky kind” Zibulo said.

“Is this true” he asked looking at me.

I nodded my head stroking my bread.

“She’s different baba nothing I have ever come across” I told him.

“Then make right by her and if you think there more cobhoza uzwe amanzi and bring her over” he said.

“I don't think she will allow him not after he chased her down yadlala phansi ingane yabantu” Zibulo said laughing.

“Now I definitely want to meet her” baba said pouring himself another drink.

“I don't know baba kunenkani” I told him.

They looked at me and laughed this is going to be a long night.

My girl is back home and everything is okay between us and the baby is doing just fine, Qhawe offered to pay for all her checkups even though I told him there was truly no need for that but he insisted and we took his offer. Sophie wanted to put a replacement on Philile's place but her employers refused to have someone else sent and said she could come back to work and take it slowly. And I called my parents the other day and things seem to be fine at home apart from the fact that I miss them so much but the money really helped that's what my mother said. The surgery went well and my old man is back home Nqaba is preparing for his school trip and I pray he takes care himself I shouldn't be worrying this much he has his head screwed on properly but with boys you just never know. I told him no alcohol and he just laughed see the last time Philile and I tried drinking we ended up sleeping in the chicken coop. My father wouldn't speak to me for a week and each time I tried talking to him he would tell me none of his children are alcoholics. I tried speaking to Sophie about maybe changing me and placing me in a somewhere else just not this house that was weeks ago and she still hasn't said anything.

I do some breathing exercises before walking into Qhawe,s bedroom I do a lot of that lately,curiosity gets the better of me I kick a bag under the bed I look around and go on my knees pulling it and another one beside it. I unzip them just to take a look so I can quickly put them back again the first one has what looks like drugs wrapped in duck tape how do I know these are drug moves yes they always do this and the other has money. The thought of him being involved in some kind of shady dealing comes to mind but no not Qhawe well not the one I have seen around the girls or his mother he wouldn't right.

“Going through people's things will get you killed” he says.

I almost snap my back when I hear his voice behind me was he watching this whole time did he see me bend.

“Careful now uzolima” he says walking towards me.

He pushes the bags back under and looks at me smiling.

“Did find what you were looking for” he asks.

I shake my head.

“What were you looking for” he asks.

I have a lot of questions going through my brain right now but he looks so casual and unfazed I don't even know how or where to start.

“Can I ask you something” he asks.

I nod my head and the man laughs.

“You look beautiful when you don't know what to do” he says laughing.

“You wanted to ask something” I say.

“I have a work thing tonight and I would like if you came with me” he says .

“Tonight I don't think I can do it” I say.

“I promise I will behave and keep my hands to myself” he says.

“I don't have anything to wear” I tell him.

“That’s sorted someone will come and take care of that” he says closing the gap between us holding my waist tilting his head leaning over his warm lips brushing mine. I close my eyes this is the second time this man takes my lips and the feeling is always different overwhelming that I want to cry.

“You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen Zobuhle” he says smiling.

The door to his bedroom opens and his girlfriend walks in she sees me in Qhawe’s arms and starts hurling insults trying to get

to me but Qhawe shields me from her savage behaviour and drags her out.

“Qhawe that’s enough you’re hurting her” I say following behind him.

“Stay out of this Zobuhle” he shouts.

“Please let her go” I say.

Flashes of my head being banged against the wall flood my brain I can almost see him in Qhawe I have seen enough woman suffer at the hands of men I can’t take it anymore, he looks at me pleading with him and lets go of her hair.

“I told you that its over stay away from me and Zobuhle or I will make you and you know I can” he says throwing her out.

“This is not he will do this to you too mark my words” she says looking at me.

“There’s nothing special about he does this all the time and he always comes back to me” she says.

Qhawe closes the door and makes his way to me I take a few steps back covering my mouth.

“Get away from me” I say.

“Zo what’s wrong” he asks.

His question opens up a fountain of tears where do I start because I don't even know.

“I won’t hurt you” he says narrowing his eyes.

He moves closer maintaining eye contact till he holds me into his arms what started as tears and just fears breaks out into loud sobs that he holds me tight not letting go.



“Don't let me go” I tell him.

“I will never let go” he says.

He drove me home to get ready for tonight and he tried getting me to talk but I wouldn't budge even that scary look of his didn't work he ended up letting it go and gave me the numbers of the person I was supposed to call when I got home. He dropped me off and Philile was there already home I told her what happened and she kind was enough to run me a bath and make some rooibos tea.

“Zo you will catch a cold” Phililesays.

Its only now that I realise the water is cold my mind had drifted away.

“I don't like seeing you like this” she says helping me out.

“I saw him and he beating me up Philile I begged him to stop but he didn't” I say.

“Did you tell Qhawe” she asks, I shake my head looking away.

“You have to tell him the truth he needs to know everything” she says.

“But he doesn’t I mean its not like we are together we are just sharing moments” I say.

“We both know that’s not true you love him” she says.

“Philile I don't know what to do he’s getting in my head and I can’t stop him” I say.

“Don't fight it let him love you “ she says smiling.

“I don't think he’s capable of loving me the way I want” I tell her.

“He is capable though of loving you in a way you have never been loved before I just know “ she says smiling.

“Come you need to get ready he might be here any moment now” she says walking out the coming back with a box in hand.

“ What’s in the box” I ask.

“When you called I figured I should get you something appropriate for tonight” she says opening the box.

I put a hand over my mouth.

“No I am putting that on it won’t fit its too small” I say laughing.

“It stretches and its called lingerie” she says.

“Just put it on and I tell you that man will want rip it with his teeth”she says laughing.

“Philile” I say.

“I knew you wouldn’t put an effort so I appointed myself” she says shrugging her shoulders.

“Thank you “ I say.

0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">My dress is a sheer nylon white flowy dress that has a slit on the thigh with a touch of silver on the waist

“You look beautiful” she says after doing my face.

Philile is good with makeup and has always wanted to be in the beauty industry.

“He sent you a personal designer and a jeweler so you can pick the most beautiful piece and earrings he cares okay” she says.

“These are materialistic things” I tell her fixing my weave.

“You forgot the most important word Expensive materialistic things” she says.

“Now you look perfect” she says after I put on my shoes and look at myself in the mirror.

“You don't think it too much or too revealing” I ask.

“No I think its perfect” she says smiling.

“Tonight might just be the night” she says nodding her head.

“For some reason I think you once hit your head when you were young” I say.

“And I think he's here” she says getting the door.

I fix myself up one more time and head to the lounge he stands up when he sees me and just stares.

“You are supposed to say something anything” Philile says.

“Okay I will leave you guys alone and don't worry I will lock the door as soon as you leave” she says heading to her bedroom.

He looks at me and laughs.

“See when I left home I had a whole speech in my mind but now that I am seeing it all just went out the window” he says.

“I could change into something else” I say.

He moves closer and his eyes till in mine.

“You mean change into your birthday suit right” he says laughing.

“No” I say.

“You are beautiful Zobuhle” he says taking my hand and placing it in his chest.

“Hear that” he asks smiling.

I nod my own head smiling this man is here right in front of me and he sees me”

“Its beating fast and its all because of you” he says.

His hands move down to my waist coming to where my slit is.

“I see you” I say placing my hand on his cheek.

“I see you shandu omuhle” he says kissing me.

He said it's a work thing but all I am seeing are half dressed woman hanging on these men's arms, I look at Qhawe for clarification but he kisses my forehead instead I know that means shut up Zubuhle so keep my mouth zipped. I am not sure but this looks like an auction bid of some sort all eyes are us as we get to a table that is already occupied, I think this was a bad idea to come here I don't belong here this is not me.

"I didn't know you could clean up this good mkhulu" one gentleman says.

"And who is the lovely lady next to you" Another one asks.

"Zo this is Mkhize a very good friend of mine and that is Mngomezulu and these are their partners" he says looking at me.

"Ngiyjabula ukunazi" I say looking at Qhawe.

He smiles nodding his head.



“Kujabula thina ntokazi” they says looking at Qhawe.

“And this is Mambatha” he says holding my hand under the table outing me at ease.

We get offered drinks and Qhawe excuses himself kissing my cheek.

“Please don't leave me “ I whisper.

“You are going to fine and I will be right back” he says.

Both the gentlemen join him and disappear in the back.

“So you are dating Qhawe” one of the ladies asks.

I don't even know what Qhawe and I are to each other so I gulp down this bitter wine and smile.

“I will take that as a yes” she says scoffing.

That’s it she’s mean there’s no two way about it.

“You are different refreshing” the one next to me says.

“Oh please stop fooling the poor girl we both know how the Mthethwa brother’s use them and dump them” the other one says looking at me.

“Zibulo is married in case you have forgotten” the one next to me says.

“You mean trapped everyone knows his wife used muthi on him” the mean one says .

I take another gulp at this wine and feel all kinds of hot I wish Philile was here .

“Ladies and gentlemen the bidding has started “ A man on stage says I turn my head and there are young girls standing next to him.

“First package goes at 100 000” the man says pointing a girl young enough to be hid daughter.

“What is going” I ask.

“Sweaty all the man you see including yours are here to buy” the one who accused Zenkosi of using muthi says.

“So they are buying people kids” I ask.

“Yes some buy them for their own personal use and others to gift to their friends” she says.

I feel my insides turn Qhawe has the nerve to bring me here first it was the money, drugs and now human trafficking this man is a monster.

“Please excuse me “I say going to the toilet.

I look at myself in the mirror I could call the police right now and end this stupid charade but then he might go to jail or I might just walk away and never see him again. I fix myself up before walking out and heading straight to the door I will not

be a part of something so disgusting. I take off my shoes and walk bare footed dammit I left my clutch with my phone inside I can't call a cab meaning I will walk till kingdom comes. I keep walking on the side of the road but stop when I hear a car hoot behind me, I turn the driver blinds me with the headlights that's it I am about to be stolen and sold why do I always find myself in such situation.

"Ngena emotweni Zobuhle" he says stepping out of the car.

"I dare you to come near me" I say pointing at him with my shoes.

I keep walking this man will be the death of me and why did I even agree to come with him in the first place. He gets into the car and drives next to me while I walk on foot.

"Ouch" I say when I get splinter.

"Ngithen ngena emotweni " he says .

## QHAWE

I watched her breathe her eyes closed and her thighs exposed I could see myself inside her making love to her, last night was amazing we didn't just become one but she gave herself to me willingly and it was beautiful she looked beautiful like a goddess under me her whole body welcomed me and I knew I was home. She yawned and opened her eyes and smiled she looked worn out tired and that was understandable because we kept on it till the sun came up and only then was she able to get some sleep. I leaned closer and kissed her forehead thinking where this would lead will I be able to protect her and love her the way she wants or will I ruin this and push her away. I don't conform to normality that's just not me and these walls I have built why are they suddenly falling so fast I can't put them up again, the promises I have made the rules I said I would abide too suddenly feel like a distant memory and its all because of her.

"Morning" I said pulling away.

“Morning” she said softly.

“Why didn’t you tell me I would have waited” I said looking her playing with her fingers.

Its not everyday a man meets a virgin and get to bed her without putting work.

“In that moment it felt right like I belonged here with you and I didn’t want to fight it” she says.

I looked her wondering where this beautiful woman has been all my life.

“Don't look at me like that I didn’t know how to put it it’s not something I broadcast to the whole world” she said.

“Do you regret last night” I asked.

She shook her head and smiled.

“If I did I would have probably sneaked out early in the morning” she said shrugging her shoulders.

“I meant what I said last night Zobu every word of it” I said kissing her hand.

“What are we Qhawe is there an us or was last night and all the other moments we shared a phase” she asked.

“I don't believe in phases Zobu as I said I meant everything I said ngiyakuthanda” I said.

“Ngiyakuthanda nam” she said smiling.

“Ngiyabonga Mambatha for trusting me with your body” I said kissing her.

“I come I want to show you something” I said helping her up.

“Qhawe I still need to shower” she said shaking her head.

“Fine I am giving you enough time to step in there freshen up and come out I will come help you freshen up” I said.

She stood up and made her way to the bathroom and came back looking fresh as a daisy I took her and led her to the outside in the garden, I asked Zenkosi to help out and she suggested breakfast in the garden prepared by a chef and full body massages for the both of us but because I am not into all this I said I would pass and just watch my person get pampered.

“I wanted to say thank you sthandwa sam” I said looking at her.

“This is beautiful thank you Nyambose” she says giving me a hug.

“I want you to be treated like the queen you are Zobuhle” I said.



“Come lets go get pampered” she said excitedly pulling my hand.

“I would rather watch you take in the sun” I said at looking her shake her head.

“Well then I will sit with you” she said settling next to me resting her head on my chest.

“Qhawe” she called out breathing heavily while I wrapped my hands around her.

“Yebo sthandwa sam” I said.

“No matter what happens I want you to know that I don't regret last night or meeting you” she said looking up to me.

“What’s wrong Zobu” I asked sensing that she was holding back or trying to tell me something.

“I am happy that all” she said placing her hand on my chest.

I kissed her head and held her close my eyes

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ZOBUHLE

Qhawe dropped me home to get a change of clothes and an overnight bag so I can spend the night at his place but we went past the doctor to get tested as I had asked, last night was different not that I know anything else but being in his arms was beautiful and I didn't even want him to let me go. I found Philile watching tv still in her pajamas stuffing her face and crying with tissues next to her I doubt she even heard me walk in.

“Earth to Philile” I said setting next to her as in most gently way I could.

“I am watching onward” she says wiping her nose.

I think this is the fourth time she’s watching it without me and she cries all the time.

“You know I still can’t believe that small boy didn’t see his father and that’s all he ever wanted” she says putting the movie on pause.

“That part really messes me up” I say.

“Okay I am fine now where have you been” she asks,

“I was with Qhawe” I say biting my nails.

“Hawema sebayiqobhozile” she says screaming.

“Kahle umsindo” I say.

She stands up and dance singing from the top of her lungs.

“How was it was it painful oh my word was he gentle is he huge” she ask standing in front of me.

“I won’t tell but it was beautiful” I say.

“Oh welcome to the world of hoeing and going crazy because of dick lafa elihle” she says deeply sighing.

“I am happy for you Zobuhle but you do know what you have done right” she asks.

I nod my head.

“Yes and I would do it over and over again” I say.

“Now that you guys have moved to this serious stage that connects you not only physically but spiritual he needs to know everything about you and where you come from” she says.

“Can I just enjoy this without having to worry about Mahlabathini and its people” I say.

“I wish I could tell you that’s the case but it’s not that place can ruin what you and this man have just like that” she says.

0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">“I don't care anymore “ I say grabbing her bowl of popcorn.

She pulls me in for a hug and says nothing.

“Who knew that Zobuhle of people would have a man touch her and make love to her hayi sizalwa nabanye sofa nabanye” she says laughing.

.....

Qhawe

I went to my brother's place and we shared a drink and talked business with the girls running around and Zenkosi cooking in the kitchen although I told them I wasn't staying she insisted on feeding me.

"Bafo I want you to do something for me" I said.

"Anything" he said leaning on his chair.

"I want you to look into Zobuhle anything you might find" I said taking a gulp at my drink.

“But you can do that better than me even” he said raising his eyebrow.

“I know but I want you to do it” I said.

“You are afraid of what you might find and do” he said.

“Will do me this for me” I asked.

“I will have the information you want in three days” he said.

“And if it happens that the info is not what you’re looking for then what” he asked.

“Angazi bafo” I said.

“Why are you doing this isn’t love enough” he asked.

“I don't know mkhulu” I said standing up joining the kids.

Am I ready to let her go should I find out she's not the person I think she is.

.....

ZOBUHLE

The drive to Qhawe's house is quiet and that worries me because when we are together he never shuts his mouth we pull over in the drive way and walk inside the house, the house light are dimmed he stops me from switching on the lights and holds my hand while the other hand rests on my waist.

"I wanted this to be special" he says.

Oh now he can speak how nice just as I am about to tell him off he puts on the music.



“What is this” I ask looking at the in house picnic with rose petals on the floor cushions and everything that make for a perfect picnic.

“Do you like it” he asks.

“I love it” I say getting on my toes kissing him.

“May I have this dance” he says already pulling me to his hard chest.

I am blushing close to shedding a few tears being with him is enough he really doesn't have to do all this, I rest my head on his chest as we move to the song quite an interesting choice but I am not complaining.

‘If I ain't got nothing I've got you, if I ain't got something I don't give a damn coz I've got you. I don't know much about algebra but I know that  $1 + 1$  equals two 2 and its me and you that's all we'll have when the when the world is through coz baby we

ain't nothing without love darling you got enough for the both of us. So come on baby make love to me, when my days look a low pull me in close and don't let me go make so when the world is at a war that our love heals us all right now make love to me,

"I love you Zobuhle and I want to make love to you" he whispers.

'I don't know much about bombs but I've been shot by you and I don't know when I am gonna die but I hope that am gonna die by you, I don't know much about fighting but I know I will fight for you just when I ball out my fist I realise I am laying right next to you baby we ain't got nothing but love and darling you got enough for the both of us,

"The things you do to my soul" I say when he pulls me in.

"I plan on sticking around no matter what" he says kissing me.

I don't think we will have time to eat because my dress drops to the floor and he leaves kisses on neck leading t to my shoulder, he pulls away allowing me to help him out of his clothes holding my gaze taunting me with his black beautiful eyes. He lifts me up having my legs wrap around his waist holding my rear cheeks I grind on him begging him to take me now, he lays me down and tears bra a part he could have been civil you but who care, he uses his teeth to pull my panty all the way down to my toes coming back to kiss me gradually pulling away just to look at me.

“Qhawe” I complain, he chuckles running his hands down my body placing his hands on my temple rubbing on clit having my butt in the air, he pushes his finger inside moving to the sides pushing it deep my nails dig in his arms. He pulls his finger out and taunts me more by brushing his cock against my thing and on my entrance making me scream and pant wishing he would make me come now, he holds my hands down and enters me this blood rushing unexplainable feeling takes over and most amazing feeling consumes me. he slowly thrust in and out gasping if I didn't know better I would say he's taking in gulps and gulps of air he pulls out and pushes his cock again inside of me bringing tears to my eyes. I wrap my arms around is neck pulling him for a kiss he goes a bit faster and we both climax

having collapse on top of me twitching inside of me. he pulls put and so does the rest of him he reaches for a blanket and one of the towels next to him to wipe me clean, he kisses my forehead and pulls me close to his chest wrapping his arms around me.

I wake up to the rest of the house being ransacked and Qhawe being pinned to the floor and a man standing in front of me, I hide my indecency and bringing my feet to my chest looking around. I don't know what's going on but this looks like a raid the man comes down to my level and shoves a paper on my face written "search warrant" I look at Qhawe and blink what the hell is going on here.

"Good you can read now listen to me carefully where is the bag" he ask.

"She knows nothing " Qhawe says.

"Shut up we both know they all do" the man says looking back at me.

“I don't know what you are talking about” I say still looking at Qhawe.

“Look at me not him” the man says roughly holding my chin.

“Again where is the bag” he asks.

I shrug my shoulders that seems to upset him because a slap lands across my face.

“Marshall” Qhawe roars trying to fight being held down.

“Now do you know where the bag is” he asks again.

“Touch her one more time and I will kill you” Qhawe says looking at me.

I never thought I would ever find myself in such a situations but here I am, the man uses his gun to move the blanket off my thighs tracing it up all the way to my temple.

“Qhawe” I shriek closing my eyes tears streaming down.

“I swear you’re dead man” Qhawe says.

He moves it and uses it to peak through taking a look at my boobs then placing the gun on his nose sniffing it.

“She’s sweet” he says looking Qhawe.

“It’s shame she will end up just like the rest of them all dead and buried” the man says standing up.

“Oh well the lady doesn’t know anything taking him to the car” the man says.

They drag him out and I pull the blanket hiding all of me.

## ZOBUHLE

A knock brought me back from leaving me no choice but to go get the door Zibulo and his wife made their way in I closed the door and waited for one of them to say something. Zenkosi moved closer and gave me a hug I won't lie this woman is beautiful it all makes sense why Zibulo would decide to leave his bachelor ways and settle down, she pulled and smiled looking at her husband.

"She's beautiful Nyambose uyabona kodwa" she said smiling.

"She is but that's not why we are here" Zibulo said looking at his wife.

"Right uhmm how are you" she asked looking at me.

"I am okay" I said.

“Qhawe called and asked me to come by and check up on you”  
Zibulo said.

“Where is he” I asked.

“They are still questioning him but he should be back before  
morning” he said looking at me.

“Okay” I said.

“I will stay with you till they come back” Zenkosi said.

“ No its okay I will be fine on my own” I said

“We can’t leave you alone” Zibulo said shaking his head.

“I know you are trying to help but I am okay and I will be fine  
alone I think that’s what I need right now” I said.



“And besides the girls need you and your brother needs you” I continued.

They looked at each other and decided to leave I closed the door behind them and went to bed, I woke up the sound of glass shattering and quickly got of bed to go have a look.

“Qhawe” I called out and there was no answer.

My heart started beating fast and I slowly walked to the kitchen and noticed the glass on the floor.

“Qhawe is that you” I asked but there was no answer I attempted running back to the bedroom but the intruder hit me in the head and I fell, he got on top of me and started strangling me I started losing my vision I used my fingers to poke his eyes but he punched me in the face pressing harder on my throat. I tried kicking but that didn’t help I tried my fingers again and was able to get him off. I ran towards the passage and he held my foot tripping me I fell on my stomach and he got on top of me pulling my pants down, I screamed so loud

hoping the security personnel would come to my aid but nothing he turned me over and got between my thighs.

“Please don't do this” I begged him when he was about to unbuckle his belt.

I looked to the side and reached for one of Qhawe's statues and hit him on the head with it he fell off giving me a chance to pull my pants back up. I crawled my way to the bedroom looking for my phone but some reason it wasn't where I put it.

“Come out come out wherever you are I know he's not here its just you and me” I head the same voice coming towards the bedroom.

I stood up and rushed to close the door but it was too late he was in and pushing me to the floor. I kicked and fought my way to Qhawe's side of the bed and reached for his gun I pointed it at him closed my eyes and fired more than one shot. He dropped dead on the floor my hands shook as I dropped the gun and looked at this man take his last breathe his eyes looking at me, I ran to the bathroom to get some towels and

tried stopping the bleeding but it was too late he was gone my breathing changed when I realised I killed a man.

“No....no ..... no please wake up” I said looking at my blood stained hands .

I sat in the corner hugged my legs and rocked myself back and forth looking at the man.

I don't know how long I stayed in that position for but I heard Qhawe's voice calling me.

“Zo” he called.

I blinked hoping what happened was a dream but it wasn't the dead man was still here.

“Zobuhle” his voice got louder and nearer.

He made his way in followed by his brother I looked at him and tears streamed down.

“Dammit” his brother cussed.

“Baby” he called out kneeling in front of me.

Zibulo covered the body and looked at me.

“Don't touch me” I told him when he attempted to hold me.

“Zo calm down” he said.

“I killed a man” I said.

“ Sthandwa sam I know and I am sorry” he said.

“You don't know Qhawe look at me I killed a man he's dead and all my fault” he shook his head tightening his face.

“He was going to kill you sthandwa sam and you had to protect yourself “ he says.

“He wanted to rape me” I told him.

He looked at me and tears fell off his eyes he rested his head on my knee.

“If this is your world then I don't want to be a part of it” I said.

He looked at shook his head.

“Please don't say that” he said.

“Your world is not what I thought it was Qhawe it I can't do this please call the police” I said.

He looked at me like I was crazy.

“There’s no way I am letting you hand yourself to the police” he said.

“Zibulo please call the police” I said standing up.

“I am sorry but I can’t do that” he said looking at his brother walking out.

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0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">I wiped my tears and looked at him.

“We will get through this together please trust me” he said.

“There is no us Qhawe I am going to walk out of that door and I am going to turn myself in” I said.

He grabbed my arm pulling me to him.

“Awuiyi lapho and beside there is no body to tie you up to anything” he said

“So I don't have a choice I can't turn myself in” I asked.

I nodded my head when he said nothing.

“Ngicela ungahambi Zo” he said.

“Your world turned me into a killer” I said showing him my shaking hands.

“Ngiyakuthanda Zo” he said still holding my arm.

“I am sorry that I wasn't here to protect you” he said.

I blinked about a thousand times when I saw Sbani standing behind Qhawe smiling at me.

“No” I said shaking my head.

he can't do this to me not today of all days I looked at him hoping he would disappear but he suddenly become one with Qhawe I put a hand over my mouth failing to hold my tears.

I changed clothes and headed back to the flat I sank into Philile's arms and she didn't ask nor say anything she held me and became what I needed her to be. I fell asleep in her bedroom woke up took a bath and started packing my clothes so much happened in only three nights , I gave myself to the man I love, the police dragged him out of the house, I was humiliated by that police officer and I killed a man worse of it all he wasn't there to protect me. Philile walked in and sat on my bed.

“What happened Zo” she asked.

“Ngiyahamba” I told her.



“Are you moving in with Qhawe” she asked.

“I am going home” I said.

“Why, why would you go home” she asked.

“I need to see my mother Philile I need her hugs and I miss my dad” I said.

“There’s nothing I can do to change your mind” she asked.

“No” I said carrying on with my packing.

“Did you guys fight is he the one who did this to you” she asked probably seeing my bruised cut lip and black eye.

I shook my head and looked at her I could tell her everything that happened but I would be burdening her and she doesn’t need all that.

“I love you and when you are ready to talk you I am here” she said.

I stopped what I was doing and headed to the shower and opened the water flashes of what happened playing in my mind.

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Qhawe

I still couldn't get my mind around what happened a day had passed and Zo wasn't taking my calls aand when I went to her house there was no one there. I hired someone to clean the house and moved to the loft for the time being I doubt I will be going back to the house anytime soon. I called Zibulo about the information I asked him to dig up and he asked for time I then called Sophie and asked for Philile's number turns I don't know

anything about Zobuhle. I knocked on the door before she opened the door letting me in she gave me a look I couldn't understand.

"Before you say anything I didn't hurt her" I said.

"I know but you did something to her and she's broken" she said .

"Do you know that the last time she was like it was because of Sbani" she said looking at me.

My eyes widened that name again she once said the name in the sleep.

"Can I see her" I asked looking around.

"She's not here she left" she said breathing heavily.

"Left where too" I asked.

“She went home Qhawe even though she went through great lengths not go home” she said.

“When will she back” I asked.

She shook head and sighed.

“If she comes back” she said disappearing to her bedroom then came back with a piece paper.

“This is her address I would come with you but I can’t I have work” she said.

I thought for a while and looked at her.

“I will talk to your boss just tell me when you a free then we can leave” I said.

“Talk to my boss and we can leave anytime tonight even” she said nodding her head.

“Thank you” I said.

“Just pray to your ancestors that we find her and try beefing up on security we might need it” she said shaking her head.

“Is there something I should know” I asked.

She cleared her throat and shook her head.

“Philile who is Sbani” I asked.

“Maybe you should ask Zobuhle about him” she said walking me to the door.

## ZOBUHLE

Its been four days since I got home and my father is still at the hospital coming back home today, I don't know how he will react to me being home without letting him know that I was coming but then again this was a spur of a moment thing. My mother on the other hand has been pampering and spoiling me the first night I arrived she came and slept in my bedroom we talked all night. I cried all night telling her everything that had happened to me how I met Qhawe and how I ended up with a dead body to my list, she called someone to come and help with a cleansing so I could I try moving on without having a drak cloud over my head. All that Nqaba and Zanele cared was hearing stories about the big bad old city its shame I couldn't tell them all its secrets but I was sure enough to add spices on the stories I told them. I woke up early in the morning to clean I now know my father wasn't overreacting as I thought he was when he told me about Zanele not doing anything around the house because of her phone. Last night she almost burnt her dress while typing talk about trying to multitask. My mother came out of her her bedroom and joined me in the kitchen.

“We missed you Zobuhle” she says.

“I missed you too ma” I say.

“Now tell me what does you being here back home mean” she asks.

“It means nothing mama I just miss my family that’s all” I said.

“I mean with you and that poor boy you left in the city without even saying goodbye” she says.

“Ma I don't want to talk about him” I say.

“It won't change that you love him or the fact that you gave yourself to him” she says.

“Ma please” I say.

Now I regret telling my mother about Qhawe she will ask about him till God knows when.

“Zobu with everything you told me that boy loves you and as your mother I am going to tell you to follow your heart” she says.

I look at her and smile she has never said anything other than that trust me when I dated Sbani she used to be my shield when it was whooping time.

“I love you mama” I say giving her a hug.

“I love you too” she says smiling.

“Now make your mother some rooibos I need strength for the man I am about to fetch” she says laughing.



She finishes her cup and asks Nqaba to accompany her to the taxis. I spend the rest of my day just walking around not many people know that I am back and all those who know have been starrng and whispering amongst themselves not that they care. I look at my phone and Qhawe has been calling and sending texts none stop I wanted to block him but a part of me refuses to sever any ties with the man and the fact that I saw Sbani has been stuck in my brain why now after such a long time. I want to call Philile and find out if he has come around the flat or not but I can't seem to execute that and maybe things are better off this way. The day goes on as normal as it should till mama calls telling me they are on their way back home I start cooking my father's favourite and hope its enough for him not give me a lecture. I pace around the yard waiting for them but it seems like they are taking long so I decide to do what I have been doing best since I got here and that is to sleep till they get here.

"Ngiyacela Shandu don't shout and please don't s scare the child" I hear mama's voice next to me.

"You wont' tell me how to discipline my children Macele" baba says.

“She’s sleeping baba let her get some rest” mama says.

“What rest are you talking about this person has been here for four days ” he says.

“But she is asleep and I don't see the need to wake her up”  
mama says.

“Macele engathi uzongicasula we both know she’s not sleeping vuka Zobu” baba says.

I slowly open my eyes and find him looking at me wasn’t mama supposed to butter him up for me what was that rooibos for then. I sit up straight and the first thing he does is to give me a hug not letting go.

“Zo ka baba” he says still hugging me.

“Baba” I say sniffing till my sniffs break into a cry.

“Ususekhaya manje konke sekulungile” he says brushing my back.

“Living alone is hard baba” I say crying even more.

“But you have Philile” he says.

“I do but its not the same” I tell him, he pulls away and wipes my tears kissing my cheek.

“You have grown so much beautiful just like your mother” he says smiling.

“You are not angry that I am here” I ask.

“I could never be angry at you “he says giving me another hug.

“You scared me when Nqaba told me you collapsed I was scared” I say.

He laughs and holds my chin.

“I am not going anywhere okay you don't have to worry about me” he says.

“Now tell me about the city of gold” he says standing up.

“I would rather you tell me everything that happened while I was away” I say.

“Uyazithanda izindaba Zobu” he says laughing.

Seeing my father and being home is not all that bad its night time now and mama cooked up a feast to celebrate her husband coming home although doctor told him to ease up on the salt and fats he has been doing the opposite. One of the dogs in the yard starts barking at the sound of a car making its way in.

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26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">“Phuma Nqaba”Zanele says.

“Why me” Nqaba asks.

“Because you are the man of this house remember” Zanele says.

Well that’s been his motto since I got here telling everyone he’s the man of the house.

“Well if you put it that way then I will” he says standing up walking out side.

He comes back not alone but followed by royal guards we all stand my heart racing here it goes my worst nightmare coming to life, I only breathe when Sbani’s mother makes her way and orders the guards to wait outside I was wondering when news of my arrival would reach the royal home.

“Ndlovukazi” both my parents say.

“Bab Mbatha, Macele it is good to see you again” she says looking at me.

“Nqaba and Zanele will excuse us” baba says.

“I won’t repeat myself” he says in a stern voice .

They leave the room like lightning leaving my parents, the queen and I. she moves closer to me and I don't wish to look her in the eye but she insists I raise my head only to have her slap me so hard my ear starts ringing.

“Not in my house Thandeka” Baba says.

“Kahle Mbatha ukumvuna we all took a decision that she leaves because we love her” the Queen says looking at my father.

“Things change and here she is what now” baba asks.

“She goes back where she came from” the Queen says looking at me.

“You are lucky that Mhlaba is not here or he would be the one standing before you” the Queen says softly.

Knowing that Mhlaba is not around puts my soul at ease at least I can sleep better knowing I won't be dragged out of my father's house late at night.

“I am sorry” I say.

We all settle down and I can see Sbani in his mother kind and gentle you wouldn't say she gave birth to Mhlaba .

“Does the king know that she's here” my mother asks.

“Not yet but people are talking Macele” the Queen says.

“You know I love you Zobuhle but if you stay there’s no telling what Mhlaba might do” the Queen says.

“Ma with all due respect but I am tired of running away from him and if he wishes to kill me then so be it” I say thinking about the worst thing that can happen I think I lost Qhawe and that thought alone kills me.

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Queen

I still can’t believe that Zobuhle came back after all that has happened seeing her brought joy to my heart, I remember when Sbani introduced me to her she was and still is the best that had ever happened to my handsome son and we all knew it. I kneel next to his grave and wipe my tears he died too soon he was taken from me too soon I needed more time with him



Zobuhle needed more time. I remember when the police came knocking on my door step and told us he was gone my baby boy was butchered and left to die like an animal, the police later found the murder weapon in Muzi,s room with his prints all over it and my son's t-shirt was found hidden under his bed. The shock and hurt in Zobuhle's eyes when she found out a part of her died that day not only did she lose her brother but her husband too. She was first on the scene and for weeks she didn't sleep nor eat she always went back to that place and would sit for days on ends till she didn't anymore. After Sbani's death things were never same my husband buried himself in work and I just kept on living for the sake of my daughter's and family Mhlaba on the other turned vile it's like what was buried deep inside him suddenly found a voice the one side of my son that I had always been afraid of manifested and came to life. I place a hand on his grave and close my eyes why him and not me things would have been different if he was still alive.

I feel a hand on my shoulder and my husband breathing heavily behind me I turn and give him a smile.

"I didn't know that you were here" he says joining me.

“I wanted to be alone and I somehow found myself here” I say.

“I also took a walk and found myself here” he says trying to laugh.

“I miss him baba so much” I say.

“I miss him too but we need to move on so much has happened we can’t dwell on the past” he says.

“You say it like you mean it” I say.

“I tried fighting it for so long but there’s no use anymore Mhlaba will be king whether I like it or not” he says.

“What changed baba why is he like this I no longer recognize him my own son” I say looking at my husband.

“He’s a monster” I say shaking my head.

“He just needs a good wife someone who will ground him” he says.

“He hurts people baba no wife will stand him” I protest.

“But he’s still our son no matter what he does he will always be our son” he says.

“Let’s go home I don't like seeing you like this” he says helping me up.

I don't know what came over me but I found myself dialing Qhawe's number and it didn't go through I hate hate how I left things and the truth is I love the man there I said it, I love him and I miss him so much just talking to him and being in his snugly warm arms. I can't get over his smile or that thing he does with his eyes and the way he looks at me like I am the only the thing in the world that matter's. I look at Zanele get ready for her physiotherapyi I won'tlie her journey to walking has cost us a lot of money but seeing her happy is what matter nothing else.

"You know Having you back isn't all bad" she says laughing.

"I thought having me back was the best thing to happen to you guys" I say.

“I will only agree with you because Nqaba can be a bully sometimes” she says nodding her head.

“How is school going” I ask.

“Its okay the kids stopped laughing at me long ago” she says shrugging her shoulders.

I know how bad school kids can get especially when they feel you are different and don't know what to do.

“Any boys in the picture” I ask.

“No” she says giggling.

“Well if there’s ever someone just enjoy it okay and don't allow them to change you because you are beautiful just as you” I tell.

“I miss this having my older sister home” she says giving me a hug.

“Now get going we don't want you missing your session” I say.

“Can I have some money” she asks.

“I gave you some money Zanele enough for lunch and taxi” I say.

“But I saw these really nice jeans and mama says I have to work for them” she says silkung.

I reach for my purse shaking my head.

“Money doesn't grow on trees Zanele” I say giving her a R300.

“And you are an amazing human being” she says walking out.

I walk back to the kitchen and sit next to my father.

“What do you want” he asks.

“Nothing I only want to be next to my old man” I say.

“Something has been on your mind right” he says.

“Nothing I can’t handle” I tell him.

“Are you in trouble Zobuhle” he asks.

“Cha I am just worried about my job” I say.

“Then go back” he says looking at me.

“Its better than staying here and putting me through hell again”  
he says.

“Did I fail Zobuhle” he asks.

I look at him shocked.

“No baba you didn’t fail me you are the most upstanding man and amazing father in the world” I say.

“I never told you this but when my brother died I made a promise that I would love and protect you and Nqaba till the day I die” he says.

“Lets’s not talk about death baba” I say standing up.

“Uyaphi” he asks.

“To the river I haven’t been there since I got here” I say.

“Okay but be careful and just don't drown” he says laughing.



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## QHAWE

It took longer to get here and Philile was not impressed me but I had to put a few things in place before coming here in the line of work where I am one day could just change everything and I can't afford that. I drove in with Philile in the looking excited she couldn't hide it , for a person who hates small talks and people in general I found her to be a lovely person quite hilarious she told me stories about this place and its people. I wanted to park outside but Philile said I could to drive in since I was with her and did exactly what I was afraid off she jumped out of the car and screamed Zobu's name. I stepped out of the car and soon after Zobuhle's younger brother came out of the house followed by the parents Philile greeted everyone and introduced me to them as Zobuhle's friend. Her father looked at me then his wife and asked that they bring us something to quench our thirst leaving us alone.

“How good of a friend are you to my daughter” he asked looking at me.

“Very good friend sir which is why I came to see if she’s okay” I said clearing my throat.

He looked at me laughing.

“What type of a friend are you” he asked.

“I don't understand sir” I said.

“I am asking son what are you to my daughter” he asked giving me any look a father would give to a stranger looking for his daughter.

“ We are friends baba and I really care about your daughter hence I am” I answered.

“Very well” he said calling Philile.

“Baba” Philile said bringing something to drink followed by food.

I now understand her close relationship with Zobu she’s like a daughter in this house.

“Welcome ndodana” he said shaking my hand.

“Lets eat before Philile takes you to the river that’s where you will find your friend’ he said.

I had a long chat with Zobuhle’s father which led us to talking business and family her mother took one glance at me and invited me to stay over for the night. Zobu’s father showed me around and I could tell he’s a proud man and that he loves his family just like my father the day went by quicker and he had attend to a few things around village. Philile walked me to the river and I must say this place is beautiful and its soil is rich she showed me where Zobu was and left.

“I think she needs you more than she needs me right now” she said walking away.

I stood there my heart beating as she sang a song with her legs inside the water.

“Weh msheli wam wangibuka wanginyanya uzongikhumbula mhla uphela umandla, hayi uzongikhumbula umhla uphela amandla uzongikhumbula mhla uphela mandla” she kept singing with her eyes closed.

‘Losisi ngimbone izolo edlula ngasekhaya ehamba nabangani bakhe kwavele kwajama inqondo ngaphathwa nayikhanda kwangathi ngiyasangana , webantu akenishoni nake nayinona into enjena ngamthanda umuntu ngiqala ukumbona ngamthanda umuntu ngifisa ukumlobolola, ngamthanda umntu ngiqala ukumbona ngamthanda umntu nqiqala ukumbona ngifisa ukumlobola. Webantu abadala akeningixoxole yakeyakhona into enje emandulo losisi angimazi ngishi igama kodwa enhlizweni esengcwele ngamthanda umntu ngiqala ukumbona ngifisa umulobola , I sang still standing behind her.

“That’s how I felt the first time I saw you” I said hoping she would turn and look at me.

“I know I wasn’t there and what happened scared you I am sorry but please don't walk away from us” I said.

“I love you Zobu and these past few days believe it or not have been hard not seeing is hard” I said.

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0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">“Please look at me” I said.

“You shouldn’t be here Qhawe” she said softly.

“Look me in the eye and tell me that to my face” I said.

She stood up and looked at me her lip in her mouth.

“Don't do this Qhawe” she said shaking her head.

“What, love you because that's what I am doing loving you” I said moving closer to her.

“Tell me what to do and I will do it” I said putting my hands around her waist.

“I don't want to be a part of your world if it will hurt me in the process” she said softly.

“I would never hurt you or let anyone hurt that you have believe okay” I tried assuring her.

“I am not a saint and I never will be one kodwa ngiyakuthanda Zobuhle and for the first time ever I am hoping its enough” I said.

“Tell me what to say and I will because I miss you so much” she said.

“Tell me that you won’t give up on us no matter how messed it gets ” I said holding her gaze the red sun reflecting on her beautiful eyes.

“I will never give up on us” she said nodding her eyes.

I pulled her close and kissed her.

“You came” she said pulling away looking up at me.

“A man can never be whole without his heart” I said leaning my forehead on her’s.

“I see you” I whispered.

“I see you Nyambose” she said placing her hand on my chest letting her tears fall.

I know it will take some time for her to be okay she killed a man while trying to protect herself and I wasn't there the thought of someone wanting to violate her really messed me up. And as for Marshall he paid dearly for what he did not to me but Zobu it's a shame I couldn't kill his weak ass but teaching him a lesson was worth it.

"This is where I grew up" she said pulling away.

"Its beautiful" I said looking around.

She held my hand and we both settled down looking at the sun setting.

"My parents died when I was young well my father killed himself after my mother lost her fight with cancer" she said.

"But I saw your father and he you look like him" I said.

"He is my brother's twin and he raised us and took us in when our parents died" she said still holding my hand.



“I am sure you have met brother Nqaba well I have another one who is in prison for a crime he didn’t commit and then we have Zanele my sister” she said breathing heavily.

“I am sorry about your parents” I said, she shook her head standing up her eyes shiny.

“Don't be sorry, for my mother yes but my father don't be” she said shaking her head.

I saw the hurt, pain and anger consume her she tried fighting the tears its clear that’s her parents death is still a painful topic she hasn’t healed from it. I stood up and started taking off my clothes looking at her and only her.

“No” she said.

“There’s no one here” I said taking off my pants.

I stepped into the water as cold as it was.

“You are crazy Qhawe” she said taking off her own clothes.

“I am just crazy about you” I said.

She put her hands over her face and giggled.

“I am waiting” I said.

“The water is cold” she complained.

I stepped out and carried her on my back.

“Dilika” I said as soon as we were in the water.

“No” she said holding tight.

“I will dip you in” I said.

“You wouldn’t “ she said laughing.

“You were warned” I said letting her go but she clung on.

“Guess I am going to have to go on my knees” I said going under.

She screamed so loud and cussed but and ended up laughing and hitting me I held her close to my chest and looked into her eyes.

“Hey” she said putting her hand on my jaw.

“Hey” I said smiling.

“Its getting dark we should get home” I said.

“We should’ she said smiling.

“You know I can’t resist your smile right” I said.

“Nope” she said proudly.

I ran my finger down her cheek and kissed her soft lips.

“Let me carry your pain” I whispered lifting her up stepping out of the water then laying her down on the cloth she had laid down and pulled down her panty.

She looked at me up mouth open and swallowed hard.

“Let me make love to you with the stars the sky and the river as our witness” I said.

“Ngivumele ngikuthande Zobuhle ngendlela efanele” I told her.

“Let this soil witness and attest to the love we share” I said.

She took my hand and placed it her breast.

“Ngingowakho ngokomoya nange nyama” she said closing her eyes.

I gently parted her legs holding her gaze and her warm moist walls welcomed me, she still has to get used to me being inside her but her body wasn't fighting me. I moved slowly and gently while she moaned my name and her nails dug onto my back I ran my hand from her breast down to her thighs. I tried pulling out but she locked me in with her legs and moved her arse meeting me half way, I changed position and she came on top while I sat up and buried myself in her warm breast. She looked at me unsure but I held her waits and gently moved it till she got a hang of it and threw her head back her one hand balancing her on my leg while the other rested on my shoulder. I saw the gates of heaven open and my soul depart my body she fell on me and held me so tight biting my shoulder to muffle her screams her toes curling and legs curving on mine. I moved with her and laid her down gently stroking till I came growling I pulled out and had her rest of on my chest.

“I love you Qhawe” she said.

“I love you Zobuhle” I said.

## ZOBUHLE

Qhawe and I stayed in each other's arms looking at the stars for a moment I had forgotten where we were and only he mattered, for a while I had forgotten that someone could see us and spread rumors like wild fire for a second I complete forgot that I belonged to someone else and in that moment I belonged to Qhawe and only him I was his as much as he was mine. We had to leave though and head home because my father had started calling threatening that he would make his way to the river. We walked hand in hand smiling and laughing what I didn't know is that my father was waiting for us at the gate, I tried taking my hand back but Qhawe wasn't having it he tightened his hold and in that crazy sweating moment I wanted to die. My father asked me to go to the house and he stayed behind with Qhawe I don't know what was said between the two of them and when I asked I was told to stay out of men business just like that. Nqaba was the one to pour him water so he could bath and also show him his room my father's doing that man clearly doesn't want me to see me happy.

“Awuyi ngani ukuyolala” he asked looking at me.

Its not like I was the only one not sleeping Nqaba and Zanele were still up.

“I am still watching tv baba” I said looking at my mother.

They were supposed to be asleep a long time ago giving me time to sneak out.

“If I remember correctly the doctor ordered you to get some rest” mama said looking at her husband.

“If I remember correctly that was days ago” baba said.

“Hayi mina sengiyolala” I said standing up.

I went to bed with heavy heart but mama came to wake me up after baba had fallen asleep and gave me a key to the room Qhawe was sleeping in. As I predicted he had a gun in hand the

moment I walk in that room but lowered it when he realised it was me I flung in his arms and stayed there till he pulled way .

“You want your father to kill me” he asked.

I shook my head and took off my shoes and got inside the bed.

“You definitely want you your father to kill me” he said laughing then joining me.

He lied on his back and I rested on his chest.

“Thank you for coming” I said.

“I will always find sthandwa sam” he said kissing my forehead.

“I don't want to you to leave” I said drawing circles on his chest like a young girl who had juts fallen inlove for the first time.



He chuckled and turned to face me while I did the same

“I don't want to leave but I can't stay in your father's house my father would kill me” he said.

“Are we okay” I asked biting my lip.

“If you are asking if you can date other men the answer is no” he said.

“I wasn't thinking that far but now that you mention it” he started tickling me.

“Kahle umsindo” he said letting go.

“I would kill anyone who ever looked your way just so know” he said.

“Stop saying things like that we both know you would never do that” I said.

“Ngqiqinisile njalo Zobuhle angisiyona into yokudla” he said giving me the chills.

I had to sneak out again in the morning and go prepare for his trip just like any other guest my mother made him a full roast chicken and some dumplings for the long road he was about to take. Seeing him leave did dampen my mood and my father had to make it worse on purpose I believe.

“Such a fine young man” baba said nodding his head.

“And he is well mannered” mama said.

“It’s a shame he doesn’t have a wife if I was him I would be sowing wild oats having the time of my life” he said looking at ma.

I folded my arms and looked the other way.

“What’s wrong with this one” he asked looking my way.

“Mbatha just leave the child” ma said.

“She was fine not so long ago maybe she’s sick” he said.

“I just have a headache” I told.

“Are you sure that’s all” he asked.

“Ma please tell your husband to leave me alone” I said walking away.

I stood by the door and watched as he whispered sweet things in her ear and mama laughing with her baba kissing her cheek and holding her hand that was two days ago.

“Snap out of it mama” says clucking her fingers.

“Miss him already” mama asks.

“Something like that” I says shrugging my shoulders.

I hear a lot of commotion coming from the outside and think that Philile is here that reminds me I need to thank her for showing Qhawe the way here.

“I wonder who that is” mama says standing up.

We get outside and find Mhlaba standing right in front of my father’s house looking livid with his guards next to him I lose my step trying to back away but fall flat on my arse.

“Zo” he says trying to help me but I shake my head.

He retracts his hand tightening his face

“I didn’t know you were back” he says looking at me.

“I missed you” he says, missed me he made my life a living hell.

I look at my mother begging with her eyes and wish my father was here.

“Asambe” he tells me.

I shake my head tears welling up.

“Shwele nkosana she’s not well please” mama says clasping her hands together.

“Zo don't make me angry ngithe sukama sihambe” he roars.

I have been on the clouds because of Qhawe’s visits that I totally forgot about him coming back.

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He pulls me by my hair dragging me to the car I fight with all that I have and end up being slapped back to the ground. his right hand man comes closer to him and gives him an envelope he opens it up looking at me his eyes not blinking, he shoves the pictures on my face placing his hand on throat lifting me up.

“In my father’s land” he says squeezing my throat.

Mama picks up the pictures and shakes her head.

“Kubeyiphutha ngiyacela bandla ungam’limazi” she begs.

He lets go of me and tells his right hand man to take me to the car, I get a glimpse on one of the pictures these were clearly taken on the morning Qhawe left and I stole a kiss before he got inside his car.

We drive to his house my heart pumping the moment we get there one of the servants attends to me and cleans me up, she

leaves us alone when Mhlaba enters the bedroom and settles next me.

“I looked for you everywhere but I couldn’t find you seemed like you disappeared into thin air you family wouldn’t tell me where you were” he says looking at me.

Mhlaba has always been handsome but the problem is his heart.

“Who is that man” he asks.

I look at him and my heart wants to praise Nyambose so bad but my head is telling me not to do it.

“I won’t ask you again Zobuhle” he shouts.

“He ‘s a friend” I tell him.

“You go around kissing friends now” asks.

The thing with Mhlabuyazonda is that I learned to respect him not because I wanted too but because he instilled fear in me, he forced it down my throat and it remained although I hide it well it remained.

“Do you love him” he asks.

“No” I say looking at him.

He stands up and walks out locking the door behind him, a few minutes later the door knob turns with Zondi making his way in.

“Still his henchman I see” I say.

“Still beautiful and naive I see” zondi says.

“What did you think was going to happen when you got here that suddenly he would have married someone else and



mysteriously forgotten about you, the he was a changed man and didn't want to bed his young brother's wife" Zondi asks.

"After all that he did to you the beatings and humiliation seems like that little head of yours forgot" he says shaking his head.

"By coming here you have let him in back into your life and let me tell you something this time around he's staying" he says.

"And then you had to drag an innocent man into this war stupid girl' he says.

I wipe my tears thinking about Qhawe knowing how ruthless Mhlaba is he won't hesitate killing him.

"Does that guy even know who you are" he asks.

"I am zobuhle Mbhatha nothing more" I say.

“So he doesn’t know that you are the future Queen of Emahlabathini” he says.

“Will you please stop” I shout.

“Promise that if I help then you stay away from this place go live on a farm or something” he says smiling.

“I am tired of running away” I say.

“Then stay and suffer as a matter of fact love him and give him children who will turn out exactly like him” he says.

Mhlaba returns and looks at Zondi telling me to excuse us, he settles next to me and take my hand.

“I am sorry I didn’t mean to snap or hurt you like I did” he says brushing his thumb on my lips.

“You are still beautiful like the first day I saw you” he says.

I cringe at the feel of his warm hands touching my face.

“I hate seeing you cry and this is not how I imagined it would after seeing you so long” he says softly.

I look at him and for a moment think maybe he’s delusional or just crazy.

“I will take you home your father is probably worried” he says.

“My father will send people to your home and everything will be okay” he says.

Just as he promised he takes me home and my father almost snaps his neck but because he can’t he resorts to warming him.

“You are leaving today I don't care where you go but you are living this place” baba says packing my bags.

“You can’t do this to me again baba mama talk to him” I say.

“I am sorry ngane yam but it’s the only way” she says.

I shake my head refusing.

“If You stay he will never let you go and one day his possessiveness will lead to him killing you” he says walking out.

Mama pats the empty space of bed next to her.

“I know you love that boy and I can see he loves you too okay and if this is your chance at being free and happy then take it and never look back” she says wiping her tears.

“You father loves you and this is tearing him apart losing you again is killing him” she says.

“Now I am your mother Zobuhle I raised you and I know you slept him but if Mhlaba finds out then he’s going to kill you both ” she says.

“This is for the best” she says giving me a hug.

“But mama this is not fair I hate him” I says.

“Shh” she says wiping my tears.

“I love you” she says kissing my cheek.

I don't know what’s happening but its all happening too fast I did this though coming here was the worst mistake ever I should have listened.

## ZOBUHLE

My father sent me packing not that I blame him I was stupid to think anything would come out of me going home, I should have just stayed in m flat and cried myself to sleep but then again I needed more than just to cry I need my people. I needed my father more than I let on and seeing him made me happy but at what cost right now they could be in danger and its all my fault. I looked outside the window and watched the rain heavily pour in all its might I deeply sighed when the door to my bedroom opened up and Philile walked in, she sat next to me and shook her head I immediately felt a lecture coming on.

“Can I say something” she said looking at me.

“Sure go ahead” I said still looking outside.

“You were stupid for going home and I just had to say it” she said.

“Really Philile” I asked looking at her.

“We warned you but still you didn’t listen why would you go there what possessed you” she asked.

“You’re a fine one to talk Philile you see your family all the time while I stay here and be alone” I said.

“Its for your own good” she shouted.

“Staying away from my family and always looking over my shoulder how is any of that for my good” I shouted back.

“You are not the one who sleeps with one eye open because there’s a man after you, I had to give up my dreams Philile and stay in hiding all because of that man. I lost my sanity because of that man and you are here telling me I was stupid for going home” I said.

“I didn’t mean it like that” she said.

“I lost everything Philile and yes I regret going home but rubbing it in won’t change a thing” I said.

“But you have Qhawe and maybe he can help” she said.

“I can’t tell him Philile I just can’t” I said shaking my head.

“But its not your fault all of this is not your fault Mhlaba is the monster here” she says.

“How I wish it was that simple” I said chuckling.

“You love him and he loves you surely that’s enough he won’t turn his back on you” she said.



“Say you are Qhawe and I tell you that traditionally I am married to someone else and that person is the future king and we couldn’t be together even if we wanted to because he would kill us both” I asked tilting my head.

“Putting it like that makes it sound like you are cheating on your husband” she said smiling.

“See I can’t lose him” I told her.

“I want you to know though that whatever happens I will always be right here” she said.

“I am sorry that I went off at you like that” I said.

“Its okay we understand” she said rubbing her belly.

“I want him dead Philile” I said standing up.

“Hayi Zobu don't talk like that or you will have all the Nxumalo ancestors strike you down with lightning” she said looking around as if someone could hear us.

“I know you are angry but talks like that will have you killed and your father’s house burned down” she warned.

“You are right” I said clearing my throat.

“Oh my word you’re not hearing me I can see it in your eyes” she said raising her hands.

I shook my head and laughed.

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MHLABA

I sat in my office and looked at Zobuhle's picture's truth be told I have never met someone this beautiful someone who makes my blood run like this, I remember the first time I saw her she was by the river singing and I swear her voice enchanted me and I never looked back. I would go to the river everyday just to see her with the other girls and my heart would find peace in her presence in her beautiful eyes and the way she would smile. If only she could forget about my brother and see me and love me the way I love her, If only she could see me then I would give her the whole world there's nothing I wouldn't do for her if only she could look at me the way she looked at Sbani.

"Zwide" I looked up and Zondi handed me a cloth I broke the glass I had in my hand.

"What is that my brother had that I don't have" I asked.

"Nothing Zwide" he said looking to the side.

“I want you to do something for me” I said handing him the pictures of Zobuhle and that man she was seen with.

“Anything” he said.

“I want you to find Zobuhle and look into that man” I said.

“I don't think we will find Zobuhle Zwide and as for the man why is he important” he asked.

“Finding Zobuhle will be easier this time around follow the man he will lead you to her” I said pouring myself another drink.

“Find out everything about him his past, family

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business anything you find I want to know” I said.

“This cat and mouse I have been playing with Zobuhle ends either she comes home or her own free will or I drag her home” I said.

“And the man what are you going to do with him” he asked.

“What else can I do Zondi” I asked.

“Zwide” he said.

“If there’s something going on between him and Zobuhle then by all means kill him and feed him to the dogs” I said looking at the man’s picture.

“Very well” he said.

I sat back on the chair and looked at Zobuhle’s picture hell will freeze before I let anyone have her she’s mine and the future Queen of this soil the mother of my kids. I don't want anyone else but her that man better pray he is nothing to her or so help me god heads will roll I will teach him a lesson he will never forget and those close to him will suffer a great deal.

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ZIBULO

I looked at the file in front of me and wished I hadn't gone digging I wished Qhawe hadn't asked me to look into this girls life. I closed it and sighed rubbing my forehead there is no way in hell I will let her ruin my brother's life not while I am still alive.

"Even if you look at it without your glasses on it won't change anything" zenkosi said settling down next to me.

"Tell me that I am dreaming" I said standing up.

She looked at me and yawned rubbing her belly clearly not taking me seriously.

"Should I tell him" I asked looking at her.

“Hlukana nezindaba zabantu” she said looking my way

“You don't get it this is war whichever way I look at it dammit zenkosi” I shouted.

“I won't lose my brother because of her” I said.

“Fine go ahead and tell him and watch me not speak to you” she said calmly.

“He's my brother Zen” I said.

“Still this is not your truth to tell” she said.

“So you are telling me to watch by while my brother walks into a trap” I asked.

“Have you seen Qhawe lately huh he's happy and more welcoming for the first time in a such a long he is truly happy don't take that away from him” she said.

“She’s feeding him lies though what happens when her man wants her back huh what about my brother” I asked.

“That’s not fair though that girl has been through a lot because of Qhawe she killed a man in his house and we both know that man wanted your brother, you yourself are not a saint zibulo so please stay out of this” she warned.

“If Qhawe needs you then I know you will gear up and be there for him” she said standing up.

“Just don't ruin this for him if they are meant to be then everything will work out trust me and think about this what kind of a women would leave all that luxury and wealth mhmm” she said kissing my cheek.

“Ngimyeke adlale ngomfwethu” I asked.



“How many secrets did you hide from me huh? How many secrets is he hiding from her don't stand there and judge it doesn't suite you” she said getting back on the bed.

“I can't let him get hurt though Zenkosi he can't go through another heartbreak not after how he lost Thando and zano” I said breathing heavily.

I got into my pants and hood then put on my shoes.

“I will be back I need to do something” I said walking out.

“Ungabuyi zibulo uyangizwa” she shouted.

I drove to Zobuhle's place and found myself knocking on her doorstep she opened the door and her widened the moment she say me.

“Zibulo please come in” she said moving out of the way.

I stepped inside and looked around.

“Would you like something to drink” she asked.

“No but I came to tell you something” I said tightening my face.

“Oh is there something wrong” she asked smiling.

In that moment I saw the why mother fell for her she’s beautiful and probably the best thing that’s ever happened to my brother, I cleared my throat and scratched my head.

“Is something wrong with Qhawe is that why you are here” she asked looking worried.

I thought about Zenkosi’s words and shook my head.

“Please don't hurt my brother” I said.

“I love your brother and I would never hurt him” she said softly.

“I should get going” I said nodding my head.

She walked me to the door and I didn't know if I made the right decision coming here I wanted to tell her to leave my brother, I know this won't end well if he doesn't kill her for playing him then he might just go of the rails and I don't know if he will be okay after that, I got to my car and a text from him came through asking if I had found anything I looked at the file and thought for a while I might need to doctor this whole file.

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## ZOBUHLE

A lot happened during a short period of time and for the first time in my life I was confused and didn't know if I was coming or going I even asked Sophie to relook at my application to have me work for someone else just not Qhawe, speaking of that one he told me to quit my job and asked me to move in at the loft or rather have some of my clothes at his place. I had a lot to think about and telling the truth about my identity was one of them truth be told I love that man so much and knowing that I might lose him when Mhlaba finally decides that he has had enough kills me. I looked at myself in the mirror and sighed lately I haven't been feeling well I feel bloated and under the weather all I want to do is take long naps and just look at my man. I had a good mind to change my dress and put on leggings something that complimented my mood but my phone rang I looked at the screen and it was Qhawe.

“Muhleza wam” he said on the other end.

“Nyambose” I said smiling.

“How are you feeling today” he asked.

I shook my head this was the fourth time he was calling to check up on me even though he complained about having these painful headaches yet he still got time to call.

“Still under the weather but I will be fine” I said.

“I can come and kiss it all better” he said.

“And have you leave work no ways” I said.

“Okay can I sing it better then surely that will make you feel better” he said.

“I would rather you focus on your work and let me sleep” I said laughing.

“Still seeing you tonight” I asked.

“How about we make it earlier than that ngisemnyango” he said.

“I look horrible so please turn back” I told him.

“Awukahle Mambatha woza uzovula” he said ending the call.

I walked to the door and he was standing there holding take aways in hand a smile on his face.

“Please do come in sir” I said moving out of the way.

“Why thank you mam” he said laughing.

He headed to the kitchen and came back with one spoon and helped me down.

“I couldn’t focus knowing that you are not feeling well didn’t sit well with me” he said kissing my forehead.

“You are amazing Nyambose” I said.

“Wait I am not done yet” he said standing up and playing some music he gave me that side smile of his and started dancing he helped me up and we started dancing together we stopped and looked at each other without saying anything. He ran his hands down my cheeks and placed his thumb on my lips smiling.

“God you are beautiful” he said not taking his eyes off me.

“You are not bad yourself” I said smiling.

“Usho kahle ngoba ngiyinsizwa mina Zobuhle” he said.

“I love you” I said.

“And I love you more than you will ever know” he said kissing my lips then my nose and finally my forehead.

“Please do bonk each other on the couch while at it” Philile said walking past us.

“kahle ngamatshe Philile I brought you and the baby something to eat” Qhawe said giving her a brown bag.

“You know what do whatever you feel like doing kids kusekhaya la” she said heading to her bedrrom.

“Is she always like this” he asked looking at me.

“Always” I said laughing.

We both settled down and he took out a tub of icecream and fed me while taking small bites at it.



“Sthandwa sam I was thinking” he said feeding me a mouth full.

“Yes” I said nodding my head.

“I want you to meet my parents” he said.

“I have met your parents so it only fair you meet mine” he said holding my hand.

I thought for a while and just as I was about to say something he shook his head.

“Think about it okay “ he said smiling.

“I would love to meet your parents” I said returning the smile.

“Are you sure” he aske.

“Yes” I said breathing out heavily.

“Ngiyabonga” he said kissing me.

“Dlana ke khona uzophola” he said feeding me.

QUEEN

I had an interesting visit from the traditional healer we took a walk around the royal garden with the guards at a fair distant, my husband had work with the royal council that it kept him busy all day. I looked at the healer and cleared my throat this was starting to get to me and heart was already at my throat.

“I hope my visit doesn’t alarm you in any way ndlovukazi” he said looking at me.

“A visit from you is always welcome you are the bearer of good and bad news” I said.

“I do hope nothing is wrong with the king” I said.

“Nothing is wrong with the king or the prince but I have been having disturbing dreams” he said looking at me.

“Disturbing how” I asked.

“I am afraid it’s about Zobuhle “ he said clearing his throat.

“Please don't tell me she’s in the trouble” I said feeling my heart drop.

“She has given her heart to someone else and I fear that she has done the same with her body” he said shaking his body.

“She wouldn’t” I said shaking my head.

“My dreams say otherwise ndlovukazi and we know whoever touches her or shares her bed will not see daylight” he said.

I shook my head thinking of her losing another person she loves  
I have to do something.

“I will call her and find out” I said.

He bowed and left with the guards showing him the way I took  
my phone and called Zobuhle she picked up on the second ring.

“Ma” she said.

“I hope I didn’t catch you at bad time” I said.

“Not at all ma I was just cooking” she said laughing softly.

“Zo can I ask you something” I said.

“Anything ma” she said.

“Have you shared your bed” I asked her.

She kept quiet and it sounded like the line was dead I looked at my phone and the battery was dead.

ZOBUHLE

We ended up taking some of my clothes and going to Qhawe's house I don't think I will ever be ready to go back to that house and he when I told him that he was okay with everything, he said he preferred the loft more it doesn't attract any eyes well that's what he thinks till you get inside and your whole heart tell you to rob the whole place. I slept in his arms till I heard him mumble and cry in his sleep I didn't wake him up I sat there looking at him and my heart ache for him, why can't we take each other's pain and bear it all even if it is just for a day I would do anything for this man. I got on my knees and prayed for him but he wasn't coming down I then decided to shake him and the worst happened he pushed me so hard I landed on the floor. I crawled back my eyes widened I wasn't expecting that he looked at me breathing heavily.

"I am sorry" he said running his hands over his head.

I stood up my back aching from coming in contact with the floor he made his way to me and kneeled in front of me bringing me into a hug.

“I am sorry” he said.

“Its okay it was just a bad dream” I told him.

He helped me up and placed me back inside the bed and cuddled me gently rubbing my back.

“I will call a doctor in the morning” he said softly.

I held his arms and closed my eyes he was hurting and there was nothing I could do.

“If I had a wish I would ask the genie to help me carry all pain I can't bare seeing you like Qhawe night after night” I said softly.

He kissed my head and remained still.

I woke up to an empty bed with Qhawe not in sight I moved my hands around and rolled over to his side and it was empty. I opened my eyes and sat up straight looking around till I saw him standing outside, I stood up and joined him closing the sliding door behind me I breathed heavily before wrapping my arms around his waist and resting my head on his back. He was

smoking and was about to stomp his cigarette but I stopped him.

“Its okay” I said.

The thing with Qhawe is that he never smokes around me but I know having a smoke does calm him down.

“Ngicela ukhulume name” I begged him.

“I don't know where to start” he said.

I could feel the tension all over his body.

“What is haunting sthandwa sam” I asked.

He turned and looked at me starring down on me.

“You're enough for me” he said smiling.

I saw tears welling up in his eyes.

“Qhawe what’s wrong” I asked my own tears welling up.

Why does seeing him in pain hurt so much why does loving him make me so weak.

“I once had a family Zobuhle” he said letting his tears fall.

“I once had a family” he said breaking down.

I looked at him shocked and confused.

“And I failed them” he said.

I shook my head and held his face.



“Don't say that you're an amazing man surely you did your best” I said.

“I couldn't protect them Zobu my beautiful baby girl and I wasn't there when she needed me the most” he said breaking down even more.

“I am so sorry” I said holding him tight.

“I told myself that I would never put the people I love in harms way and I told myself I would never have a family of my own ever again” he said looking at me.

“I don't want to hurt you Zobuhle” he continued.

“What are you saying Qhawe” I asked.

“I love you and you alone are enough for me” he said.

“And kids what about kids” I asked letting go.

He shook his head and my heart sank.

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ZOBUHLE

A few days and I haven't seen or heard from Qhawe after our talk that night he became distant and for some reason it feels like he is pushing me away, I had a talk with Philile and she told me to go look for answers even if I have to hold people hostage talk about being violent you see now I am starting to think that baby in her belly is messing with her head. Speaking of the baby I can't wait to see her and a part of me feels it's a baby girl. My smile fades when I think of babies the thought of Qhawe not wanting them leaves me vulnerable I for one want babies so bad with all my heart and not just with anyone I want them with him. I deeply sigh when I think of how my life is nothing but a mess and only he is the good thing probably best thing that has ever happened in my life. I snap out of my world and take the lighter burning everything that reminded me of Sbani leaving only one picture of him and another one we took together. I loved him he was my first love but our life together was short lived and now I have found the most amazing and

caring man yes he has his faults but he loves me. Philile joined me outside and wrapped her arm around me breathing out heavily.

“You’re letting him go” she says.

“Yes” I say.

“I am going to tell him everything” I say looking at her.

“Are you sure I mean aren’t you afraid of losing him” she asks.

“I can’t keep this from him Philile I am drowning in lies and I hate that by doing so I am putting his life in danger” I say.

“What if he wants nothing to do with you after this” she asks.

“Then my fate is sealed” I say shrugging my shoulders.

“What is that supposed to mean” she asks tilting her head.

“Ngiyasaba Philile that I will lose him and when that happens a part of me will die with him rejecting me, I will pack all my bags and go back home there will be nothing left for me” I say.

“Just have faith I believe there is a reason that you guys are together” she says smiling.

“Have I ever told you just how much of an amazing person you are” I ask.

She tilts her head throwing it back and laughing.

“If only you knew that you the amazing one” she says.

“Now go look for your man and start at his brother’s house surely that hunk knows where he is” she says nodding her head.

I freshen up and go catch a taxi taking me to Zibulo's house, I find myself standing on his front door knocking the door opens up and his wife Zenkosi appears looking beautiful as ever.

"Zobuhle please come in" she says letting me in then closing the door behind her.

She leads me to the kitchen and I find Qhawe's mother with the girls baking come to think of it thus family like baking and they are big on family.

"Ncane" the girls scream coming to topple me.

"Hey babies" I say giving each one a kiss.

"Sawbona ma' I say looking at Qhawe's mother.

"Sawbona Zobuhle" she says smiling then wiping her hands.

I look around and clear my wiping my sweaty palms.

“I didn’t mean to disturb I was looking Zibulo hoping he would help me locate Qhawe” I say.

Zenkosi looks at her mother in law then the girls.

“Girls please go check on mommy’s dough” she says.

The girls let go of me and run towards the kitchen I suddenly get the urge to puke and look at Zenkosi.

“Down the passage second door on your left” she says.

I run to the toilet and throw up I wipe my mouth when all feel okay but feels another load coming up.

“Its okay”” Qhawe’s mother says brushing my back.

She helps me up and allows me to wash my mouth.

“I am sorry I don't know what came over me” I say placing a hand over my shoulder.

She smiles and leads to the lounge.

“This should help” she says giving me black tea.

I take a few sips and calm myself down.

“Thank you” I say.

“Do you mind leaving me and Zo for a moment makoti”  
Qhawe’s mother asked.

“Of course not ma I will go check on the girls” she says standing up.

Qhawe's mother suggests that we go to the garden she looks at me and smiles shaking her head.

"I have never met someone who scares my son like you do" she says laughing.

I smile and look up.

"Trust me even his father doesn't put fear in him like you do and that's because he loves you" she says.

"And I love him ma" I say.

"These past few days have been hard on him" she says nodding her head.

I get a feeling she is talking about Qhawe's late fiancé and child.

"I remember the day he lost Thando and Zano it was the worst day ever for all of us" she says her eyes filling up with tears.



“It was any normal day and we were at the house having a family lunch and he was on his way to fetch them from his house, he took longer than he was supposed to and that worried his father and I had this bad feeling that just wouldn’t go away. We tried calling him and Thando but none of them picked up which worried everyone babakhe, Zibulo and I decided to go to the house and what I saw will always haunt me forever. Thando was in the bath tub her throat was slit and Zano had been placed on her chest to choke on her mother’s blood” I gasped putting a hand over my mouth.

“Zano cried and drowned in her own mother’s blood the water just did the rest she was only nine months old” she says wiping her tears.

“When my boy got there it was too late they were gone and he was never the same” I wipe my hearts imagining him walking into something so gruesome and heart breaking.

“He loved his daughter more than anything in this world and losing her broke him” she says sniffing.

“I love my son more than anything and seeing him like that broke my heart I couldn’t take away his pain” she says breaking down.

“I don't know what to say” I say.

“You know what he did after that he stopped living and became something I don't know he pushed me away and only the girls could get through to him but now he has you and he is living again I have my son back and that mean so much to me” she says holding my hand.

I can hear and feel her pain this woman loves her son.

“I am telling you this because I don't want to dig him up again I don't want to go through that ever again’ she says shaking her head.

“Dig up” I ask holding my breathe.

“I don't know what happened but someone buried him alive they buried my baby alive and if it wasn't for his father and brother searching for him I don't know what would have happened to me, I know he is not a saint but he is a good man and I raised him well” she says.

“You love him so much” she nodded her head smiling.

“Guess that makes the two of us” I say smiling.

26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;”>“He is at the club that is where you will find him” she says giving me the address .

I can't believe I have never been to the club she gives me a hug and pulls away.

“Take care of yourself’ she says.

I get to the club and find a few bartenders behind the bar cleaning the surfaces and wiping the bottles they look at me

and get back to what they are doing. I clear my throat and one of the girls looks my way.

“Excuse me” I say.

“The bar is closed lady” the lady says.

“I am not here to buy but I am looking for Qhawe” I say.

She looks at me from head to toe and looks at another bartender.

“I am afraid boss man isn’t here and we are not hiring” she says.

I know these jeans are not that expensive and nor is my hoody but I look better than her washed up self even on her good days.

I smile and look at the young man next to her.

“Where is your boss” I ask.

“It would be in your best interest to tell me where I can find him well that’s if you still value your job” I say.

He hesitates but shows me the way to an office.

“I hope I won’t be losing my job over this” he says shaking his head.

“A raise is what you deserve” I say opening the door.

Qhawe lifts up his head and the girls next all over him peel off.

“You are bloody fired Zakhele” he hisses.

I don't know if I should be angry or butcher him right here and now but the saner part of me walks towards him.

“Ngizokulanda vuka” I say walking out.

I go back to the bar and wish I could have a drink but the taste of alcohol rubs me off the wrong way it takes a couple of minutes with my patience running out this man clearly doesn't know me.

“Zakhele right” I ask.

“Uyabona sister uzongifaka enkingeni just pretend like I am not and that you don't see me” he says.

“Do you guys have any buckets and ice” I ask.

“Hayi ufana ukubulala umlungu wam” he says shaking his head.

“The bucket Zakhele” I say.

He gives me everything I need and carries the bucket up to the office.

“You open the door and I will the rest” I say.

“Mina ngixoshiwe vele” he says shrugging his shoulders.

He opens the door and I step inside head straight to Qhawe and pour the ice water all over him, he almost knocks me off but stops and breathes heavily looking around.

“What the hell” he asks looking livid I swear he’s thinking of doing something anything just to calm himself down

“I won’t be made a fool Nyambose and trust me next time it shall be hot water” I say.

He looks at me and I think I saw a smile there but h masks it off and tightens his face grabbing his keys.

“You will find me in the car and Zakhele thank you for the help do expect that little something extra by tomorrow right Nyambose” I say.

“Musa nje ukungisuke zobuhle” he says.

“I believe that’s a yes” I say looking at Zakhele.

He finally gets to the car and we drive home silent I can’t even look at him did he sleep with them that’s the million dollar question and why the hell am I with him I should left his half drunk arse back at that stupid club. He moves his hand to mine to mine but I retract it and look outside the window.

“Are you angry’ he asks.

I scoff that question is part of a thousand ways to die and he just dug his grave.

“Angiz’khuluma nawe ungangiphenduli” he says.



I look at him and laugh.

“Says the man who was surrounded by ladies of the night’ I say.

He looks at the road and keeps driving till we reach home dammit I should have told him to take me home, I bang the car door and walk inside the house.

“Cha uyedelela Zobuhle” he says.

He walks in and heads straight to the shower while I use the bathtub, I wrap a towel once I am done and come out to find him naked his back facing me the sight of his firm butt sends waves all the way down to my temple. Oh Lord here it goes I won't make it I won't see this angry thing through he turns and just like that I am lost his marvelous physic why is he this well built.

“Still angry at me” he asks making his way towards me.

I swallow hard even I wanted to say something the words would probably be gibberish or clear as day light and that is me wanting him to take me.

“I was worried about you but clearly you were having the time of life away from me” I say.

He closes the gap between us and I can't seem to focus his huge thick cock and his beautiful smile.

“I didn't sleep with any of them” he says raising his hand.

“I don't care” I lie.

He chuckles and removes the towel dropping it to the floor.

“I am about to make you care” he says lifting me up then placing me on the bed.

He spreads my legs and his tongue spreads all over my temples making me forget I was even angry.

“Do you care now” he asks.

I manage to shake my head and that prompts him to push his finger inside me, I bite my lip and wish he would enter me right this moment the pleasurable bit stops and he comes to up my face giving me that side smile.

“I will not waste my talents on someone who doesn't care’ he says attempting to get off I grab his arms and shake my head.

“Qhawe don't do this to me” I plead.

He pushes himself in without having me scream and almost jump up, he holds me down and growls kissing my forehead.

“This is for hitting my car” he says deep stroking leaving me begging him to stop but give more at the same time.

“This for that water you poured all over me” he says stroking even harder.

“This is for turning Zakhele against me” he says stroking deep and kissing my neck.

I think I came on the third stroke this man is torturing me.

Mrs Mthethwa

I don't know if I made the right choice by not asking Zobuhle about her situation or what I think is her situation in my person experience this could mean only one thing and that is she's pregnant and expecting my fourth grandchild and the thought of holding Qhawe's offspring again makes me so happy and knowing that he is going to have his own family instead of watching by and letting life pass him brings joy and peace to my heart. I know the girls might think I favour the boys more than them but the truth is that the boys work for their money they take wise decisions and don't want things handed over to them on a silver platter. My girls are kind amazing and brought up well but they are spoilt and want things down for them and that is all babakhe's fault for not saying no when he should. And then we have Zibulo my first born the he sometimes thinks I love Qhawe more than him well more than the rest of them but that's not true I love all my children my son's had difficulties growing up Zibulo had a terrible stutter which caused him to withdraw and be a loner and Qhawe was sickly and had asthma the doctors once told me he wouldn't make it I remember the days I fought and prayed so he could

pull through , I remember cuddling him holding in my arms and begging him not to leave me the days I spent sitting next to his hospital bed and couldn't take away his pain. I am a mother before anything else and I would die for my children but I would also kill for them that how much I love them.

"You have been smiling like since you woke " babakhe says looking my way.

"Can't a person be happy babakhe" I ask smiling.

"Not when I am not responsible for that happiness" he says making his way to me.

"Are you happy babakhe I mean with the way the kids turned out" I ask.

"Apart of them girls wishing to send me to an early grave I am more than happy" he says.

"Would you do it all over again given the chance" I ask.

He tilts his head and chuckles.

“Are we expecting mamakhe” he asks kissing me.

“No just a question” I ask.

“With you yes I would do this all over again” he says.

“And the grandkids do you want more” I ask.

“Don't tell me Zenkosi is planning on having another baby after this one” he says dramatically.

I laugh and hit him on the shoulder.

“No but what if Qhawe decided to have kids again of his own” I ask.

I see his eyes light up and a smile spread across his lips.

“Is that young girl expecting my grandchild” he asks failing to contain his joy.

“No but it wouldn’t hurt right” I say.

“It wouldn’t and maybe when that happens I will rest in peace knowing he is happy” he says.

“Thank you babakhe” I say.

“For what” he asks.

“For being a great father and an amazing husband” I say kissing his cheek.

“Being all that deserves more than just a kiss on the cheek” he says laughing.

“And what more is that” I ask.

“This” he says kissing me and moving his hands down my waist.

The door to our bedroom flings open and Babu runs in closes the door looking at us.

“Gogo what are you doing” she asks narrowing her eyes.

I look at babakhe all worked up and laugh.

“Hi mkhulu” she says smiling and I know this old dinosaur next to me is sold.

“Babu what are doing in my bedroom”he asks looking at her.

“I came to hide Aphile and I are playing hide and seek” she says nodding her head.



“Gogo can you hide me please” she says batting her eyelids and I can’t say no.

“Rain check babakhe” I say blowing him kiss.

“I think its best people start raising their kids we did our part hau” he says grumbling all the way to door.

“I love you” I shout.

“I love you too” he says.

“I love you Mkhulu” Babu says so innocently coming out of her hiding place.

Babakhe says nothing and just looks at her.

“I said I love mkhulu” she says sweetly.

He scratches his head and smiles.

“I love you too Babu” he says.

“You forgot the secret word” she says folding her tiny arms

I fold my arms and laugh with Babu there no half measure.

“I love you cupcake” he says smiling.

I look at my husband and smile this is what being grandparents is all about the beautiful crazy moments.

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ZOBUHLE

Qhawe and I spent the past few days cooped up in the house just loving each other all day long until the sun sets and him telling me stories of how he grew up and tales his father used to share with them, the smile that spread across his face when he spoke about his family and mostly his mother. I now believe they share a bond un imaginable that of a mother and son, he looks up both to his father and brother. I didn't ask much about his past though or how he lost them his mother had already told me and he also told me in my sleep or so he thought I was sleep, he shared his fears and his greatest achievements he was broken and yet at peace when he said all of this.

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"I love you" I said when he was done and had just kissed my forehead.

He remained still and just held me into his arms breathing heavily I know this sounds tiring but there is something about speaking and letting it all out there.

I look at the clock on the wall and call Qhawe from the bathroom he been there for way to long and breakfast is ready. I move the bacon off the stove and turn it off wiping my hands with a dishcloth. I make my way to the bathroom and knock but he doesn't respond I open the door and find him on the floor blood coming out of his mouth I rush to his side and kneel in front of him bringing him to my lap.

"Qhawe" I call out his name panicked and he doesn't respond.

"Sthandwa sam please open your eyes" I say trying to wipe the blood coming out of her mouth.

He groans in pain but fails to open his eyes.

I walk to the bedroom and grab my phone calling an ambulance then his brother.

"Zibulo he's not waking up" I say rushing back to the bathroom.

"Who what are you talking about" he asks.

“Qhawe he’s bleeding and he won’t open his eyes” I say.

“Calm down I am on my way” he says.

I rock him back and forth tears streaming down.

“God please don't take him please” I say.

The ambulance didn’t take long and Zibulo followed us to the hospital the doctors took him and haven’t said anything since he called his parents and they came as quickly as they could.

“Babakhe I can’t lose my son” his mother says looking at her husband.

“Ma musa ukukhuluma kanjalo” Zibulo says.

“I agree with Zibulo don't talk like that” his father says.

“Zobuhle what happened” she asks.

“A week ago he started coughing blood we went to the doctor and he said it was nothing” I say.

“But this morning he went into the bathroom and when I checked up on him he was on the floor unconscious “ I say.

“That’s all” she asks.

I nod my head wiping my nose.

“Have you eaten anything” she asks.

“I just want to know if he’s okay that’s all” I say.

“I know but you need to eat something” she says.

Food is the last thing on my mind right now I need the doctor to come out and tell me what the hell is going on speaking of which she makes her way to us.

“How is my son doing” his father asks,

“We are still running test but it’s not looking good” the doctor says.

“What do you mean it’s not looking good” I ask standing up.

“And you are” she asks looking my way.

“She’s my brother’s girlfriend” Zibulo says.

“Very well” she says looking at Zibulos father.

“Sir has your son ever had any difficulties breathing” she asks.

“Yes but he grew out of it” his father says.

“Just tell us what’s wrong with my son” his mother says.

“I am afraid we don't know yet but he just slipped into a coma” she says.

His mother shakes her head falling into her husband’s arms.

“That’s impossible no one can slip into a coma just like that” Zibulo says.

“As I said we are still running tests” she says walking away.

I follow the doctor and catch her before she disappears.

“Can I please see him” I ask.

“He’s critical am afraid I can’t let you see him” she says.

“Just for a few minutes I am begging you” I say.

She leads to his room and the sight of him not being able to breathe on his own tears at me there is a tube going inside his mouth. I settle next to him and hold his hand kissing it.

“You can’t do this to me Qhawe” I say biting my lip tears falling,

I love him and if he doesn’t make then they might as well pronounce me dead.



“Please wake up your family needs you I need you” I say  
wiping my tears.

I brush the tears off his hand and sniff.

“After I lost Sbani I thought I was done for that life ceased with  
him but then you came along and found me please don't leave  
him I am begging you to fight whatever this is please” I say  
standing up to kiss his cheek.

“Ngiyakuthanda Nyambose” I say walking out.

## ZOBUHLE

I laid in my bed crying feeling like everything was just falling apart and there was nothing I could do, I still felt like shit and things with Qhawe were not improving he was still sleeping and slowly deteriorating and his family slowly falling his mother being the worst. I thought I was strong that I was brave and that I could withstand anything thrown my way but seeing Qhawe helpless and weak was breaking me and it was showing. The hospital called in specialist and they confirmed that they had never seen anything like that, his body cold yet he is still breathing which is unexplainable and very questionable his father said he would call in a traditional healer because something isn't adding up. I looked at my phone and I had a few missed calls from my parents and then Qhawe's mother also the Queen I switched it off and pulled the blankets.

"Sleeping won't change anything" philile said walking in.

"I want to be alone" I said.

“And being alone is going to solve what exactly” she asked settling next to me.

“I don't need your smart mouth philile” I said sitting up straight.

“Well then you need to eat something” she said.

“I don't want to eat I just want Qhawe back home” I said.

“I know you do but starving yourself won't help anyone” she said.

“Why won't he wake up huh why” I asked looking at her.

“I know it hurts but trust in God's timing” she said.

“He is pale and getting weaker by the day Philile he is slowly turning into a shadow of himself” I said.

“Everything is going to be okay” she said pulling me for a hug.

“Are you going past the hospital today” she asked.

I shook my head indicating that I wasn't.

I have been in that hospital for days with no change and today I just want to sleep and give his family some time to themselves they need more time with than I do, he is their son after all and I am just a girlfriend and nothing more I should stop behaving like I am married to the guy.

“Awusho Zobu did you tell him the truth about Mhlaba” she asked.

I shook my head feeling like the biggest liar and cheat to ever walk this earth here I am betraying this man's love all because I fear living without him, I fear him walking out on me and hating me for giving him hope only to snatch it away.

“Why” she asked sounding disappointed.

“I don't know anymore” I said truly.

Everytime I said I was going to tell him something got in the way, the way he looked at me and held me the way I fit perfectly in his arms and under him or the way he whispered how much he loves me when he thought I was asleep.

“This won't end Zobuhle and you know it playing these men like this” she said.

“You are un knowingly pitting them against each other I love you but withholding this from Qhawe is the same as killing him yourself” she said.

“I am going to leave him as soon as he wakes up I will tell him the truth and walk away” I said.

“I am sorry” she said wiping my tears.

Truth is Philile is more than a friend she is my sister one of those people who has my back.

“He’s going to hate me” I said.

“But he will still be alive and believe me hating you from the grave would be far worse” she said laughing.

Trust her to find humor in anything.

“I should have walked away” I said trying to laugh.

“And regret never trying Zobuhle that man came into your life for a reason and at the right moment this what you guys have is beautiful just complicated” she said shrugging her shoulder.

I looked at her and smiled crazy as she can be she speaks wisely and offers the best advise.

“Would you hate me if decided to end it all” I asked.

She looked at me for a while tears welling up in her eyes and she smiled.

“You have been through a lot with Mhlaba and you have talked like this so you will not start now” she said standing up.

With Mhlaba things were different even though he would inflict pain on my body I would still crave to see the next morning and see daylight because I knew something bigger than me awaited me behind those high walls, and now that I have found it letting it go is not an option going back to that hell hole is not option.

“I made breakfast you will find me in the kitchen” she said walking out.

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## QUEEN

I was starting to get worried Zobuhle wasn't answering my calls and her phone was off and this thing with the healer was also weighing heavily on me, I wasn't going to let an innocent young man die because of our mistakes and sacrifices the healer joined me and took a walk with me. I had told my husband that he was bringing me herbs to help me sleep which was partly true.

"Have you gotten through to her ndlovukazi" he asked.

"No" I said breathing heavily.

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26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">He looked at me and sighed I could tell he wasn't liking this one bit.

"I am afraid we are running out of time I can feel the young man's spirit" he said shaking his head.



“If you want to save this young men then we need to act fast and find Zobuhle and reverse what was done” he said nodding his head.

I shook my head maybe if we told Zobuhle the truth none of this would have happened, I remember the day Sbani brought her home we all knew she was the one and after he had paid lobola for her we had a ritual done and words were said her body was to be touched only and only by royalty. She wasn't not to give herself to any man other than her promised one and anyone who looked her way or went as far and to taste her warmth would die.

“And my son about him” I asked.

“We will deal with the prince once time comes but now let's focus on the Zobuhle” he said.

“Abaphansi bona” I asked.

“They will lead and show us the way all shall be revealed in time” he said.

“I shall arrange travelling arrangements and let you know” I said.

“Ndlovukazi” he said bowing then walking away.

I looked at my phone once again and sent Zobuhle a message this needs to be dealt with now before things get any worse and my hands are tied. I called one of the guards to take me to her parents house her mother is the only option I have left and she will need to come with us or so help us god.

Mrs Mthethwa

Babakhe brought in a traditional healer even though the hospital was against it but he managed to get him in so he could see Qhaw and tell us what is wrong with my son, the man looked older like he had been doing this for years. We closed the door behind him and started the process he burned some

incense and sprinkled water around the room he did some incantation and shook his head. He looked at us then at Qhawe his eyes widen I looked at Babakhe thinking of the worst what could be wrong with my baby is all kept asking myself. He shook his head and at down roaring.

“Hayi angizwa kahle” he said throwing the bones.

“Mthethwa,Dingiswayo, Nyambose, Magaga onsibansiba.

Mfolozi emnyama inketha baweli banawelayo bayayoqokelela, nina bakanhlamba kangicelani ngoba angiceli lutho lomuntu, wena okulugagane oluhlabangaphi ngoba phela lumhlaba ngale.

Thulisa kuyozwakal, nkonyane yenkosi, hlangalezwe, nina baka Xaba kaMadungu.

Izithandana neyakithi eyengweni, khubaze, jobe kakhali.

Magezang'bisio lwwnhlu abanye begeza ngamazni, Amabheka nkosi, Nzimezimnyama, Nina bakaGeza ka Jakada, Maphoswa kubusa, Nina basezansi, Mazila Mbolwane'

"Nina boZwide kaLanga , Mkhathwa, Ndwandwe , Somaphunga, Nkabanhle" he said calling out a different clan name.

I looked at babakhe and he wasn't sure just like me.

"What has he done what could be the matter" he asked.

I hugged myself because the room suddenly got cold.

"What is it what's wrong" babakhe asked.

The man roared one more time and collapsed he stayed like that for a few minutes and then opened his eyes.

"Your son's soul has been trapped" he said looking at us.

“What do you mean trapped why” babakhe asked.

“It is not clear but I can’t seem to reach him even his own ancestors cannot reach him” the man said looking at us.

“Are saying you can’t help him” I asked.

“I am afraid I can’t do anything at this moment western medicine will not help him at all I am sorry” he said standing up.

“Please tell us what we need to do to help him babakhe we can’t lose him I refuse” I said.

“If I intervene any further I will be struck lightning or worse let fate take its course” he said walking out.

“Powerful sources are at a play here Nyambose tread carefully” he said closing the door.

I looked at my husband and stood up to go to Qhawe’s side.

“Ngiyacela mfana wama vuka phela baba” I said holding his hand.

He didn’t move or do anything he just laid there emotionless I could feel my heart break my beautiful boy was is dying and there was nothing I could do.

I went down on my knees and closed my eyes.

“Jehova I come to as a child and mother in need, please save my son he doesn’t deserve any of this take away his pain and heal him let him wake to us we need him, okungenani thatha mina an spare my son” I said letting the tears fall.

“Please don't say that I can't lose you too” babakhe said holding me.

“Then what do we do babakhe huh watch him die no” I said shaking my head.

“Trust me I will get to the bottom of this and he will come back to us I promise” he said helping me up.

I nodded my head and held my son’s hand praying he makes it Zibulo might act strong but he won’t cope without his brother.

## ZOBUHLE

I went past the hospital yesterday to check up on Qhawe and things are still not looking good, the doctors even suggest that his parents look into switching off the machines and donate his organs despite smoking everything of his is still in the right order and he quite healthy. His mother refused and said it was too soon for such drastic decisions I for one agree with her just because the doctors have given up on him doesn't mean we have too. I haven't lost hope but a part of me feels like its slowly dying and there's nothing I can do. I had to ask his mother about the traditional healer they brought in and she broke down telling me he wasn't of any help I stayed with her at the hospital till we were told visiting hours were over Zibulo picked her up and I decided to stay behind. I was hoping to spend the night or at least convince one of the nurses to let me stay and I would leave in the morning but they refused understandably so I mean I have been here day and night hoping for something anything. I woke up to Philile shouting my name and that woke me up for a moment I thought she was in labour early labour that is but when I ran to the lounge the Queen, my mother and the royal traditional healer were

standing there in flash I had to blink thinking I was drunk on sleep and heartache but they it was them. Mama gave me a tight hug and that opened a huge flood gate of tears I couldn't hold myself. She pulled away and we sat down with Philile making a fresh pot of coffee.

“Ma nibekwa yini la” I asked.

She looked at the Queen then back at me clearing her throat.

“I don't want to alarm but we are not here for a social visit” she said looking at me.

“What do you mean mama” I asked.

“We are here to help you and Qhawe” she said breathing heavily.

“I don't understand mama there nothing you can do to help him” I said.



“But there is” the Queen said.

“Ma what is going on here” I asked.

She looked the Queen and sighed.

“You are the one who made Qhawe sick” the Queen said looking at me.

I smiled and broke into a laugh.

“I am the one making him sick how because I am not sick” I said.

“When you were introduced to us we performed a ritual that made any man who sleeps with you to get sick or die your body and soul are pure hence they had to belong to those of royalty and only them” the Queen said looking at the traditional healer.

“Ngisetshenziwe without my knowledge” I asked looking at my mother.

“ I only found out when the Queen came asking for my help”  
mama said

“I made him sick he is going to die because of me and its all your fault” I shouted standing up.

“Yehlisa umoya Zobuhle” mama said.

“How could you do this to me do you realise the hurt his family is going through what I am going through seeing him like that” I asked.

“I am so sorry zobuhle I thought I was doing the right thing” the Queen said standing up.

“The right thing by bewitching me and putting Qhawe’s life in danger I thought you cared about me” I said.

“Zo I care about you please understand at the time you were with Sbani but I am sorry” she said.

“Now he is going to die and I am the cause” I said.

“You can help him” the traditional said.

“I can” I asked.

“Yes the nxumalo ancestors want something and all of this will go away” he said clearing his throat.

“I will do anything” I said.

“Lengane oyethwele” he said looking at me straight in the eye.

“Ingane” I asked.

He nodded his head and sighed.

“The nxumalo’s want a life for a life and you are carrying it” he said.

“But I am not pregnant” I said shaking my head.

“I am afraid you and he is one pure and strong being” he said looking at me.

“To save the man you love then you need to give up that child” he said unfazed.

“Ngiyala” my mother said standing up.

“If she doesn’t do this then that boy will die” the traditional healer said.

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26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">I looked at my mother then the Queen and shook my head standing up I walked to my bedroom and changed into leggings and a hoody then took my bag.

“Uyaphi” mama asked when I walked past them headed for the door.

“Let her be Mambatha she needs time to digest everything” the Queen said.

I took a taxi and found myself at the doctors without an appointment and luckily he wasn't booked and only had walk in for the day, I waited till it was my turn and was ushered into his office he ran a few urine tests and then did an ultra sound it was quiet for a while and I didn't know how to feel but when the heartbeat came up my whole world stopped and only the heartbeat on the monitor mattered. I sobbed like a child and listened to my baby's heartbeat and started having difficulties breathing the doctor had to calm me down. I took a walk to the

park and watched kids playing and running around hugging my bell, a human being was being nurtured by my womb and I had to chose between keeping him or giving him up to save his father.

I don't how I made it out of the park and in to the taxi with my eyes all blurred up and teary the taxi dropped me off at Qhawe's home and luckily only his mother was home. I stood in their living room and swallowed hard what I was about to do would either have this woman throw me out or cuss at me till she was all out. I stood there my legs shaking and my hands trembling pilling up sweat in the worst possible way she made her back from the kitchen and looked at me.

"Hayi Zo why are you crying as if he is dead" she asked.

I shook my head and wiped my tears.

"Ma I need to tell you something" I said sniffing.

“Whatever it is we can fix it” she said putting her hand on my cheek.

I closed my eyes and breathed heavily.

“It has to do with Qhawe” I said biting my lower lip.

“Okay” she said calmly.

“I haven’t been honest with him or any of you about my past or where I come from” I said.

She offered me a chair but I refused sitting down would only make things worse.

“Zobuhle you are scarring me” she said.

“I am traditional married to someone from where I come from a place called emahlabathini and that person is a prince” I said raising my head.

“Ushadile Zobuhle” she said shocked.

“Yebo ma and the reason Qhawe is in the hospital is because of me” a slap landed on my face.

“You did this” she said fuming.

“I am sorry I didn’t mean for all to happen” I said trying to explain.

“Why Zobuhle” she asked tears welling up.

I looked at her and failed to give her the answers she needed explaining my situation would require time and strength and right now I had to make a choice to either save Qhawe or keep the baby the one thing he swore to never have.

“The only thing I did was fall in love with your son I didn’t mean to hurt him not like this” I said walking out.



.....

## ZOBUHLE

I didn't go home the pain that I was feeling was unexplainable and after I told Qhawe's mother half the truth a part of me knew she wouldn't let me see him apart from when the traditional healer would come and help him. And so I went to the hospital and asked to see him fortunately they allowed me I sat next to him and held his hand crying the happiest moment of my life walking hand in hand with the most heart breaking moment. If only I was forthcoming about my life gave him the chance to walk away maybe none of this would have happened.

"I am tired of saying sorry but it's the only thing I can say right now" I said brushing his hand.

“The only mistake I did was to fall for you and keep the truth from you, I am sorry that I lied and I am sorry that you are here because of me” I said letting the tears fall.

A moment came and I thought of how much I have been a cry baby lately and all because of this little man I am carrying.

“I wish things were different that I wasn’t me and that I wasn’t promised to a ruthless, selfish and monster of a man but the truth is I am and there is nothing I can do about it’ I said chuckling.

“What we had was beautiful none of this world and I will forever cherish it” I said smiling.

I held my stomach and breathed.

“You have given me the greatest gift and that is carrying your seed inside me” I said feeling this pang in my heart.

“I need to make a choice one that is best for the both of us and that is to walk away and never look back” the words came out but not with the pain and anguish.

“I never wanted to let you go but having in my life means more heartaches I love too much for that and which is why I am not going to let you die” I said.

I stood up and kissed his hand but my legs failed me and arse landed on the floor I wept for my unborn child and hugged myself how could they want my baby one I didn't even know about, will I ever be able to look Qhawe in the eye after this I shook my head and stood up.

“Usala kahle Nyambose” I said walking out.

## ZOBUHLE

Two days later and I stayed up at Qhawe's house and just cried till I was all out well that's what I thought until I had a dream where I was holding my baby in my arms and Qhawe stood there smiling watching us his eyes filled with love. But then a huge storm came and I was left all alone no child and no Qhawe my screams seemed not to calm the storm it only fuelled the wind and threw me back to the ground. I thought I was okay but I needed more time with my child to say goodbye as crazy as it may sound I wanted my son to feel his father and smell his strong scent and know the kind of man he is. I dressed in his clothes and wore his big boots and walked around the house and finally took a smoke for the first time in my life I took a smoke from one of the opens packs in his draw. I held my stomach and tried to bid farewell to my baby but I just couldn't. I fell asleep and only woke up when I smelled a home cooked meal I jumped out of the bed and headed to kitchen.

“Qhawe” I called out but it wasn’t him.

I stopped on my tracks when I saw his mother, my mother, the Queen and the traditional healer then Zibulo made his way in. I looked at them and shook my head it was happening this was it I was going to lose my baby. I had already asked them if there wasn’t any other way and they said there wasn’t. Qhawe’s mother called the traditional healer they had called at the hospital and he said the only way to free Qhawe’s soul from the Nxumalo’s hold would be to give a life for a life and to punish me I had to give something dear to me and in this case they chose my baby. Mama called Qhawe’s mother with Philile’s help and told her everything the woman came down hard on me for keeping all this to myself. But even if I told them the truth they wouldn’t have helped no one could even if I told Qhawe the truth about who I am I didn’t know about the ritual but fact remains I am a mess and so is my whole life.

“Its time” the Queen said looking at me.

“I will never forgive you” I said looking her way.

“I am sorry Zobuhle and I hope that one day you will forgive me  
“ she said.

“We need to start now” the traditional healer said.

“You royal people are sick twisted people” Zibulo standing up.

“Zibulo show some respect” his mother said looking at him.

“Ma these people don't deserve respect look at Zobuhle and  
look very carefully” he said pointing at me.

“She’s broken and its all because of them these people you  
claim deserve they be shown respect they have taken  
everything from her the man she love and her child fuck  
respect ma” he shouted.

“I hope you sleep at night knowing what you did” he  
continued.

“That’s enough Zibulo and I won’t say it again” his mother said.

“This is hard on all of us okay “she said.

“Ma you are not the one giving up your child and the worse thing about all of this is that you three are hiding all of this from your husband’s” he said shaking his head.

“And maybe this man is lying just to cause more pain in Zobuhle’s life I mean Qhawe has been holding on till now maybe there is something else that can be done” he said.

“Young man the only reason your brother has been holding on is because of the love he shares with Zobuhle it may not make sense right now but their souls are tied and the prince has been keeping his torch alight but he can’t fight his own kind hence we need to do this now” the man said looking at me.

“Your brother was not even supposed to touch her let alone share her bed and wake up the following day but her love saved and kept him alive till it couldn’t anymore” the man said.

“So in your eyes falling in love is a crime a sin worth punishable”  
Zibulo asked.

“I am just a messenger” the man said.

“I won’t be a part of this” Zibulo said attempting to walk out.

“You need to stay to represent your father” the traditional  
healer said.

He sat down and I was asked to go change into else, small  
incisions were made on waist and belly then the Queen said  
Nxumalo clan names and then Zibulo said the Mthethwa clan  
names. The traditional healer burned the incense and sprinkled  
water over Qhawe’s body that laid on the floor the room went  
from being cold to being warm and the thunder was heard  
followed by heavy rain.

“Siyabonga kini nina aningasekho” the traditional healer said  
clapping his hands and giving thanks.



I sat there tears streaming down and watched the man do things to Qhawe and chant his clan names till he collapsed and came about roaring.

“All is done and the Zwide’s are happy” he said looking my way.

“So how will we know it worked” my mother asked.

“She will know” the man said looking at me.

“And my son” Qhawe’s mother asked.

“Your son shall be fine when he wakes up please give him this” he said giving her a bottle of water.

“He must bath with this” he said standing up.

“May I have a word with Zobuhle” the man said looking at the Queen.

They all stood up and left us alone.

“I know this is hard and but you need to be strong this young man loves you and I have seen it all only you can end it” he said holding my hand.

“He will never forgive me” I said shaking my head.

“Trust in your love” he said standing up.

I sat next to Qhawe and took his hand placing it on my belly.

“I am pregnant and it’s a son our son” I said.

“Ungixolele Nyambose” I said shaking my head.

“Sekulungi sisi” his mother said comforting me.

“He can’t know about the baby ma it will kill him” I said.

She wiped her tears and nodded her head.

“We all agreed to take this to the grave he can never know” she said giving me a hug.

“I am sorry” she said breaking heavily.

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Philile

It has been two days since Zobuhle did the ritual and were told that Qhawe was coming along fine and showed signs of waking up I can't believe the Queen of all people did Zobuhle like this, I held my baby bump and sighed looking out the window she doesn't deserve any of this none of this is her fault people played with her life and took decisions on her behalf just because they thought it was best for her. I quickly stood up and rushed to her bedroom when I heard her scream I found her on the floor bleeding holding her stomach her mother rushed in followed by the Queen .

“Help me get her to the bath tub” her mother said looking at the Queen.

They helped her up and took her to the bathroom where she screamed and cried and all we could do was watch, her mother broke down and walked out followed by her majesty I held her hand till it was done her forehead dripping with sweat and her hands bloodied. Memories of our childhood flooded me she always wanted to be a mother and she always wanted to have more than just one.

“Ingane yam philile” she said holding her belly.

“Ngiyaxolisa” I said.

She shook her head and sobbed.

“Ngone bani mina” she said shaking her head.

I couldn't hold my tears my best friend was hurting falling apart I looked at her and saw the Zobuhle I know die she was being broken bit by bit.

“Thula thu thula mntwana thula sana thula umama uzobuya ekuseni thula mama uzbuya ekuseni” she sang while sobbing in between.

I listened and remembered this very song was sang by her later mother on the night she was taken to the hospital and never came back. She rocked herself back and forth silently humming her song having hiccups I wiped my tears and sat next her and let her be.

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Qhawe

I woke up to my mother sitting next to me holding my hand tightly I looked around and I wasn't in my house but I was home I swallowed hard and cleared my throat then closed my eyes. I tried to sit up but my mother held me down my whole body felt different like I had been hit by a truck and was asleep for the longest time.

"Careful" she said helping me up.

I breathed heavily trying to get myself in sink but it wasn't working something was wrong I rubbed my head hoping to recall what happened but my head seemed to hurt even more.

"Ma" I said looking around once more.

The door opened and my father walked in followed by Zibulo.

“Mkhulu” Zibulo said.

“Its good to have you have back” baba said giving me a hug.

“What happened” I asked.

They looked at each other then me.

“Did someone die” I asked.

“No but we almost lost you” baba said.

“Well then you didn’t “ I said laughing.

I looked at Zibulo and noticed that he wasn’t himself and that bothered me.

“Something wrong mkhulu” I asked.

He looked me and faked a smile shaking his head.

“Nothing we were just worried about you” he said.

I nodded my head and looked at my father.

“Baba what happened” I asked.

“You fell hit your head and have since been in a coma” he said.

“For how long” I asked.

“A few weeks” he said.

I nodded my head but suddenly closed my eyes when I felt this un explainable pain on my chest I struggled breathing and gasped the pain shoot through me.



“Breathe Qhawe” my mother said.

“I will call an ambulance” Zibulo said.

The pain stopped and my breathing stabilized I felt something overwhelm me and bring tears to my eyes, for the first time ever I couldn't tell or understand what I was feeling.

“Zo” I whispered it felt similar to when I found her looking at that dead man shaking and confused but this time it was intense like I had mourned someone or a part of me had died with me waking up.

“Mkhulu find Zobuhle for me something is wrong” I said.

“I will but not today I still have a lot to do” he said.

“Fine I will do it myself” I said attempting to stand but fell on my stomach.

My father tried to help me but I shrugged him off.

“Ngiyeke baba” I said trying to get up my chest heaving being weak didn’t sit well with me.

I managed to sit up and lean on the bed looking at Zibulo he was hiding something from me.

“I know you better than anyone else in this world and I know you’re keeping something from me” I said.

“Qhawe” my father called out.

“Let it not be true mkhulu” I said throwing my head back I was exhausted.

## ZOBUHLE

I haven't had a goodnight sleep after what happened although I was cleansed by the traditional healer and the doctors cleaned me up the guilt and pain of losing my baby still haunts me, I see him when I close my eyes and the thought of not seeing him grow hurts even more. I killed my own son to save his father I chose to give up my own son for a man would leave me the moment another best thing came his way. Mama and the Queen left so not to raise questions and that angered me more secrets after secrets and when my father called to check up me I had to pretend as if everything was okay even though all I wanted was to cry and tell him that I need him. Its only been a few days but it feels like all this happened in one day and I swooped away and thrown into the deep end with no one to pull me back. I stood up and attended to the door Sophie made her way in and gave me a hug.

“How are you feeling” she asked pulling away.

“I am okay’ I said clearing my throat.

“Philile told me about the passing of your aunt” she said settling down.

I looked at her and nodded my head another secret.

“I am sorry for missing work” I said trying to smile.

“Its okay just tell me what you need then I will help” she said smiling.

“I don't think I will come back to work “ I said shrugging my shoulders.

“Hayi Zobuhle please don't say that” she said shaking her head.

I thought for a while and shook head.

“I will always be grateful to you for giving me a chance and believing in me but this is for the best” I said.

“Fine stop cleaning and be my PA please” she said.

“Sophie” I said titling my head smiling.

“Please Zobu do this for me okay ngiyakucela” she said.

I nodded my head.

“I love you okay and trust me when I say everything is going to be okay” she said giving me a hug.

I stayed in her arms a bit longer and pulled away.

“I should leave but I will call to check up on you later okay” she said standing up.

I walked her to the door and we bumped into Philile coming in with Zenkosi they exchanged pleasantries with Sophie and made their way in while I walked her to the car. I took a huge deep breath before walking back inside I found the two of them on the couch with the food already taken out of the bags and put on the table I sat in between them and sighed looking on either side blinking.

“We come in peace” Zenkosi said.

I looked at Philile and she smiled taking my hand placing it on belly having head rest on her shoulder.

“How are you feeling today” Zenkosi asked.

“I don't know” I said.

She nodded her head and smiled.

“I once lost a child too and it was the most painful thing ever I didn't even know that I was expecting, I was kidnapped by a

person whom I considered to be a friend and he tortured me for days so I could repent my sins” she said laughing.

“He believed that Zibulo was the devil himself and to rid me off him I needed to be punished and repent at some point I believed him till I was found and taken to the hospital, my brother had a daughter and she was autistic and home schooled but I fought my family to have her admitted at a proper school. when I went missing she also went missing and was killed, the news of her death is what made me lose my baby in that short time I had lost my sanity and both my babies” she said wiping her tears.

“But you are still standing” Philile said in an admiring tone.

“I am but it took a while and I know it will take a while for you too but you will get there” she said holding my hand.

“I don't know much about your relationship with Qhawe but all I know is that he loves you and he needs you more than you will ever know” she said.

“She’s telling the truth kodwa Zo you can’t let your past ruin you like this” Philile said.

“I wish it was that simple but none of this is” I said sitting up straight.

“I just lost a part of me and right now nothing matters nothing” I said shaking my head.

“How about we eat and forget the rest” Philile said.

“I don't feel like eating I just want to sleep” I said standing up.

I went to bed and took a nap only to find myself waking up to my mother calling me, I opened my eyes and she was still beautiful as ever her hair black and beautiful she looked nothing like the time she went to the hospital. I looked around hoping to see my father but he wasn’t there and that broke my heart as angry as I am I still need to know why he did it weren’t Nqaba and I enough for him to pull though and keep living.



“Mama” I said feeling her warm hands on my cheek.

She smiled and her eyes started lighting up.

“Zobu” she said.

I touched her beautiful face and everything about her seemed to be real.

“Am I dreaming mama” I asked and she nodded.

“I don't want to wake up then I want to stay here forever” I said.

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26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">“You can't stay with me Zobu there is so much that you still need to do” she said smiling.

“Ma kunzima ” I said.

“I know it’s hard but you are strong and everything that is happening right now shall pass, I am sorry that I can’t be there when you need me or hold when you cry or tell you that everything is going to be okay. I am sorry that I left you guys but I couldn’t hold on anymore I tried nana but it was too sore” she said wiping my tears.

“life hasn’t been that kind but you are my daughter you come from a line of the most strongest women I know” she said.

“Don't let this world bully you and make you conform because you are more than that” she said lifting my head up.

“I will take care of him” she said.

“My son” I asked, she nodded her head and held my cheek..

“He’s beautiful just like you” she said closing her eyes.

I wiped my tears and smiled.

“I love you now always and forever” she said standing up.

“Ma please don't go stay a little longer” I begged.

She held me close and kissed my forehead.

“I will always be here looking over you” she said letting go.

I woke up to an empty room and the pain in my heart was still there aching more than before I held my chest and took death breaths shaking my head. I grabbed my phone and I had a few missed calls from Qhawe.

MHLABA

I looked at the man's profile and shook my head this is not just anyone he is the son of chief justice Mthethwa the man is known to be notorious feared and very much respected, I never thought I would ever come across the man or have any dealings with him I clenched my jaws and sighed. Whichever way I want to approach this matter I need to be cautious if I will get Zobuhle back then I need to find ways to neutralize this man killing him would mean a whole lot more people coming down on me and his brother Zibulo wouldn't hesitate killing me.

"He's not just anyone" Zondi said settling down.

"I know" I said.

"Zondi what is it that I am doing wrong" I asked.

"She's my wife surely I have every right to her" I said looking at him.

"I will never understand women or how their minds work" he said standing up.

I cleared my throat and closed the file.

“Did you find her new numbers” I asked.

“At the back of the file” he said walking out.

I looked at the numbers and dialed them it took a while for her to pick up but she did.

“Mambatha” I said.

She kept quiet and just sniffed.

“Please don't hang up” I said.

“Zwide” she said softly.

Her voice was different strained and somehow sounded as if she had been crying.

“What’s wrong” I asked.

“Ufunani Zwide” she asked.

“I am tired of chasing you Zobu” I said standing up to face the window.

“You can’t force me to love you Zwide how many will I have to tell you that” she said.

“I just want you to give us a chance that’s all I am asking” I said.

“A chance won’t do anything love is not something you can force I don't love you and I never will” she said adamant.

I closed my eyes and breathed out I thought this was going to be easy that giving her time would soften her up.

“I don't want to hurt those kids Zobuhle nor do I want to kill his mother don't make” I said pouring myself a drink.

“There he is the Mhlaba I know who doesn't care who gets hurts as long as he gets everything he wants” she said.

“I will be there in the next few coming days” I said.

He kept quiet but I could hear her breathe on the other end.

“Its time you played your role as my wife Zobuhle and that's final” I said.

“May God forgive you because I know I won't” she said hanging up.

My hand tightened around the glass I was holding I don't understand why she has to be difficult my father paid her bride price in full and her family slaughtered for us.

## QHAWWE

I noticed a lot of things when I woke up that my family could find it easy to look me in the eye and lie straight to my face my brother and father sure I understand but my mother that baffled me. I wanted to go back to my house but my father asked if I could stay a bit longer to make sure that I am okay I stayed because I hated have to argue with them, I had asked Zibulo to look for Zobuhle but he came back empty handed and made up excuses about Zobu not wanting to see me. I let that slide I mean the guy is my older brother and he wouldn't make a fool of me but something told me otherwise, I asked them what happened but all I got was that I fell and landed up in the hospital I don't remember being there but apparently I was released a few days after I opened my eyes. To me all that sounds like crap and what is so bad that I did to Zobuhle that she won't see me or check if I am okay, I made my way to the kitchen and found my mother running around trying to fix me something to eat. I cleared my throat and she turned her back to look at me and smiled.



“I didn’t know you were awake” she said looking at me.

“I was on my way out” I said heading for the door.

“kahle Qhawe uyaphi” she asked.

“I have business to take care off” I said heading for the door.

“What business is that” my father asked.

I turned and looked at him.

“Sawbona baba” I said.

“What business is that Qhawe” he asked.

“ I have a club that needs running, businesses that need to be run and finally shipment that needs to moved” I said looking at him.

“You are not strong enough to be walking around” he said.

“With all due respect baba I am not a child and I sure won’t be treated like one” I said grabbing my keys.

“You are going to her house angithi” he said.

“She doesn’t want to see you qhawe stay away from her” he said.

“You know baba if I didn’t know better I would say you are all hiding something from me” I said chuckling

He looked at my mother then me I nodded my head.

“I will ask Zakhele to come fetch my clothes if there’s anything I hate is lies and you know this baba” I said reaching for my cap and shook my head, I left the house and headed for the club first.

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## ZOBUHLE

I barely slept after the call I got from Mhlaba he threatened me and used the people I care about I can't imagine Zenkosi losing her girls or Qhawe having to lose another child, he loves those kids with all his heart and his mother is his whole world I would never forgive myself if anything happened to the Mthethwa family. I closed my eyes and looked at my wardrobe nothing said PA and that really stressed me out I looked at Qhawe's credit card and thought about asking Philile to take it back to him. He gave it to me after he tore my new lingerie and said I should go wild. I miss him although it's hard to admit but I really miss him it hurts this is not like the time I ran and went home this time I am losing him. I stumbled upon the baby scan and tears welled up I ran my fingers on it and closed my eyes.

"I am sorry" I said softly.

I stood up when I heard the door and went to get it.

“Who is it” I asked.

“Yimina ubab’ khumalo” he said.

I quickly opened the door and there he stood but when he moved over Qhawe appeared from the side my heart almost stopped.

“Ungixolele ndondakazi” he said looking at me.

I had told everyone at the gate not to let him in even bab khumalo knew this.

“Thank sir” Qhawe said looking at bab’ khumalo.

He walked away and left us standing by the door I couldn't look him in the eye the pain, guilt and anger had consumed me so bad tears welled up even more, he was wearing black jeans, a black t-shirt and boots with a cap and a jacket his beard seemed to have grown more over the past few days and he looked okay.

"May I come in" he asked.

I hesitated but thought of Mhlaba's call and moved out of the way letting him in.

He walked in leaving trails of his scent along the way I closed my eyes and found myself floating in it, it smelled familiar like home and I needed to be there just one more time. I closed the door behind me and turned to look at him all tall and handsome you wouldn't say he was lying emotionless close to death a few weeks ago. I pushed all that to the back of my brain and looked to the floor, I could feel his eyes on me till I moved to the kitchen and stood close to the window.

“Sthandwa sam” he said softly.

“Qhawe” I said still looking out the window.

He moved closer and held me but I stepped back his touch was awakening things I didn't want to feel, it reminded me just how much I needed it when I lost our baby I held my stomach and thought about the biggest sacrifice I have made .

“I thought I told Zibulo that I don't want to see you” I told him.

“Why” he asked.

“Because what we have is over” I said shrugging my shoulders.

He chuckled mockingly.

“Say that to my face” he said.

I turned but didn't have the courage to look at him.

"Look at me Zobuhle and tell me that to my face" he said.

"If you want to end things for whatever crazy reason then look me in the eye and tell me" he shouted.

"Kuphelile Qhawe I don't want to ever see you again" I said looking at him.

"What" he asked.

"Its over" I said looking at him.

I looked at his hands and they were trembling his eyes were searching me searching for my truth but I couldn't afford him that.

“Why” he asked shocked.

“Because I don't love you anymore” I said blinking my tears away.

“What changed huh what” he asked shaking me.

“Nothing changed I just don't love you anymore I don't think I ever did” I shouted that hurt him his eyes flinched I could see the doubt in his eyes.

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He didn't take off his hands me but tightened his hold on my arms.

“Who is he” he asked still holding me.

“You are hurting me Qhawe” I said.



“I said who is he dammit” he asked.

“There is no one I just don't love you anymore and there's nothing you can do to change that please leave before I call the police” I said.

Tears fell down his face and he let go of my arms stepping back.

“What happened Zo we were fine” he said.

“Leave” I said pointing to the door.

“Just like that you are giving up on us without a valid reason” he said.

“Not loving you should be enough now please leave” I said.

He looked at me bite his lips and nodded his head reaching in his pockets, he took out a ring box and showed it to me.

“Ngenze njani ngalokhu” he asked showing me the most beautiful ring I had ever seen.

He wants me to be his wife.

I shook my head and looked at his hands this wasn't supposed to happen no rings were supposed to pop up.

“Qhawe please” I said.

“Tell me what to do with it and I will” he said not moving his eyes from me.

He nodded his head to my silence and placed the ring on the table.

“Keep it because this is what you're walking away from” he said.

“I am sorry “I said.

“And I am sorry that I love you still” he said heading for the door.

I wanted to scream and run towards the door but I didn't I watched him leave heartbroken as he was and closed the door behind him only to put a hand over my mouth and sob.

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QHAWE

I sat in at the loft the lights turned off with a glass or Irish whisky on my hand listening to this one song Kayise sent me and said she loved and it brought tears to her eyes, I closed my eyes and gulped down the glass and ended up pouring a full glass it no longer matter. My mind drifted to what happened earlier today she looked at me and told me she doesn't love me, she looked at me like I never meant anything to her that

the love we shared was a lie she looked angry and hurt but her eyes were cold as ice I couldn't read her. I ran my hand down my beard and shut my eyes thinking about where could have gone wrong.

Turn down the lights

Turn down the bed

Turn down these voices inside my head

Lay down with me

Tell me no lies

Just hold me close, don't patronize don't patronize me

Cause I can't make you love me if you don't

You can't make your heart feel something it wont

Here in the dark in these final hours

I will lay down my heart and I'll feel the power

But you wont, no you wont

Cause I can't make you love me if you don't

I'll close my eyes, then I won't see

The love you don't feel when holding me

Morning will come and I'll do what's right

Just give me till then to give up this fight

And I will give this fight.

Cause I can't make you love me if you don't

You can't make your heart feel something it won't

Here in the dark in these final hours

I will lay down my heart and I'll feel the power

But you won't, no you won't

Cause I can't make you love me.

“ Tell me what's wrong I could see it in your eyes that you're hurting tell me the cause and I will make it go away, I will kiss it better if that is what's needed but don't tell me that you don't

love me because that's a lie we both know. Waking up something felt strange like I had lost a part of me nothing makes sense right now everything is a mess only you make sense I love you" I texted.

I waited for her response but nothing came through.

"I will find out the truth one way or the other and you will tell me" I sent another text hoping she would talk.

"If its another man I will kill him better bury him alive so he can learn to stay away people's things" I sent another one.

Dammit Zobuhle I cussed when I realised nothing was working.

"By this time I was hoping you would be carrying and nurturing my seed but I guess things don't always work out the way we want them too, I don't know what's happening it's like I slept one day and woke up to a completely different world with you not in it. I won't lie it hurts but I can't make you love me Zobuhle that's not who I am" I sent the last one

## ZOBUHLE

Mhlaba stood in front of me with Zondi by his side for a moment I thought I would pee on myself but he assured me that he wouldn't hurt me but he was here to take me home. I packed up all my clothes and Philile walked in to help me she wasn't happy but I told her that everything would be fine. I would be fine and part of my rent would always be taken care of truth is money was never the issue in the first place. Being tied to the royal family meant having access to money but Mhlaba's money came with terms and conditions hence I could never take it. I remember when Mhlaba told me to leave school I refused and said I would die before I left my dreams behind but that night he beat me up till I couldn't speak and only my body could do the talking. He held me by my throat and asked me one more time.

“Uzowuyeka lomsango wokuba wudokotela” he asked, Sbani was paying for my tuition but when he died Mhlaba wouldn't have me go to school hell would freeze before he did that .



I nodded my head and he spared me from any further beatings.

I snapped out of my thoughts and looked at Philile folding my clothes.

“You are really doing this” she asked.

I nodded my head and smiled.

“He is going to kill you one day you know that” she said.

I thought for a while sure he would kill me but not if I kill him first.

“I have called you all the names I could think of including stupid but that doesn't seem to unsettle you” she said looking confused.

“I am my mother's daughter Philile and I am doing this because I love Qhawe more than anything” I said.

“You love him yet you are going to walk out of that door with that man” she said.

“I am going to walk out with that man because with me by his side he would never go after Qhawe or his family, I am doing this because I care about Qhawe and I wouldn't want to see him hurt because of me again” I said.

“And pushing him away is best” she asked.

I looked at her and smiled.

“You know I have cussed myself questioned my sanity and even love for him asking if all this is worth it and yes it is loving him from a distance is better than loving him from the grave” I said.

“Its fine I understand you are not my issues so its easy to judge and tell me to tell the truth but what good will that do huh because I know war will come and I will lose those dear to me,

Philile who is to say that I won't make him sick again huh who is to say that by being with him this time I won't kill him" I asked.

"Don't say that" she said holding my hand.

"I am tied to this people whether I like it or not" I told her.

"These people are selfish and they are only looking out for their son" she told me.

"And I am looking out for my family do you think I am doing all this because I love Mhlaba I hate him but he has the power that I don't have and he has hurt my family so many times over the years I can't put them through that anymore" I said.

"He really did torment them" she said.

I thought about my father and shook my head that went suffered because of Mhlaba.

“And I am afraid that if I keep pushing him he will retaliate and do worse” I said.

“I will always be here” she said

“And I will always be here for you and the baby” I said placing my hand on his belly.

I looked around my bedroom and sighed so much went down in these four walls although the last memory will haunt me till I die this was my home for the longest time.

“I will treat you like the queen that you are” Mhlaba said holding my hand.

I looked at him and smiled.

“And I will be the Queen that you deserve Zwide” I said looking at him.

“You are not fighting me” he said shocked.

I thought about my child and the things he put me through.

“How can I fight a man who loves me more than anything in this world” I asked smiling.

He looked at Zondi then me.

“Are you mocking me Mambatha” he asked.

“I could never mock my husband or would I Zondi” I asked looking at his right hand man.

“She knows better than to do that” Zondi said looking at Mhlaba.

“You wanted a wife here I am as you threatened and I will obey you like any slave would a master” I said heading towards the door.

“Zondi please bring my bags” I said.

If he wants a wife then wife is what he will get

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ZIBULO

I had a talk with my father we decided that its best we tell Qhawe the truth he hasn't been okay since his breakup with Zobuhle, he hardly sleeps and I fear he might just go back to the life he had right after he lost Zano and Thando a life where he would end up with a lot of bodies to his name. I asked me him to join me for a sparring session and he agreed I wanted to talk to him but I needed to do it cautiously.

“Easy on that” I said watching him gulp down a glass.

“I need something to calm me down” he said stretching.

“I wanted us to talk” I said getting inside the ring, he joined me and just nodded his head.

“I thought this was a sparring session nothing more” he said throwing the first punch but I ducked.

“I know but I also thought that maybe we could talk” I said landing punch on his face.

He held his jaw and smiled.

“Okay talk” he said throwing another punch but I moved out of the way.

He didn't seem interested he wasn't putting much effort into this session.

“Its about Zobuhle” I said and just then a hard punch landed on my face followed by two blows on my gut, I fell on my knees

and another punch landed on my face. I held his legs and brought him down but he used that position to punch my rib sides I pulled away and went back to my corner.

“What irks me the most is that you are my brother and you always told me that family looks out for each other” he shouted taking off his gloves.

“You don't want to do this” I said.

“Oh but I do” he said with a smirk on his face.

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I wiped my mouth and stood up this was going to be hard.

Qhawe was once in the military and he speacialised in firearms and assassination.



He charged towards me but I locked in his arm and punched him in the face still having his arm locked I delivered hard blows to his gut then focused on the face, he managed to get out of my hold and kneed me on my rib cage he then held head and kneed me on the face showing no mercy. I retreated and backed off blood coming out of my nose while it did the same on his face.

“If Zenkosi was messing around I would tell you” he shouted spitting out blood.

“I am sorry okay I thought I was protecting you” I said breathing heavily.

“Protect me” I think that angered him more because he pinned to the floor and started throwing punches this is how he gets when is angry. I pushed his off got on top of him throwing a few punches of my own.

“Ngimdala Qhawe” I said holding him down my arm lodged on his throat.

He chuckled and turned things around.

“Futhi ngiyakuhlonipha Mkhulu” he said putting me in a sleeping position tightening his hold around my neck.

“She’s not cheating on you but she’s married or was” I said feeling all the wrong blood rush to my brain he wasn’t letting go.

I used my hand to tap on his arms and tried elbowing him but he was not giving in.

“That’s a lie she’s not” he said.

“That’s enough” my father said.

“I swear I am telling you the truth” I said closing my eyes struggling to breathe.

“I said that’s enough Qhawe” baba said.

He slowly released me from his hold allowing me to breathe.

Baba got in the ring and looked at Qhawe.

“Uzongishaya nami because I knew the truth and kept it from you” he asked.

“I am talking to you answer me boy” he asked.

“We did what we did to avoid you becoming this” he said pointing at him.

“You had no right to keep anything from me” Qhawe said fuming.

“I am your father I have lived and I know best” he said.

“Help your brother up so we can talk” he said walking away.

I looked at him and he was still angry fuming seeking answers, he helped me up and we walked to the study he gave me a towel to clean myself up and put ice on his jaw still looking at me. This is exactly what I didn't want to happen he retaliates he never does anything in half measures he deals with things in his own way. If he believed that Zibuhle was two timing him then she and her lover would be cold as ice right now. I know he loves her hence we wanted to keep quiet but after I heard he wasn't coping and going at everyone and everything I had to come.

"Your mother wants you home and non negotiable I will not have my wife worry because of" baba said looking at Qhawe.

I looked at him tapping his fingers waiting for us to talk.

"Do you know a man by the name Mhlabuyazonda Nxumalo" baba asked.

"Should I know him" Qhawe asked.

“Yes you should because you have been bedding his wife” baba said.

“Baba please” I said.

“I don't go around bedding people's wives you taught me better than that” Qhawe said.

He looked at and I cleared my throat.

“When you asked me to look into Zobuhle I found out that she was married to Mhlaba's younger brother they are the Nxumalo prince but unfortunately Sbani the younger prince died and left Zobuhle behind. Traditional it was decided that the older prince being Mhlaba should take over his brother's duties and marry Zobuhle making her his wife kwathiwa ukam'ngene” I said looking at his whole face tighten.

“She didn't want to marry this guy and went as far as trying to return his dowry but things got messed up her brother was

accused and arrested for killing the young prince and her family lost everything the little her father gave the royal family they refused” I said.

He looked defeated and breathed out heavily.

“So this is not really her husband” Qhawe said.

“Qhawe focus he’s a prince a very dangerous one at that” baba said.

“The man is obsessed with her and its nothing I have seen before it’s a deadly one” I said looking at Qhawe.

“How so” he asked looking at me.

“He’s a monster has beaten her up so many times just to hear her say she loves him but she managed to get away ” I said.

He shut his eyes and ran his hands over his head he hearing that tore him I could tell he is my brother after all.

I got chills when I read that file there is no bone that girl hasn't broken in her body.

"And you kept this from me my own brother what happens if he kills her huh what then" he asked.

"If he is that much of a monster then why keep this from me" he asked.

"Because you would have wanted to kill him and but it's not that simple so much is at stake trust me Mkhulu if things were that easy or simple she would have told you herself" I told him.

He looked at me and stood up.

"I am still going to kill him but first I need to deal with Zobuhle" he said.

I shook my head because he meant these words.

"If you hurt her then you will have me to deal with" baba said looking at him.

“A prince you say” he asked looking at me with a smile on his face.

“I have never dealt with a prince before” he said scoffing then laughing, I know this look he won’t let this go.

“Qhawe” baba said standing up.

“Khehla el’dala” he said smiling.

“I will get that boy out prison something doesn’t add up here” baba said looking at us.

“Whatever happens you are my sons and I love you this is war so please try not to kill each other and kill the enemy instead” he said helping me up.

I nodded my head if he can get like his over us omitting this then what more of the baby I felt bad about not telling everything but this is for the best.



## ZOBUHLE

I never thought I would say this but this was on hellish of a month living with Mhlaba not knowing when he will explode or when he will ask me questions I have no answers too, for the first time I wasn't sure about myself or where I was headed everything seemed but being able to see my family has made it all worth it. I might still be his prisoner but I have stopped running away which is much better, speaking of my husband he hasn't asked to share my bed not that it bothers me but I am afraid of his reaction should he find out that I am no longer a virgin. He sleeps in the next room to mine and always checks up on me every morning and before I sleep, I play my wife duties very well the truth is I have learned to respect him that way he never questions me or hits me. I looked at him make his way in the living room and came to give me a kiss on the cheek.

“Myeni wam” I said smiling.

“Mambatha” he said smiling and for a moment I thought if only he could stay like that things would be better.

“I will be out for the day” he said looking at Zondi.

“Should I prepare the car” Zondi asked.

“No you will stay with Zobuhle we don't want her doing something we wouldn't do now would we Zondi” he said looking at me.

“If I didn't know better I would say my husband doesn't trust me and fears leaving me alone” I said standing up.

“I love you too much to have bored all alone all day” he said smiling.

“Is this a meeting that you are going to” I asked.

“Something like that” he said.

I nodded my head Mhlaba knowing Mhlaba this meeting is probably another one of his many women, he walked with Zondi and just as I was about to clear the table Zondi walked in.

“Why do you keep working for him Zondi” I asked turning to look at him.

“And why are you here instead of being with him” he said looking my way.

“Him” I asked.

“The man you love” he said.

I looked around my eyes widened.

“It’s just the two of us” he said shrugging his shoulders.

“Something’s are better left unsaid Zondi but still you haven’t answered my question” I said.

“Who do you think kept him away for long huh? He asked

I looked at him narrowing my eyes.

“We all have to make sacrifices” He said attempting to walk away.

I held his arm.

“Who killed him” I asked.

He shook his hand and removed my hand from his arm.

“Let sleeping gods lie Zobuhle its all in the past” he said.

“Maybe for you but not for me whoever killed him made sure he died like an animal” I shouted.

“Your brother killed him” he said.

I raised my hand and slapped him.

“That’s a lie and you know it” I said fuming.

His chest started heaving and shook his head.

“You have changed Zondi so much that you are starting to sound like him” I said walking away.

I headed to the kitchen and held my phone this is one of those days where I just want to hear his voice nothing more, I put my phone on private and dialed Qhawe,s numbers I always do this when I feel like the walls are closing in on me.

“Hello” he said on the other end.

I held my breath heard the girls calling him.

“Anikahle umsindo nina” he said shouting.

“Hello whoever this is I don't have time to play” he said.

I breathed and just had blink.

“Sthandwa sam is that you” he asked.

I smiled and breathed again.

He went quiet for a while and only our breathing could be heard and the longing could be felt.

“Oh I miss you so much” he said chuckling.

“I know it's hard but I will come for you okay” he said.

“I love you” he said.

I ended the call and sunk to the floor holding on to my phone.

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QHAWE

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My father managed to get Muzi out of prison without raising any questions or having to alert his family the process was a smooth one because his murder case wasn't that complicated and some of the evidence was circumstantial. We haven't alerted his family and I haven't seen Zobuhle in over a month knowing that she's with that man kills me but I had to wait till her brother was out so we could find out more about Mhlaba. He came back from his run took a shower and joined me outside.

“Good run” I asked.

“Something like that” he said smiling.

“Saw anything interesting” I asked .

He nodded his head and chuckled.

“All the good things that make a man’s blood boil” he said.

“There is something about being free and chasing the wind” he said looking sounding happy.

“Did you do it” I asked.

“He was like a brother to me and he was with my sister I could never kill him” he said.



“Then what happened” I asked lighting a smoke.

“I remember it like it was yesterday we had spent the day together and we stayed around the fire till he asked me to accompany him home, I walked him home but he asked me to go back because he didn’t want to keep me something felt strange that day he couldn’t stop holding Zobuhle and telling her how much he loved her. Now that I think of it he was saying goodbye in a way” he said shaking his head.

“On his way home he was killed more like butchered” he said standing up.

“And where do you fit in all this” I asked.

“His bloodied t-shirt was found in my room and my boots were stained with his blood and the knife was mine” he said running his hands over his head.

I looked at him and could tell he was genuine and gutted by all this.

“Mhlaba has always hated his brother he envied him and things got worse when sbani started seeing Zobuhle he became different and his heart hardened, rumors said that he sacrificed his brother for more power and to make sure he sat on the throne” he said.

“So you believed he killed his own brother” I asked.

He nodded his head and that mad think no matter how angry I can get killing never be an option.

“We are not dealing with a man here but an animal” he said.

“If you are going after him then you must be prepared”

“I have to make sure your sister is safe first” I said.

“Then prepare for war because he won,t let her go” he said looking at me.

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MHLABA

I don't know how to describe what it feels like to live under the same roof as Zobuhle waking up to her humming and having to eat her delicious home cooked meals has made the happiest man ever, I dreamt of days like this watching her sleep being able to hold her and kiss her knowing that she is mine. She's a bit stubborn that can be dealt with in more ways than one , I don't know what she saw in my brother because between me and him I had everything she could ever want I shook my head thinking about her recent conquest being one of the Mthethwa brother's .

“You have been awfully quiet today” she said sitting ontop of me unbuckling my belt

I had asked Zondi to look into the man's life and this gorgeous lady turned out to be a great ally.

"How are things on your side" I asked shutting my eye when her hands reached my cock.

I had to make an urgent trip here just as Zobuhle suggested visiting her parents

"I can't do much he is still hung up on that bitch but I have a feeling he is slowly coming around" she said.

"Watch your tongue" I said tightly wrapping my hand around her neck.

"Talk about her in that manner again and it will be last thing you say I will cut out your tongue and feed it to the dogs" I said letting her go.

She got up gasping for air.

“What is it with her that drives you man crazy” she asked.

“Something you don't have and will never understand Nontle” I said making myself decent.

I stood up and made my way to her till her back was against the wall I lowered my head and kissed her.

“I didn't come here to waste time and for you to insult my wife, I need you to start using your God given talents and make that man succumb to you and only you uyangizwa” I said.

She nodded her head.

“Good I don't care how you do it but he better call your name at daylight and whisper your name at night that way we both get what we want” I said.

“Qhawe will soon forget about that wife of yours and besides once she learns about me and him she will want nothing to do with him” she said smiling.

“What does he have that you won’t stay away and are willing to such lengths to have him” I asked

She smiled looked me in the eye.

“What you should be asking yourself is what is it that you lack so much that your wife has to go looking for it in other men” she asked.

I held myself from strangling her to death.

“Have his child and all of this will go away you will have everything you want and be the mighty Qhawe’s wife” I said pulling her close.

“Leave everything to me by the time I am done with him he will begging me to marry him” she said.

I thought for a while and concluded this trip would not be in vain at all

MHLABA

Its been weeks since I have been here and I decided to extend my leave and pay Qhawe a visit I don't know what possessed me but I found myself walking into his club asking to see him, they led me to a private area and that where I found him with his brother and two more other men they were smoking cigars and drinking from the finest bottles. For a moment I was impressed almost said the words myself but I held my tongue and looked at him he attempted standing up but his brother held him down. He shook his head and tightened his face looking at him.

“I have that effect on most people” I said settling down.

He chuckled and looked at his brother then the men next to him.

“Mhlaba Nxumal o” I said still looking at him.

“Is that supposed to mean anything” He asked raising his eyebrow.

He reminded me of man named Ragnar from the Vikings confident, arrogant, and not of this world a true enigma.

“kahle Mkhulu” his brother said tilting his head.

“Very well” Qhawe said raising up his hands.

“Qhawe Mthethwa, Zibulo Mthethwa, Mncedisi Buthelezi and this is Ngwane” he said proudly introducing everyone.

“How can I help” he asked looking at me.

“Mkhulu you sound like one of those call center people” Ngwane said.



“And here I was thinking you know nothing about those people” Qhawe said laughing.

They all erupted into laughter but Qhawe stopped and looked at me titling his head.

“You must have a death wish or something” he said looking at me.

“Forgive me for coming by unannounced I was in the area and decided to see the other man” I said.

he chuckled.

“I was going to warn him but you asked for it” Mncedisi said shrugging his shoulders.

“You mean the man she loves” he said.

I clenched my jaw and stood up.

“What you should be saying is thank you that a man like me is standing in front of you and for some reason you are not dead for even looking at my wife” I said.

He looked at his brother and chuckled nodding his head.

“I should be thankful” he asked placing a hand on his chest as if I had offended him.

“Niyangiziswa madoda” he said looking around then turning to look at me.

“A man like you should be thankful that a man like me didn’t plant his seed inside her” he said smiling.

I felt the walls closing Zobuhle was no longer a virgin he slept with her and has the audacity to throw that in my face.

“Usuyangamatshe manje Mkhulu” Ngwane said.

I quickly masked the pain and anger and looked at him.

“Not only have you disrespected me but the whole Zwide clan and I swear you will pay dearly” I said.

“When going to war with an enemy make sure you dig up not one but two graves because I am coming for you” he said in a warning tone.

“Mark this day make sure you remember it and every word because it will haunt you for the rest of your life” I said walking out.

I got to my car and made plans to home Zobuhle messed up she has pushed my buttons and there's no going back I can't let this go unpunished.

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## ZOBUHLE

Things were going well I was alone in the house with so much room to do everything I wanted, Mhlaba left and somehow he had to extend his trip which was great for me him being away gave me time to think and get used to the idea of having him as my husband. Zondi kept his distance and would only come when he needed to check up on me or report to his boss. I looked at the time and it had passed on so fast I grabbed my phone and realised that I today I didn't call Qhawe, I attempted but stopped just when I was about to press call. I shook my head and deeply sighed I can't keep calling him like this I can't keep doing this to him or me it's not fair. I placed the phone away and took a long shower that left me relaxed I put on my silky peach night gown Qhawe loved it every time I wore it he would worship and praise me body I smiled just thinking about him. I smeared some lavender lotion on my hands before heading out to make myself some warm milk the huge part missing Philile just had to have a glass of milk with cinnamon. I turned on the stove placed the pot and poured some milk followed some cinnamon sticks. I walked closer to the fridge and took out the cake I baked.

“Don't you dare Zondi” I heard Mhlaba’s voice outside.

I drop the knife and scrambled for it but I ended up cutting myself, he wouldn't be angry at me I didn't do anything he was away surely I am not the one who made him angry. I tried acting normal but my heart stopped when he called out my name.

“Zobuhle Nxumalo” he shouted barging in followed by Zondi.

“Zwide don't do something you will regret” Zondi said pleading with him.

“Phuma Zondi” he barked.

“I said get the hell out of my house” he said.

Zondi walked out leaving the door open.

I looked at the knife as he made his way to me but he reached for it before I could and pushed it away. I ran around the table and that seemed to anger him even more.

“You slept with him” he roared.

I blinked only a few people know about my sexual encounter with Qhawe.

“I am going to kill you” he said charging towards me.

Even if I lied he wouldn't believe him I can see it in his eyes.

I ran for the door and he ran after me he caught up and fell to the ground.

“Mhlaba please” I cried.

The guards watched by and carried on with their business.

“You will know who I am” he said dragging me by my hair.

I could feel the concrete eat away at my flesh, he closed the door behind him and came back to put his foot on my throat he stomped on my face and the most painful feeling came from my nose. He started beating and kicking me till I coughed out blood.

“Did you sleep with him” he asked.

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I tried opening my eyes but my vision was blurry.

“Did you sleep with him Zobuhle did you give yourself to that man” he asked kicking me on my rib cage.

I crawled trying to get away from him but he stepped on me and pulled me by my hair.

“You won’t even deny it” he whispered.

I figured if I die today is the day.

“No you know why because he is more of a man than you will ever be what we shared was beautiful something you will never know and I want you to know I gave myself to him willingly because I love him” I said spiting on his face.

“If that’s how you want to play it then fine I will show you a real man” he said dragging me to his bedroom and threw me on his bed.

He shut the door and unbuckled his belt.

“I am your husband and I am taking what is mine” he said.

“No” I said shaking my head.



He came closer but I managed to find the floor and threw everything that I could find at him he kept at it till he got hold on me and grabbed my neck.

“Zwide please I promise I will behave” I begged but my cries fell on deaf ears he pinned me down lifting up my night gown..

“No..no.” I said

“Please don't do this” I said trying to push him off but he was much stronger resilient and angry.

He roughly parted my legs and got in between pulling down his pants.

I closed my eyes tears trickling when he pushed in his cock inside me, he put his hand on my neck while he humped and pumped hurting me.

“You’re hurting me please stop” he moved his hand from my neck and placed it over my mouth.

He roughly went in out tearing me.

“Please stop” I begged.

“Was it nice spreading you legs for him huh” he asked going harder and deeper my cries started to come out as a whimper.

I felt the pain the hurt and disgust cloud my brain I cried begging him to stop but he didn't, he went on and on till I couldn't feel anything and everything became numb.

“That's enough can't you see” I heard Zondi's voice bringing me back.

I realised I had passed out during this horrible ordeal I could feel and hear him grunting and groaning on top of me, I shrieked and cried at the feel of him still being inside me.

“You monster” I said upon realizing he never stopped even though I was out of it he continued to rape me. He pulled out and roughly shoved his cock inside my rear end. I have never felt such pain but because of him I did and it unbearable I could feel everything inside me twist and turn.

“This will teach you how to keep your legs closed” he said groaning.

I stopped fighting and begging him till he was finished he stood up looked at me.

“Run to him let’s see if he will still want you as damaged as you are he loves you right” he said walked away.

I curled up and there was blood everywhere the door opened and Zondi walked in he rushed to me but I shrieked when he tried touching me.

“He hurt me Zondi so bad” I silently cried.

“I am so sorry this wasn’t supposed to happen” he said putting a blanket over me.

“Zo stay with me” he said but I couldn’t keep my eyes open.

“No .. no.. Zobuhle don't do this come on” he said lifting me up.

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MHLABA

I don't know what came over me the rage was too much all I saw was red the thought of that man running his hands all over Zobuhle’s body messed me up, if I had it my way I would have killed him right there and then but I was outnumbered. I kneeled on my brother’s grave and wiped my tears.

“I wish things were different that I was different” I said clearing my throat.

“I messed up and I forced myself on her even though she begged me to stop” I said.

“Why can’t she love me the way she did you things would be much simpler, everything I have done nothing seems to work on her she pushes till I push back I hate myself for having done what I did but I couldn’t stop” I said.

“I wish I was half the man you were but I am not and this love that I have for her I don't know what to do with it I would rather have broken, tormented even dead than to see her with another man” I said standing up.

“Zwide” I said walking away.

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## QHAWE

I tossed and turned till I got out of bed and had a smoke I had lost count of the number of times I took a smoke today, I no longer wake up in the middle of the night because of Zano and her mother that part of my life seems to have passed ever since I woke from the unexplainable coma my sleep have been peaceful. Initially I thought I was coming down with something but this heavy feeling kept at it the whole day even my mother's food didn't help. I closed my eyes and flashes of Zobu came flooding I miss her more today that a part of me wants to shed tears.

"Come back to bed" Nontle said wrapping her hands around me.

I sighed I don't know how I went to "I never want to see you again, to having her here.

"Don't make this something that its not" I said.

“She’s gone Qhawe forget about” she said.

I turned and walked inside to grab my phone.

“I am sorry I didn’t mean it like that its just that I hate seeing you this upset” she said softly.

“I will sleep on the couch” I said walking out.

I went through Zobuhle’s pictures hoping my mood would lighten up but nothing I scrolled on her pictures but stopped on one where she looked different more plump and fuller on the waist, I went back to her previous pictures and she was different in them compared to this one. I stood up trying to figure out a few things could she be pregnant but if that’s the case then she would have told me.

“A woman’s body changes with time due to many things like mood, stress and food and sometimes we feel bloated” I remembered kayise telling after I realised she had picked on some weight.

Clearly Zo was going through what most women go through.

## ZOBUHLE

I woke up to a sore body and could hardly move it, I looked around and I was in the hospital it all came back to me it wasn't a horrible a dream it actually happened Mhlaba repeatedly raped me and hurt me just to prove a damn point as to who is a man between him and Qhawe. I didn't want to think about that night but it all came back like a flood the way he beat me up till I couldn't feel my body, the way he pinned me down and forced himself on me the way he didn't care and just violated me till I couldn't take it anymore and my body collapsed . I shook my head no one in their right minds would do that no one could do that to the woman they claimed to love, I closed my eyes and images of him on top of me came chasing me I couldn't keep my eyes closed for long. I drew in my breath and I could smell him and I could see the coldness and rage in his eyes he saw red that day he wanted nothing but to break me and he did. I tried wiping my tears but got the sharpest pain from raising my hand I realised it was in a sling. the door opened and my heart started racing when Mhlaba walked in carrying a bouquet of roses not even my favourite I am more of a sunflower person.



“Hey” he said putting the flowers down.

I looked at him and tears just fell, he attempted making his way to me but I shifted as hard as it was I did.

“I want to go home” I said softly.

Scared didn't even compare to what I was feeling right now terrified was the right word.

“You can't go home you are too weak” he said settling down.

“Mhlaba ngiyakucela ngifuna ukuya ekhaya “ I begged.

I have never wanted my mother more than I did now.

“And I am telling you that you can't its too soon” he said in a warning tone.

The room went silent till he cleared his throat.

“I am sorry” he said.

“You are sorry” I said.

“I truly am what I did was wrong please forgive me” he said.

“Mhlaba you raped me even when I said you were hurting me, I screamed Mhlaba and you carried on and you have the nerve to say you’re sorry” I said.

“Mambatha that wasn’t me I was angry” he said standing up.

“You slept with him and he boasted about it what was I was supposed to say huh” he shouted.

I got a fright and he raised his hands up looking at me.

“Don't look at me like that” he said.

“Do you know what you have done to me Mhlaba” I asked my lips quivering.

He clasped his hands together and looked at me.

“I am sorry” he said wiping his tears.

“Ubungangibulali ngani that would have been better” I told him.

Honestly I would have gladly welcomed death than to go through what he put me through.

“Kill me” I said.

“Ini” he asked shocked.

“Ngibulale Mhlaba take this pain that I am feeling away” I begged him.

“I would never do that ngiyakthanda” he confessed.

“You don't love me this is not love Mhlaba, if this is your love then I am afraid of your love I don't want your love it hurts and I hate it” I told him.

“Don't say that its his fault that you are here he pushed my last buttons” he roared.

“I was never yours in the first place I was never yours not then not now” I screamed.

“I love you don't you see that” he shouted making his way to me.

I held my breath and shut my eyes awaiting the worst but instead he ran his fingers down my cheek and kissed me.

The doctor walked in and Mhlaba moved allowing me to breathe.

“I didn’t mean to disturb you I came to check up my patient” the doctor said.

“I was on my way out” Mhlaba said looking at me then heading for the door.

I looked at the doctor and he cleared his throat.

“We ran a few tests and took necessary precautions trust me you’re safe no infections or anything of that sort” he said.

I nodded my head hearing that brought some sense of relief.

“Zondi asked me to give you this” he said handing me what looked like a burner phone.

“I will make sure no one disturbs you” he said walking out.

I looked at the phone and only one number was programmed in it, it didn't take long for it to ring and in my heart I knew it was Qhawe I know his number by heart and head.

I looked at it and tears welled up what was I going to say to him this lump on my throat made it harder for me to speak without shading tears.

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QHAWE

I looked at everyone and sighed things were going ahead as planned but my heart wasn't here, the guys were here and we were getting ready to go to Emahlabathini and wreak havoc, I looked at Muzi and he wasn't himself he wanted to go first and scout the place and make sure his parents were okay but him

going alone would mess up our plans so he stayed behind. We got a call a few days back from Zobuhle's mother telling us how her husband was fighting for his life after Mhlaba shot him and took their young daughter Zanele. I cringed at the many thoughts that crowded my mind after what that man did to Zobu. I doubt he would have any mercy on that child.

"I say we kill him and get this over and done with" Mthandeni said shrugging his shoulders.

"Killing him will be too easy he needs to suffer" Mncedisi said.

"I think we should find Zobuhle first and then deal with Mhlaba" Zibulo said.

Mthandeni looked at him and cleared his throat.

"I think you're right" Mthandeni said looking at me.

"I want to burn him alive I want him to beg me for mercy" I said breathing out.

“Muzi” I called out.

“That man took away so much from me wangibheca ngobende inyama ngingayidlanga”

“How are you holding up” Zibulo asked looking at me.

“What do you think” I asked walking away to get some air.

“He is just worried about you mkhulu” Mthandeni said.

“Ngwane I don't know what I am going to say when I see her” I said.

“Just be there” he said.

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“I talked to Nkanyenzi and she is more than willing to come and help her” he said walking back to the guys.

I took out the burner phone and called Zobuhle for the tenth time but she wasn't picking up I then called Zondi.

“She's not picking up” I said.

“I know she's not okay” he said.

“Why are you helping me” I asked.

“It doesn't matter why I am helping you” he said ending the call.

He then sent me codes leading to the kingdom.

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## ZIBULO

In all my life I have never seen Qhawe this mad and destroying everything in his way the guy who has been helping him told us about Zobuhle's whereabouts and how we could find her sister, I watched while he barged into Mhlaba's house and gun down everyone in sight till he reached the man's private chamber and dragged him out like the dig he was. Mthandeni was enjoying every moment of this.

"Guards" Mhlaba shouted.

His men came in and Mthandeni shot one of them in the head.

"This is how things are going to work okay this man comes with us" I said pointing a gun at Mhlaba.

"You will not get away with this" Mhlaba said while trying to wiggle his way out of Qhawe's tight grip.

“And you think I care about your useless threats” Qhawe asked.

“I have a surprise for you” he said moving out of the way allowing Muzi to walk in.

“Zwide” Muzi said.

He wasn't expecting this because he blinked.

“How”he asked looking at Muzi.

“Don't worry about that but worry about what this man is going to do to you” he said pointing at Qhawe.

“I will burn you alive” Qhawe said letting him go tilting his head.

In that moment his parents walked in and got the shock of their lives.

“Guards” his father shouted.

Mncedisi shook his head and chuckled.

“Don't waste your breathe khehla el'dala” Mncedisi said.

His mother looked at me and shook her head.

“I am going to take your son and he is going to pay for what he did to Zobuhle and I will bring him back to kill him right in front of your eyes” Qhawe said looking at the king.

“Baba please do something” Mhlaba said.

Mthandeni stood up just as the king was about to walk towards his son.

“Don't test me I am not in the mood to kill Royalty just this pathetic son of yours” he said looking at the king.

The man was defeated although we were outnumbered there was not much to do we had their prince.

“Zobuhle is a Nxumalo she belongs with us” the king said.

“Baba” the Queen said.

“No let him speak” Qhawe said raising up his hands.

“She is my daughter inlaw and it is my duty to protect her” the king continued making Qhawe even madder.

“Protect her where were you when your son raped her huh” he asked making his way towards the king.

I stood in front of him blocking his way.

“We didn’t come here for this old man we came for Zobuhle and to kill this sorry excuse of a man” I said.

“These people will make me crazy Mkhulu I swear I will kill everyone in this place” he said fuming.

“I wouldn’t mind that” Mncedisi said shrugging his shoulders.

I have always thought that Samu’s death changed things especially Mncedisi he was never this dark.

“You don't want this innocent woman’s blood on your hands trust me” I said looking at the Queen.

he turned and looked at Mhlaba picking him up, he dragged him closer to the wall and bashed his head against it till he was more calmer beating up someone does that to him.

I nodded my head when it was enough and he looked at the Queen.

“Who are you” the king asked shaken while the queen wept clasping her hands together.

“My name is Qhawe Mthethwa and I am your worst nightmare” he said breathing heavily.

“I am his brother here to make you remember the surname all the days of your life” I said.

“Sekulungile madoda asambeni” Qhawe said leading the way.

We went past the hospital to go fetch Zobuhle my hands were sweating I remembered how distraught Ziphozenkosi was when that loony bin of a pastors child took her. Muzi ,Qhawe and I made our way into the room she was asleep but the tears on face were there visible on her swollen face. Qhawe moved closer and sighed rubbing his hands over his head this was

harder on him he couldn't bear seeing her like this. He grabbed a chair and sat next o her holding her hand and kissed it.

“Sthandwa sam” he said.

She opened her eyes and looked around till her eyes landed on her brother.

“Bhuti” she said softly.

I could hear the strain in her voice she was in pain.

“Hey” Muzi said making his way to her.

Her eyes were swollen and her lip was cut her arm in a sling.

She looked at Qhawe and pulled her hand away but Qhawe didn't let go.



“I am never letting you go” he said.

She tried blinking her tears back but she couldn't hold them her lips quivered and her eyes closed then a loud sob filled the entire room.

Qhawe stood up and sat on the bed helping her into his arms and wrapped them around her , she grabbed onto his clothes her eyes tightly shut and only her sobs spoke for her.

I felt her pain everyone felt her pain it was unbearable.

“I am so sorry” Qhawe said rocking her back and forth.

“I think we should let them be” Muzi said walking out, I looked at them one more time before I followed Muzi outside.

“Mhlaba will pay for what he has done” I said.

## ZIBULO

Qhawe stayed behind while we took Mhlaba with us his head was bleeding and he was groaning in pain but none of us cared, we took him to one of his warehouses and the guy couldn't believe his eyes we had infiltrated his land and took over his territory, he kept cussing and asking if we knew who he was and that his people would hunt us down. For a moment I was amused I won't lie he seemed too sure of himself and that cracked me up Muzi had his fun with him and Mhlaba ended up in the chair his hands tied up to the chair as well as his legs.

"You won't get away with this" Mhlaba said.

"Will you shut up no one cares and no one is coming"  
Mthandeni said.

"Can we just kill him this torturing business is tiring me this guy is not worth our energy" Mncedisi said.

“Let’s leave the killing to Qhawe” I said chuckling.

I moved closer to Mhlaba and looked him in the face he wasn’t sorry he was in pain but his eyes were still cold.

He looked at me and smiled.

“You want to avenge your sister in law or is there more to this” he asked.

“Shut the hell up” Mthandeni said throwing a punch followed by another one till he begged him to stop.

“And what did you do when she begged you” Muzi asked getting his tools out of the bag.

“No no Muzi we are family please don't do this” he begged when Muzi made his way towards him with pliers.

“The first few days in prison were not that bad” Muzi said shrugging his shoulders.

“The problem started when I was sentenced for something you did and then one day I woke up to a few man holding me down while their boss pulled out my teeth” he said shaking his head.

“Ever had your tooth pulled out with being injected with something to numb you whole mouth” he asked.

“I want to see and I will the honors of holding him down” I said.

“You bastard” he cussed.

I held his head and Muzi pushed in the pliers inside his mouth and pulled out one tooth his screams were deafening, I let him chock on his blood till I thought it was enough. Mncedisi had his turn and pulled out two he screamed so loud Mthandeni used the same pliers to shut him up.

“You are man enough to rape so take it all as it comes” he said getting back to his chair.

“I am begging you please let me go I will pay you so much money” he said.

I stood in front of him and chuckled.

“Do you know who we are” I asked shaking my head.

“Do you honestly think we would betray our own brother for you” Mthandeni asked standing up.

“I think he needs some water” he said.

Muzi brought a bucket closer and made him drink Augy’s pee, he tried spitting it out but his mouth was swollen and he couldn’t do much.

“Dammit now you have ruined my shoes” I said looking at his bloody vomit on my shoes.

I took the bucket of water that was close by and poured it on his face.

“Great now we can see you clearly” I said.

“Get the sack” I said.

“I am going to enjoy this” Mncedisi said putting the sack over his head.

I started pouring water over his head not giving him a chance to breathe he kicked and moved but I didn't stop.

“I see you are guys are having fun” Qhawe said walking in carrying an electric box a switch with two cables.

He brought a zinc basin filled with water closer and placed Mhlaba's feet inside.

I removed the sack over his head and came head to head with Qhawe.

"Zwide" Qhawe said.

"Ngiyakucela mfethwe please don't do this" Mhlaba said.

"I see a few teeth a missing but don't worry this will be over soon, I still need to burn you and shoot you in front of your parents" he said unshaken.

He wasn't the Qhawe I know and this scared me.

He wrapped the cables around Mhlaba's upper body and sighed

.

“You know it’s been long since I have done this to any man” he said getting two socks and putting a sunlight brick inside.

“You can’t do this stop him please” Mhlaba pleaded.

“Here’s the deal if you don't scream then I promise not to burn okay” Qhawe said looking at him.

“Is that a yes” he asked.

“Great if he doesn’t scream I won’t burn him but if he does then I will burn him simple” Qhawe said.

He stood behind him and whispered.

“You broke her the same woman you claim to love and then took a video of the act” he said looking at Mthandeni.

“I don't much about volts but I hope they shock the daylights out of you” he said.



“Ngwane” he said and Mthandeni didn’t waste time turning on the electric box.

I could see veins I didn’t even know existed pop on his head and face.

“No ...no ... no...” the man screamed.

The water made things worse in increased the electric wave effects administered to his body.

Qhawe took off his t-shirt and held the sock in his hand and started the process of assaulting him in the worst possible way.

“You violated her” he screamed hitting Mhlaba’s balls.

“You hurt her” he said hitting him once more.

“She begged and pleaded but you didn’t stop” He shouted hitting him countless time Mhlaba started bleeding and vomiting,

He could no longer scream or shout his body was giving up.

“Mkhulu that’s enough” I said.

“Let him be” Mthandeni said looking at me.

He beat him up till he was unconscious and untied him then poured water all over him bringing him about.

“Sukuma” Qhawe shouted.

He tried standing up but he couldn’t.

I looked at my brother smiling while shaking his head

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Wena musa ukungikhipha emoyeni ungifake enyameni

Wena musa ukungikhipha emoyeni ungafake enyameni

Wezwa ngobani ukuthi wena ukushaya wawushaya bani umshayelani

Ngingakufaka unyawo mina mangithanda

Ngiyokushaya mfana ubaleke uchitheke njengamanzi

Kodwa ukholwo lwami luyangicindezela

Wena ngathi uyakhohlwa mina ngelusa wokhuluma ubale amagama akho” he kept singing.

He dragged him outside and tied him to a steal pole placing him on an open fire.

I have heard men scream but this was nothing I had ever heard before the smell of the fire eating away at his flesh made me sick.

“I did say I was going to burn you” he said.

“This is nothing compared to what you did to Zobuhle” he said walking away.

I knew my brother was cold but this was beyond words he asked Mthandeni to untie him.

Mhlaba looked at me his flash peeling off and extended his hand.

“Please help me” he said.

I looked at him shaking and coughing blood.

I reached for the bucket near me and poured water over him  
Mncedisi had already mixed it with some chili these guys meant  
business.

“I am begging you to show me some mercy” he said looking at  
my brother.

His speech was barely audible

“Time to go home” Qhawe said dragging him to the car.

We drove to the palace and as soon as we got there Qhawe  
dragged him to the place and into his father’s feet.

His mother walked in and looked at Qhawe.

“Nyambose please forgive him I know he has wronged Zobuhle but he is still my son please” she pleaded.

“He is your future king right” he said looking at the king.

“Yes” the king said shutting his eyes.

Qhawe pulled out his gun and cocked it pointing it at Mhlaba.

“Confess your sins and I will spare your life” Qhawe said.

But the guy could barely speak

“Very well I will do it for you” he said.

“Your precious son killed the rightful heir to the throne and framed Muzi for it as if that wasn’t enough he went for Zobuhle because he is obsessed” Qhawe said.

“I wish you had been man enough to teach your son how to be a man and save me the trouble of having to go through all this” he shouted pulling the trigger shooting Mhlaba.

The king held his chest and tears fell down his face.

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QHAWWE

Zibulo and the guys left but Muzi and I stayed behind he wanted to fix things with his parents and I wanted to see Zobuhle her mother led me to her bedroom.

“She’s been like this since you brought her here” her mother said.

“Thank you ma” I said.

She closed the door behind her and I made my way to Zobuhle.

I sat next to her and held her hand she turned to look at me and I didn't recognize her.

“Zo” I said.

She blinked and tears welled up.

I felt my heart break I didn't know what to say.

I took her hand and placed it on my chest.

“I see you” I said still holding her hand but she pulled it away and stood up.

“Look at me” I begged her.



“What happened doesn’t change the way I feel about you ngisakuthanda Zobuhle ungowami ngokomoya,umphefumulo kanye ne nyama” I said.

“Ngiyazenyanya” she said looking away

“Don't ever say that okay, don't you ever say that” I told her.

She shook her head.

“He violated me” she said clasping her chest holding her dress.

“I hate myself Nyambose I can’t even look at myself in the mirror” she said wiping her tears.

I stood up and tried holding her but she backed away

I slowly made my way to her but stopped when I realised she was frightened.

“ What happened is not your fault okay” I told her.

“I know nothing I say will make up for what happened but I love you and I want you to heal Zobu with me” he said.”

“Let me hold you please I won't hurt you” I said

Tears fell off her face while she shook her head.

“How are we going to come back from this because I don't see myself ever being the same” she said.

I close the gap between us and extended my hand.

“I am scared Qhawe” she said wiping her tears once again.

“Take my hand and I will walk this journey with you please” I said.

She took my hand and I found myself breathing out .

“Let me help you let me help carry your pain” I said bringing her into a hug.

## QHAWWE

I asked for her father's permission to take her with me and I must say she hasn't been alright since we came back, she hides in the bedroom doesn't speak and hardly get anything on her stomach. I tried talking to her but every time I do it feels like I am talking to a brick wall. she is closed off and the look in her eye is that of a broken wounded person. Her mother said once her father was okay they would come and check up on her, she wanted to take care of Zobuhle but considering the state her husband is in I thought it would best I take care of her. I must say I was relieved when we found her sister alive and untouched anything could have happened and I doubt Zobu would have been able to handle much more. I looked at Nkanyezi running around the kitchen helping Ma make some breakfast she came here to help Zobu but I think her trip was in vain because each time she tries initiating a conversation with Zobu my just stands up and asks to go to sleep. she doesn't want me to touch her no matter how much she cries or sobs at night. I wish she knew the how I feel how my heart breaks knowing there is nothing I can do to make her feel better.

“How did she sleep” Ma asked looking my way.

“She tossed all night as always” I said.

“I know it doesn’t seem like it but trust me she will get there”  
Nkanyezi said.

“Maybe I should go talk to her” she offered.

“I think that is a good idea” ma said nodding her head.

I thought for a while and shook my head.

“Its okay I will go she probably went back to bed” I said making  
my way to our bedroom.

I walked in I could hear the shower going she wasn’t in the bed  
nor outside, I stood in the middle of the room thinking I should  
check on her till I heard her cry and I couldn’t hold myself. I  
made my way to the bathroom and found her inside the

shower on the floor talking to herself more like shouting. I looked at her violently scrubbing herself like she wanted to get some dirt off her but she couldn't and that made her even more determined but in actual fact she was hurting herself. I stepped inside and turned off the water but she kept on scrubbing till I held her.

"I need to get the smell off, I need to get his sweat off its all over me" she said.

"Zobu please stop" I said.

"I need to get it all off me" she cried.

I clenched my jaws it pained me seeing her like this.

"I can't get it off Nyambose I am trying but I can't" she said shaking her head.

I blinked my tears away I needed to be strong for her as much as this was tearing me apart she needed me to be strong for the both us.

“I know it hurts but I promise you he will never hurt you again” I told her.

She looked at me and smiled through her tears.

“Its in here and in here” she said pointing at her head then her heart.

“If I could I would give you my heart as dark and twisted as it is I would still give it to you and I would take yours and carry it for you till it heals, I swear sthandwa sam I would make sure it heals I would go to the ends of the earth to make sure it heals and then give it to you. So I could carry on living because you are my heart Zobu you are my everything and I wish I could I stop the aching but I can't I can only try. But Zo you need to try with me okay I am begging you there is so much we still need to do” I said.

“I don't know how to try suddenly everything feels foreign” she admitted.

“Let's get help I will be there just don't give up don't” I begged.

“Why didn't he stop when I begged him” she asked looking at me.

“I said would behave I told him I would” she said shaking her head.

“Out of all things he could have done why this I hate him” she said.

“I hate him Qhawe I really hate him for trapping me for crippling me because that is how I feel” she said.

For the first time she was talking venting about she felt.

“He stripped me off myself “ she said through hiccups.

“I am so sorry that he did all that and that I wasn’t there to protect you” I said.

“I blame myself because had I not taken long none this would have happened, I am sorry I that I failed you that I wasn’t there” I said lifting her up.

I dried her up and helped her into to clean clothes and placed her inside the bed.

I sat on the edge of the bed just starring at her.

“I will be in the kitchen” I said standing up.

“Ungahambi” she said sitting up straight.

I moved closer and stood on my side of the bed.



“Nginga ngena” I asked taking a chance.

She nodded and pulled the blankets allowing me to get next to her.

“May I hold you please” I asked.

“Yes” she said breathing heavily.

I opened my arms and she easily rested on my chest I could feel her body was tensed up.

“I don't have to hold if you are not comfortable I can just be here” I said trying to make things simpler for her.

“I want you to hold me I need your scent more than ever” she said.

“ I don't want to go crazy” she said.

“I would love you still” I said kissing her forehead.

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MTHANDENI KHANYILE (NGWANE)

I sat back and looked at the kids running around Zibulo came back with two beers in his hand he had a lot in his mind I could tell. He sat next to me and deeply sighed things women tend to do if they have something to say. I wish the triplets were here but my mother offered to look after them and for Qiniso he just didn't want to come and said something about spending time with his friends.

“They grow up fast don't they” Zibulo said.

“What is wrong with you” I asked.

I knew the moment I set foot in this place but I wanted to hear him say it.

He looked at me and smiled.

“Nothing I am just having one of those days” he said.

I chuckled and drank my beer before I could say anything .

“You mean lusting over your brother’s girlfriend soon to be wife” I said looking him in the eye.

There was no way he could lie to me I know him.

“khuzeka Ngwane” he said clenching his jaws.

“Uzokwenzani” I asked pushing his buttons.

“Tell me what I saw and heard isn’t true that my mind is playing tricks on me” I said.

I heard the rawness in his voice when he spoke about her and the way he looked at her in that hospital

“There is no truth in what you are saying” he said.

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“Then look at me and tell me that I am far from the truth” I said.

He downed his beer and right there I had gotten my answer.

“If I could pick up on it surely it’s a matter of time before Mkhulu catches on too” I told.

He was fighting it I could see it in his face.

“Dammit Zibulo why her” I asked standing up.

He could be infatuated with anyone or whatever it is he is feeling just not with her.

“I don't know it just happened” he said.

“I don't want to hear any of it she only has eyes for him and you have no business looking her way” I shouted.

Yes we found her in a state but I could see the way she looked at Qhawe and she only has eyes for him and only him.

“And you think I don't know” he asked.

“He is my best friend and he is yours too but he is our brother first and we don't do that” I told him.

“Tell me something I don't know” he said shouted In frustration.

“Yiyeke lento Nyambose chata, uphalaze noma ungathandaza kodwa yishiye phansi” I said.

He was falling for Zobuhle or maybe he had already fallen and I was too late.

“I would never act on any of this I would never hurt Zenkosi or Qhawe like that” he said.

“For all our sake I hope you are telling the truth” I told him settling down.

He wouldn't, he couldn't hurt the people the people he loves the most in this world like that I convinced myself.

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## NKANYEZI (NYOTA)

Ngwane was back from Zibulo's house and he joined Qhawe outside they seemed to be in their own world deep in conversation, I didn't want to disturb them so I head to Zobuhle's room and knocked a few times before she answered. I walked in settled on the couch next to the small coffee table. For a while I didn't say anything I looked outside and saw my husband the father of my kids the one man I love more than anything this world. I smiled thinking of how far we have come to think he haunted me for so long yet today he is my safe place I can't imagine life without him or the kids.

"Hey" I said turning my focus on Zobuhle.

Her eyes were swollen she had been crying instantly remembered the morning I would wake up with a soak wet pillow. I saw myself in her broken and completely lost well that is how it felt for a while.

"Hey" she said sitting up straight.

“Sleeping won’t help I know you probably think that you are actually sleeping it off but that is not true” I said.

“You don't know what I am going through you don't” she said in the most polite way.

“I wish I had this calmness when in varsity” I said standing up.

“Are you mocking me” she asked.

“No I am just telling what I wish I was back when I was seventeen” I said.

“Because I sure was angry at myself for allowing it happen, I was angry at God for allowing it happen and I was angry at the world but mostly I hated myself for such a long time” I said.

He teary eyes widen.



I nodded my head and blinked the tears away that part of my life is just that the past.

“I was seventeen when it happened and it scared me” I said.

“How did you get past it because its hard” she said.

I made my way to her and held her hand.

“Come with me” I said leading her to the balcony.

“What do you see” I asked.

She looked at me and softly laughed I was asking the obvious.

“I see Qhawe, Mthandeni and the Garden” she said.

“The Garden looks beautiful doesn’t it but that is not always the case in winter or autumn” I said

She nodded her head.

“And just like a garden you too shall grow and be strong from this but more importantly you will be beautiful inside and out because your roots will be that of a strong resilient tree” I told her.

“See that man” I asked pointing at Ngwane.

“He is my scar” I told her.

“I don't understand” she said looking at Ngwane.

“See Zobuhle I married the man who took my innocence and left me shattered and angry for a long time” I said.

“For the longest time he was my nightmare day in and day out till one day our paths crossed and I remember telling him that night that nothing would ever be the same, and I am telling you

nothing was the same ever again I fell in love and I couldn't stop it no matter how hard I tried fate kept pulling us together. Is it wrong to love him this much after what he did to me for while I thought yes it but no I don't think so heck I would die for this man" I told.

"You forgave him" she asked.

"It was a long journey but yes I did wholeheartedly although most women may judge me but Ngwane is my other half and as much as I tried I couldn't run away from it" I said.

"I will never forgive Mhlaba because of him I feel dirty" she said swallowing hard.

"And that is not what I said you should do or think of doing but don't paint that man with same brush as the man who hurt you" I told her pointing at Qhawe.

"He loves you more than anything and seeing you like this is killing him" I said.

“Healing doesn’t happen overnight it takes time” I said.

“ I was angry ,hated myself I wanted to die and I wanted it all to stop but when it didn’t I realised that I had to live with it and not allow myself to be a victim but a survivor “ I said.

She nodded her wiping her tears.

“Scream and shout as much as you need curl up and cry cuss even but don't push Qhawe away and don't let it consume you don't give Mhlaba power don't allow this to cripple you , trust me you are bigger than this” I said wiping my own tears.

“It will take time but I will get there” she said.

“Yes one day at a time and you need to believe this” I said smiling.

“I need a hug” I said.

She smiled and opened up her arms.

‘You are going to be okay I know you will’ I said holding her tight.

“Tell me how you met Ngwane” she said smiling faintly.

“We are going to need wine” I said smiling.

ZOBUHLE.

I went from content to being the happiest woman on the planet I said yes to the man of my dreams. We only got some shut eye when the sun started coming up we watched the movie he made and talked all night long and watching the lights fly in different directions was the most amazing thing of all. We got home in the morning and took some proper sleep he even took a day off from work and dedicated this day to us. I don't know if it's too soon to feel this way after what I went through but truth is Qhawe and my family is the only thing keeping me going. Yesterday he asked me to leave the past in the past he begged me to look unto with him and I couldn't say no the future looks amazing from where I am standing, I can already see myself being a mother of four and loving this man for the rest of life. Qhawe is not a spiritual person but last night he said the right things and included God in it if this isn't being blessed then I don't know. I looked to my side and he was sleeping peacefully his bearded nicely covering his face I stroked and kissed him careful not to wake him up. I took my phone and went to stand outside the balcony and called my mother.

“Zobu” she said on the first ring not allowing the phone go at it twice.

“Really ma” I said.

She laughed on the other end.

“I will let it ring next time you call” she said.

“How are you? How are things” I asked.

“Everything is okay how are you feeling” she asked.

“Everything is well ma and I think I will get better” I said.

“Don't think pray and hope that you will get better” she said.

“I know I will get better” I said.

“That’s my baby girl” she said.

“Ma’ I said looking at my ring.

“Yes what’s wrong” I think she could hear the nervousness in voice.

“I have something to tell you” I said looking a back at Qhawe still in the same position I left him in.

“Mam Qhawe proposed he wishes to marry me” I said.

She went quiet for a while and my heart almost sank but I heard her screaming and giving thanks to the Lord, see knowing my mother she probably put the phone away and started doing her thing

“Akabongwe ongaphezulu” she said.



“Oh Zobu I am so happy that boy loves you he worships the ground you walk on” she said.

I could hint some hesitation in her joy.

“What is wrong ma” I asked.

“Have you told him about the child” she asked I immediately got light headed thinking about what I went through losing my child .

“No I haven’t told him ma” I said looking at the ring.

“You need to tell him Zobuhle soon and he needs to come to your father and get his blessing and since the Nxumalo’s paid for your bride price he needs to go there and give them their cows back” she said.

“Hayi ma ngiyala” I said.

“Its tradition Zobuhle you can’t run away from that” she said.

“After everything that family has put me through me ma now Qhawe has go and grovel to them just so I can be free” I told her.

“I know but think of future with him away from those people” she said.

I shook my head closing my eyes.

“Ma am I cursed” I asked.

“No you are not cursed quite the opposite in fact it said that your mother’s womb was blessed and she gave birth to two beautiful kids a girl and a boy, their beauty would be both a blessing and curse to those who crossed paths with them” she said.

“Ngathini kuwe” I heard my father’s voice in the back.

“Baba” my mother said in the most calm voice.

“Give me that phone” He said.

He sounded different his voice was stern

“Zobuhle” he said in a warning tone.

“Baba” I said.

“I hope you haven’t taken anything your mother says to heart”  
he said.

“Hawu kodwa baba” my mother said in the back.

“Usufuna ukuba uzwilakhe emzini wam” he asked.

I heard some bickering till my mother came back on the phone.

“Don't mind your father he is just grumpy today” she said.

“Are you sure ma he didn't sound like himself” I told her.

“He just needs some love he will be fine” she said.

“I hear you” I said.

She sighed and cleared her throat.

“Zobu I have been having strange dream of water over and over again” she told me.

“Yisisu nje leso” I said laughing.

“I know which worries me a lot could Zanele be pregnant but how” she said sounding stressed.

I could say sex but I didn't want to worry my mother.

“Talk to her mama okungenzeka uphuphela omunye umuntu” I told.

“Let's hope so or I will strangle that sister of yours” she said laughing.

“Congratulation Zobu may the good Lord keep blessing you we love you” she said ending the call.

I looked at my ring and smiled.

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QHAWWE

Ngwane and I took off after we had discussed a few things and I told him about my plans to go to Emahlabathini to ask for Zobuhle's hand in marriage. I still can't believe that's she said yes without even blinking or thinking about it that much. I know Zobu she is stubborn as a house and she breathes and spits fire when angry but last night was perfect.

"I don't know how to put it" Ngwane said shaking his head.

"Khuluma Mkhulu" I said looking at a picture of Zobuhle sleeping.

"Phakathi kwenu nobablili kukhona odlise omunye ngiyakutshela kukhona osebuya kwa mai mai " he said

I laughed and shook my head.

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26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"Ngani nawe bakudlisa futhi wena ke bakufunza" I told him

He took his eyes from the road and looked at me laughing.

“I think we need a strong traditional healer we can’t love these women so much” he said shaking his head.

“Musa ukungifaka otakwikini lakho mina ngikahle nedliso lami”  
I said raising my hands.

“You truly love her I can tell” he said.

“Yes I do” I told him.

“I am happy for you” he said.

We got to the house and my mother was the first to give me a hug then she squeezed Ngwane and forgot all about me.

“I am your son just in case you have forgotten that” I said.

“Kahle umona we don't see Mthandeni that much” she said.

“I miss every time I am away ma” Ngwane said.

We went to the garden and Zibulo and my father were already waiting for us.

“Mkhulu” I said looking at my brother.

He gave me a hug and pulled away studying me.

“I am happy” I said.

“And why is that” my father asked.

“I finally asked Zobu to marry me” I said.

A smile on father's mouth spread and he gave a hug.



“That’s my son I am proud of you Mthwethwa” he said heading the house.

I looked at Zibulo and he wasn’t himself.

“You and I are one” I said.

He looked at Ngwane then me.

“You and I are one” he said smiling.

It’s a saying we used to say when we were young to remind us that we are brothers and come from the same womb, formed from the same flesh we are one and we feel as one.

“Don't you think its soon after what she has been through” he asked.

“They love each other just you love MaButhelezi and decided to marry her” Ngwane said.

“Congratulations mkhulu finally someone steals your heart” he said smiling.

My father came back with a bottle and a box in hand.

“This is one of my finest and most expensive bottle and this is the best cigar there is out there” he said giving each one of us a cigar, he then opened the bottle and poured for each one of us.

“I drink to you boys” he said looking at us three.

“My boy is getting married” my father said laughing.

“Your brother is getting married” he said looking at Zibulo.

“If I knew him getting married would make you this happy then I would have long found him a wife” Ngwane said.

“Its not just about finding a wife it is about finding the right one” baba said looking at me.

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I got home and Nkanyezi was in the kitchen making food and the girls were helping her, I didn't know they would I have brought them something sweet getting myself in trouble with Zobu there is something about giving kids sugar at night it goes straight to their heads and they become animals refusing to sleep. I peak in and Babu saw me then Aphile and thee ran obviously expecting me lift both of them up, I kissed each one of them on cheek and watched Ngwane make his way into the kithen.

“Shall I take these two with me” I asked.

I looked at them and them and my kitchen was about christened in the worst possible way.

“I guess that is a yes” I said taking the girls with me.

“Where is Ncane” I asked.

“Sleeping she wasn’t feeling well” Aphile said.

“And no called me not even you” I said looking at her.

“She told me not to bother you and allowed me to hold her ring just like mommy” she said.

Zobuhle knows how to get to Aphile and its diamonds and anything shiny my baby girl loves sparkly things.

“Okay” I said .

We walked in the bedroom and Zobu was laying on the bed I put the girls down and got on side of the bed.

“Hey” I said.

“Hey” she said.

“Talk to me” I said.

“It’s nothing just a stomach bug” I said groaning in pain.

I placed my hand on her forehead in was burning up.

“You are burning let me call the doctor” I said about to get off the bed but she held my hand.

“Ungahambi I will be fine just hold me” she said breathing out.

“Girls” she said.

“Ncane” they said simultaneously.

She patted her side of bed and shifted a little to mine giving the girls enough space to sleep next to her.

“Shoes off” I said taking off my own the girls did the same .

“I held Zobu and she extended her arms to the girls.

“Baba pleas” Babu said.

“No” I said.

“Please”She said.

“Twinke twinke little stars lalalalala now go to sleep” I said.

Zobu laughed.

“I think we deserve some proper singing right girls” she said.

“Ncane is right baba we deserve some singing” she said.

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ZOBUHLE

Today I had an early appointment with the head doctor well that's how Qhawe calls her, I was a bit nervous well that is because she said today we were trying something different and I didn't know what to expect, I stood in front of her P.A and the poor girl looked at me from head to toe fine I didn't look my best but I had started at the gym first so my look made sense.

"Mrs Mtheth I mean Mam" she said standing up.

"Hi is she ready for me" I asked.

"Yes please go through" she said.

I went into the doctor's office and found my special doctor reading a book on body language, I cleared my throat and she put the book down looking at me through her glasses.

"Great you are here" she said.

I placed my bag down and sat on the couch.

She took off her glasses and grabbed her note pad.

"Something different today" she said looking at my hand .

"Uh I see we are engaged to be married is that correct" I nodded my head.

"Congratulations I am happy for you" she said

"Thank you" I said.



“How are you feeling” she asked tilting her head.

“I really don't know sometimes I am okay and the next I am curled up in a ball crying afraid” I told her.

She nodded her head jotting things up.

“I blame myself” I said.

“Why is that is it because you went back willingly” she asked.

“I went back there because that monster had threatened everyone I love including the girls, that man had been a thorn in my life ever since Sbani died. He would drag me out of my father's house crying and kicking to his house just to hear me tell him that I loved him. he would chain me up and leave me without food for days to teach me a lesson and then he went after my father when he saw I wouldn't break” I said wiping my tears.

“What do you mean” she asked.

“He had his man beat him up in front of people just to humiliate him, he had my own father beaten up so baldly he couldn’t talk or walk for a week, I didn’t go back for myself but for the people I love I was tired of him using them to get to me” I said.

“Tell me about Qhawe” she said.

“He’s amazing with him I feel complete and without him I feel incomplete, I love him” I said.

“And we want to heal right we want to get better for the those we love” she said.

I nodded my head.

“Very well now I want you to close your eyes and think about Mhlaba go back to that day” she said.

My eyes widened how could she ask me to relive that day.

“Trust me” she said.

I closed my eyes and thought about that day from the moment he shouted my name and the moment he dragged me back into the house and started beating me up.

“I can’t go there” I told her shaking my head.

“Try Zobuhle you need this” she said.

Flashes of him dragging me to the floor and pulling down his pants came so hard I opened my eyes standing up .

“I can’t do this I am sorry but I can’t” I said grabbing my bag heading for the door.

I ran out of that place as far as my feet could carry me, I got to the car and Philile stepped out to give me a hug this one knows just when to chip in at the right time.

“I couldn’t Philile I don't want to go back to that day” I told heer.

“Its okay I understand” she said.

We drove to a nearby coffee shop and Sophie was waiting for us I looked at Philile and she shrugged her shoulders.

“She wanted to see you” she said.

“Exactly that so please don't be angry at her” Sophie said giving me a hug.

“How are you feeling” she asked the minute we all settled down.

“I am okay” I said.

“You don't have to pretend to be anything that you not, not with me” she said.

I looked at Philile again clearly this woman knows more.

“I found her crying the other day and she had no choice but to tell me” she said.

“I am so sorry Zobu” she said looking my way reaching across the table for my hand.

“You should have called I would have been there for you” she said.

“You can still be there” I told her.

“You two will cause me grey hair you know that” she said shaking her hand.

“Ma its not that bad she is okay” Philile said.

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26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">“Are you okay”  
she asked looking at me.

“I am getting there” I told.

The waiter came with three orders.

“I already ordered figured you guys might be hungry its both  
your favorites” she said.

“I would like some lemon water please” I said.

“And then what is going on” Sophie asked.

“I am trying to lose some weight” I said.

“What she actually means is that she is on a water only diet”  
Philile said.

“And you think that is healthy because” Sophie asked.

“Ungazosidina wena la idla and if this is all for Qhawe then he is  
not the man for you” she said.

I placed my hand on the table and my sparkling just popped up”  
Philele almost had a fit from screaming she didn’t even notice  
it.

“That’s new right he proposed” Philile said.

I nodded showing off.

“With that diamond he definitely is the one” Sophie said.

“Congratulationa Zo” Philile said still hogging my hand.

“Qhawe has nothing to do with me wanting to lose weight its all on me I feel horrible I just want my old body back” I said .

“Well you are going about it the wrong way and I am glad its not Qhawe pushing for a slimmer you not after he went through hoops for you way before you even said yes to dating him” she said.

“Went through hoops” I asked.

She looked at me and sighed.

“I wasn’t supposed to tell you this but the early bonuses you guys received were not from the company but from him to help your father” she said.

“And what about me” Philile asked .



“Well you guys come as a packages” she said.

“I don't think I ever told you this but us saying yes to Qhawe was the best decision ever” Philile said looking at me.

I couldn't help but laugh.

“Come back to work I know it has been months but please” she said.

“I do need something to take my mind of things” I said.

“Great as soon as you are ready I will be waiting” she said.

.....

QHAWE

I got home and for some reason the house was empty well that is what I thought till I smelled a home cooked meal, I thought Nkanyezi was in the kitchen but I found Zobu humming and cooking. My mouth watered at the sight of her in action and because of the smell ofcourse. I stood there and watched how she moved swiftly and for odd reason she looked even more beautiful these days. I just couldn't wrap my mind around the things people said about her on twitter she was doing the rounds today, apparently someone told the media about my new love interest and how she lacks class and style. A picture of her in oversized tracksuits was going around being reposted and re twitted, some saying she is pretty just fat while others had only good things to say. I shook my head those trolls no nothing this woman right here is everything I said to myself.

“Like what you see” she asked.

I didn't realise she was aware that I am standing behind her.

“I love what I see” I told her coming from behind wrapping my arms around her.

She turned and kissed me then carried on with her cooking.

With her mood I doubt she saw the media pages today.

“Food will be ready in no time and before I forget our guests went for a drive” she told me

I shook my head knowing those two they are probably fucking wherever they are.

“I will go take a shower then” I said.

“Great idea” she said.

I went up to our bedroom and took a quick shower then came down to find her already plating up.

“Need any help” I asked.

“Just go sit in the lounge I will be right there” she told.

“Sthandwa sam is everything okay” I asked.

“Everything is fine” she said smiling .

She came back with a basin filled water and asked me to take off my shoes, I did and she washed my feet in a gentle massage soothing way I kept my eyes on her I remembered my father telling how Ma used to honor him kungonakale lutho, she finished up and smiled going to the kitchen.

In no time she came back holding a small basin filled with water and a dish cloth hanging over her arm.

“Sekulungile ukudla” she said going on her knees.

I washed my hands still looking at her she stood up and brought my food.

She placed the food in front of me and sat next to me resting her head on shoulder.

“Thank you for loving me” she said holding my hand.

I pulled away and looked her in the eyes this is it I have finally found my home, she is the one my heart sees and beats for man I love this woman with all of my being.

“Wena owase Mambatheni” I said kissing her forehead.

## SOPHIE

I looked at Nandi's pictures and sighed so much went wrong in just a blink of an eye, everything was fine till my parents suggested marriage only then Nandi had fallen in love with one of the Mbatha brother's she gave up everything for love. I then looked at Zobuhle's picture how can life be so unfair and cruel to such a gentle soul. I shook my head thinking of everything that she has been through maybe if we tried harder then things would have been different. I would have had my sister and her kids would have know me not as a stranger but as their aunt.

"You are doing it again" My husband said settling next to me.

I looked at him and smiled.

"Maybe if we tried harder and found her" I said.

"Your sister never wanted to be found we both know that" he said.

"I miss her" I told him.

"She was your sister you two were close" he said laughing.

"Why the laugh" I asked.

"I remember how she refused my brother's hand in marriage" he said.

I couldn't help but laugh Nandi was feisty and she stood her ground.

"She refused a prince and settled for a commoner.

"She settled for love she wanted more than to be a kept wife she need more and your brother could never give her that" I said.

"I know" he said nodding his head.

"When are you telling Zibuhle who you are" he asked.

I shook my head thinking about the day I met her I knew she was my blood, I knew she was my sister's child I could feel it and the resemblance was unmistakable. Which each time I spent with her the harder it got and the truth became a distant thing.

"I don't think I can" I said.

"You have to she needs to know who her people are" he said.

"And what if she hates me or wants nothing to do with us" I asked.

"Then you let her be and try again sure it will be hard to digest but she will come around" he said.

I wasn't going to lie to myself he was telling the truth making sense.

"You need to stop being her guardian angel and start being her aunt" he said.

"When the time is right" I said.

"Is the time ever right for such things" he asked.

"But where do I start" I asked.

"From the beginning and with what you have been telling me history is repeating itself" he said.

"In the worst possible way" I said.

"There you have it and call your brother he needs to know" he said.

I nodded my head and thought for a while the truth needs to be told and I pray we don't lose Zobuhle or Nqaba in the process.

.....

ZOBUHLE



I sat in the dark twiddling my thumbs with everything that has happened I was going to finally tell Qhawe the truth, I was going to be honest about the child we lost. Yesterday I watched the news and followed Nontle's story she was in an accident that left her in a coma, she is a socialite so her making news wasn't new but the headlines shocked everyone "Woman wearing fake baby bump in a almost fatal accident" I still can't believe that she was wearing a fake pregnancy what for to trap someone probably, she's nothing but a fake I said to myself. I stopped and chuckled I am another fake and I lied to the man I love without blinking an eye. I looked at the baby scans and I could feel his strong heart beat in my ear in little time I had to give him up. I heard Qhawe's car in the drive way and stood up my heart close to coming out of my chest there was no way I was about to turn back now.

He switched the lights on and almost passed me but my sniffing got to him.

He turned and looked at me narrowing his eyes tilting his head to the side.

"Zobuhle" he said making his way to me.

"What is going on" he asked looking at me.

I was suddenly tongue tied everything I had planned to say flew out the window the moment he walked through that door.

I shouldn't have kept quiet till this long I was supposed to say something anything even before he proposed. I shook my head because I couldn't bring myself to say it I kept stumbling over the words.

"Uzongidina Zobuhle" he said sounding impatient.

he looked at my hand took the baby scan then looked at me.

"Whose child is it" he asked.

He was angry and me being quiet made things worse.

"Who ia the father Zobuhle" he asked hitting the counter.

I closed my eyes getting a freight.

"If you don't start talking I am going to make you talk" he said breathing heavily.

"You" I said.

"Tell me you are kicking you and I haven't been intimate since you cake back" he shouted.

"You were the father Qhawe but I lost the baby" I said swallow hard.

"You lost the baby" he said looking at me.

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26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">I nodded my head.

"How does someone lose a child and not say anything" he said tilting his head.

"It's true Qhawe" I said.

"Not unless you killed my child" he said.

I looked at him and shook my head.

"I had to choose and I chose you" His face tightened and he started breathing hard uncontrollable.

"Don't tell me you killed my child don't tell me you aborted my baby" he said.

"I am so sorry" I said.

"I made you sick okay you were in the hospit because of me,Mhlaba's famjkyy oerfonedy a ritual on me that made any mam who slept with me to die,but you dksntt instead you only got sick unknowingly but that is untill your body gave up. The doctors didn't know what was wrong or how to help you and only I could" I said.

"By killing our child" he asked pinning me against the wall by holding my arms.

"The Nxumalo ancestors said a life for a life to release your soul I had to give up our child" I said.

He towered over me tears streaming down his face.

"Tell me this is a joke Zobuhle that you are trying to get a reaction out of me" he said softly.

I shook my head.

"Why why didn't you let me die" he asked.

"I couldn't watch you get weaker and colder by the day it tore me apart knowing that it was my fault" I said.

"He was my son" he shouted in my face.

"And he was my son too,I felt him move and I heard his heart beat and they took him away from me in the most painful way" I shouted back.

"You let me go on as if nothing happened,you mourned him and denied me the chance to grieve my son how could you" he asked letting go.

"I wanted to tell you but I couldn't I knew it would hurt you ngiyaxolisa" I said.

"You gave them my son and said nothing,you lost our baby and said nothing I went down on one knee and asked you to marry

me and still you said nothing" he said giving a look of disgust and hurt.

"Don't look at me like that he was also my son" I said.

He trashed the house and looked at me.

"Your son" he shouted.

I closed my eyes he was more than angry he was livid I lost the baby a while ago but still said nothing, I was seeing a whole new face and definition to being angry.

"Nyambose please look at me" I begged.

He shook his head and sniffed.

"I love you and I am sorry please don't walk away please" I said making my way to him.

He sent me flying to the floor.

"Don't you dare touch me" he said through gritted teeth.

"As hard and painful as it was I would still do it if it meant having you come back to me" I told him.

He turned and looked at me.

"You had no right to keep this from me no right Mambatha" he said walking out.

"Qhawe" I screamed the moment at the sound of the door slamming.

....

NKANYEZI

I was in Ngwane's arms when Zobuhle called crying her eyes out, I untangled myself from his hold and asked her what is wrong but I couldn't hear a thing. She wasn't making any sense and her words were broken I had to put on my clothes and head to her house.

I found the house in a mess and she was on the floor crying clasping to a picture. I walked closer to her and she looked at me

"He left" she said shaking her head.

"Who Zo talk to me" I said making her look at me.

I took the picture she was holding and it was a baby scan dated months ago.

"I told him the truth" she said.

"What truth Zo you are not making any sense" I said.

She tried wiping her tears but the exercise was futile she was hurting.

"I told him about our baby and he walked out I have hurt him Nkanyezi and I don't see him forgiving me" she said standing up.

I looked at her and for some reason I think she was in pain.

"I need to find him he needs to know that I didn't mean to hurt him" she said heading for the door.

"Zo it's late let me call Ngwane maybe he can find him" I said.

"I am wrong but I didn't mean to hurt him" she said.

I nodded my head giving her a hug.

"He hates me" she said holding me tight.

## QHAWE

I sat next to my father I was lucky he he didn't hit me or teach me a lesson after I told him I put my hands in Zobu yes I didn't hit her but I almost did. I looked at him hoping he would say something but he shook his head and sighed standing up.

"Would would you walk out on her like that" he asked.

"She lied baba" I told him.

"We all lie Qhawe that's our nature as people" he said.

I looked at him.

"In my line of work I learned that everyone lies" he said

"Baba this is not just lie we are talking about my child a son" I said.

"And she was the mother do you think it was easy for her to chose between her own flesh and blood and you" he asked.

"That girl loves you more than you will ever know, everything she has ever done is for you. She gave up her son for you, she hid her past because of you to not have you look at her differently, she never mentioned her abusive past to or the fact



that she lost her first love only to be thrown in the deep end"  
he said looking at me.

"And what have you done for her" he asked.

I was out of words he was he saying a mouthful and for some reason I was hearing him.

"She didn't want you to die she couldn't live with the fact that she was the cause of your death, she did what she thought was best logical and made sense which was to save you" he said.

"I love you Qhawe and I would never lead you astray Zobuhle loves you and I am sorry that she took time to tell you the truth but she is the one who lost the baby, she is the one who felt that pain, she is the one who probably doesn't sleep at night thinking about her son" he said.

"Think now and think carefully do you want to walk away from this or do you want to sit down and fix this" he asked.

I thought for a while and I wanted to fix us more than anything.

"Thank you baba" I said.

"You were destined for greatness Qhawe and Zobuhle is part of that greatness" he said smiling.

"I love you ndodana" he said.

"I love you baba" I said.

My mind raced back to when I pushed her I closed my eyes and sighed she is probably scared where she is.

.....

Zobuhle

Having Nkanyezi here made things better but having Qhawe's mother here made me realise that I wasn't alone in all this. Last night I was hysterical I didn't mean for things to end up that way, I know I kept the truth from him but I was hoping he would try and understand where I was coming from.

I got out of bed and headed to the kitchen to find Ma making breakfast and Nkanyezi putting things in place. Last I was so out of it mentally I didn't notice Qhawe left the place, I shook my head helping Nkanyezi this is all my fault I have tried calling Qhawe but he is not picking up.

"You shouldn't be doing this I will manage" Nkanyezi said.

"It's okay I need something to keep me busy" I said.

"Have you heard anything from Ngwane" I asked.

"She shook her head.

"Ma have you heard anything from Zibulo or Baba" I asked.

"Nothing yet but I know he is okay wherever he is and I know he will come back home" she said looking at me.

That is all she has been doing since she got here look at me as if something is wrong,if I didn't know better I would say she pity's me for whatever reason.

"I think I should go looking for him" I said looking at my ring,I know I said I would accept whatever he decides but I can't lose him not when I know my life will never be the same if we parted.

"Zobuhle he needs time alone give him that" Nkanyezi said.

"And what if all that time goes to his head and he decides he doesn't want to share his life with me anymore a person who keeps secrets" I asked.

"Don't say that Zobuhle" Ma said.

"It's true Ma all I have done is keep secrets from your son" I said shaking my head.

"We have secrets and trust me when I say no one ia perfect" Ma said smiling.

"I think I will go change" I said heading to the bedroom I closed the door behind me and reached for my phone.

"I know that right now you are angry and that you probably want nothing to do with me, I told myself that I would accept anything but I refuse to let go of what we have I refuse to even think of losing you. I am not perfect Nyambose but I love you maybe not enough in your eyes because I kept this from you but I truly do. I am sorry that I chose you and gave up our son, I am sorry that I didn't let you go to meet your ancestors when it wasn't your time. I am sorry that I denied your son a chance to grow up with a be grieved and sad mother, I am sorry that I denied your son a chance to grow up without an amazing father. I am sorry that I didn't choose life without you that I couldn't see myself raising our son without you knowing I was the cause. I am sorry that I hurt us please forgive me please come home I need you" I said pressing send.

I waited for a while but he didn't respond I attempted to call but decided against it, if he wants to come then he will regardless of what I do or say I just need to trust in us. I abruptly stood up from the bed and tripped over my gown having my foot hook in one of the pockets. I fell and the most excruciating pain rippled through me, I tried standing up but it felt like I was being pulled to the ground.

"Ma" I screamed.

She rushed in followed by Nkanyezi.

"Ma she's bleeding we need to take her to the hospital"  
Nkanyezi said.

"Come let's help her up" Ma said holding my arm.

"It's too painful Ma I can't stand" I said letting out a painful cry.

"Ma I will hold her on this side you try holding her on that side  
work with us Zo" Nkanyezi said.

.....

MRS MTHETHWA

Our biggest and worst nightmare came to life, I didn't want to believe it but it was here staring us in the eyes. I had my suspicions but I was afraid to voice them out. Zobu has been through a lot and she has come so far I didn't want to set her back. Weeks turned into months and when she didn't say anything I figured everything was just in my head. But the weight gain, her moods changing and how she would eat the oddest of hours and now the bleeding. I shook my head and looked Nkanyezi her pants were stained with blood.

"Ma don't tell me she's pregnant" sjw said.

"That is the only explanation" I said.

"I am praying she losses this one" shw said.

"For the first time in my life I also praying for that miracle" I said

As unholy and unchristian as I sounded like at this moment I didn't want this baby for Zobuhle, she didn't deseve any of this no woman did.

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26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">I took my phone and called Babakhe.

"Mawabo" he said.

"Babakhe" I said breathing heavily.

"What's wrong mkami" he asked.

Where was I to begin and how was I to say all of this.

"Zobuhle just got admitted I know Qhawe's is with you please tell him to get to the hospital she's going to need him" I said.

"What is wrong" he asked.

"We don't know yet just tell Qhawe to come" I said.

"He left a while ago to go home but I will call him now he should be there soon" he said.

It took an hour for Qhawe to get here just as he appeared down the corridor Zobuhle screamed filled the entire corridor itself, Nkanyezi and I rushed to her ward and she was standing on her two feet holding a scalpel close to her neck. I cringed the sight of blood already flowing from where she had the knife.

"Mam please one wrong move and you are dead" The doctor said.

"I want you to do another test I am not pregnant I can't be pregnant" She said shouting at the doctor.

"I ran the test twice and everything is accurate you are four months pregnant" the doctor said.

She shook her head tears falling off her eyes.

"No" she said in a whisper.

"Zo put the knife down" Nkanyezi said.

"I can't be pregnant Nkanyezi I am not strong like you" she said pressing harder on her neck.

"Zo you are hurting yourself sisi please put the knife down" I pleaded.

The doctor attempted to walk closer to Zobuhle but she moved the knife and placed it on her belly.

"Take one more step and I will do it" she said.

"Take this thing out of me" she said looking at the doctor.

"it's too late to terminate and with all the toxins and supplements we found in you your life is in danger" the doctor said.

"I don't care I don't want this baby please I am begging you take it out of me" she pleaded.

"You had a bad fall with that said we can't do anything till the swelling goes down" the doctor said.

"Zobu" Qhawe said behind us.

"I don't want this baby Nyambose" she said.

"Put the knife down Sthandwa sam" he said.

"I can't do it"Zobuhle said closing her eyes.

I looked at Qhawe and I had never seen my baby boy scared like this.

He made his way and stood in front of her.

"Forget the world okay,forget the voices just look at me see me" he said.

"They lied to me Qhawe that doctor lied to me" she cried.



"I know it hurts I know they lied but hurting yourself won't solve anything,look at me Mambatha" he said.

"Angifuni lengane mina" she said.

"I know but we can talk about this justt put the knife down,I am begging you Zobuhle don't hirtt us okay don't break us" Qhawe said.

"We can get through anything even this trust in our love I've got you and I am never letting you go" he said slowly making his way to her.

I held Nkanyezi's hand and wiped my tears.

"Give me the knife" he said.

She slowly gave up the knife and bolted into a cry that left me heartbroken.

Why was all of this happening to her she's too young to be going through so much,will she survive this on top of everything.

.....

QHAWWE

I don't know how can life change so drastically in a short period of time,I was finally convinced that we were over the troubles and hurt of this world but now this the universe decides to throw in a baby. An innocent child that did nothing to anyone and hertrt it was about to suffer the sin of itst father.

I looked at Zobuhle sleeping I did this apparently that fall caused all this.

"If I didn't know better I would say this child didn't want to know and yes some women do get their periods while pregnant it's common just not natural" the doctor said.

I was confused Zobuhle was getting her periods not like before but she got them.

I shook my head and closed my eyes how do I take away her pain I found myself saying.

I placed my hand on her belly and for the first time in a long one I found myself wanting this baby,I was being selfish and inconsiderate but I wanted to see a part of her in this baby so bad I couldn't imagine her going through with anything other than keeping the baby. I know the father is evil but this baby has so much good in it because if Zobuhle. I brushed her belly and smiled was it wrong or me to want her to keep this baby yes in so more ways than one it was but something in me didn't care how,when and who the father was. This child is a

part of Zobuhle meaning she's a part me just like I am a part of Zobuhle.

"I know the feelings of anger, hate, resentment will shadow you mind and fill your heart but I want to know that whatever you decide I will be there holding your hand, I will love you no matter what but I also want you to know that this child is a part of you" I said.

"I want you to know that should you keep him or her I will love them with all my heart, I will be there for you and them always okay" I said.

"I am sorry that you are hurting but all this will pass trust me" I said kissing her forehead.

The doctor patched her neck up seeing her like that made want to shield her from everything and everyone.

She opened her eyes and I wondered if she heard all that, she looked at me and said nothing.

"Why are you punishing me for what I did" she asked tears streaming down her face.

I shook my head.

"Because it's an innocent child and she's a part of you" I said.

She shook her head and withdrew her hand from mine.

"Phuma Qhawe" she said.

"Zo please" I said.

"Phuma Nyambose" she said calmly.

## ZOBUHLE

I got back from the hospital about two weeks ago and everything has been spinning out of control. I honestly don't know if I am coming or going and why things have to be this hard. I think I am cursed or maybe I did something to someone and Karma is finally finding its way home. I shook my head looking at my belly the baby was fully growing inside me feeding off me. It hurt and I hated it so much no matter how hard I try to say it's still mine he or she is a part of me but nothing. Qhawe on the other hand is excited and I hate that he is why can't he be like me and be angry. Why can't he see my pain and feel and not expect me to go through with this. Apparently the doctor's were on Mhlaba's payroll and so they did everything he told them including lying to me about the rape kit. I was truly naive to believe that those men could be on my side and not his. I stood up from the bed and got the box in the wardrobe, I went through it and found just what I was looking for my documents from my matric certificate to how I got through first, second and third year till I dropped out on the fourth. Back then I knew who I was what I wanted and I was going to get it. I looked at my belly and shook my head baby or not I am going back to school. I had been thinking quite a lot if

anything were to happen to Qhawe the I would be all alone and if we were to get married and either one of decided to call it quits then I would leave the marriage with nothing because I came with nothing,I looked around and realised all this is Qhawe not me the money the cars even the house it's all Qhawe. I only have the flat I share with Philile and nothing other than that. The door opened and Qhaew walked in and sat on the bed lokkinh at the box.

"What's going on" he asked.

"I am going back to school" I said.

If I don't become a doctor the I will surely open a pharmaceutical company.

"What do you mean you are going to school" He aksedt raising his eye brow.

"I have decided that I am leaving and I am going back to school" I said.

"We never spoke about that" he said.

"There's nothing to discuss my mind is already made up" I told him.

"And what about me" he asked.

"You are going to be fine" I said.

"Zobuhle you want to leave with my .." he held his tongue and shook his head.

"I am leaving Qhawe to avoid all of this the pressure and uncertainty" I said.

"I need to be alone and find me because I am drowning. I need to think if I can live with the loss of another child at my hands, I need to think if I can live with the fact that if anything happens to this child I might not have kids of my own in the future" I said.

"I know you want to help but right now I need you to help me get through all this" I said.

"And the wedding do you still want to marry me" he asked.

"Yes but not now not when things are like" I said.

he nodded his head and bit his lip.

"Are you breaking up with me" I shook my head.

"I am not breaking up with you, I don't see life without you but at the same time I don't want to hurt us, I don't want to be the reason we break and never recover" I said.

"Is it because I want this baby" he asked.

"Partly yes you want this baby and I hate it, you are happy and I am miserable but I love you more for wanting to love this child" I said putting my hands on his face.

"I love you" I said.

He went for my mouth and kissed me I didn't return the kiss I had been long, he pulled away but I stopped him.

"Don't stop" I said.

The kiss got heated that I was getting excited in a good way.

"I will be the one leaving you stay here" he said pulling away.

"But this is your house" I said.

"And you are my home, I will help you enrol at any varsity of your choice and I will make sure to take to school, doctor's appointments and therapy that is if you allow me" he said.

"You are not angry" I asked.

"No" he said kissing my hand.

"Can I hold her" he asked.

Qhawe is convinced the child is a girl.

I nodded even though I wasn't comfortable.

He brushed my belly and chuckled I think the rascal moved.

"Hey there pumpkin" he said smiling.

"Daddy is leaving well not for good mommy needs time and space to herself which is why I need to go, one day when you are older and wiser you will understand why. I want you to do me



a few favours take care of your mom for me, behave you self dont kick a lot we don't want to scare her okay" he said looking at me.

"I love you" he said looking into my eyes.

He went down and kissed my belly then kissed me resting his forehead on mine.

"We will get through this you and I" he said.

"One last thing" he said pulling me to the bed and having me rest my head on his chest with his one hand on my belly.

I need this I need to be strong without being pushed to be strong, I need this for me and for him I have learned Qhawe and he needs a strong woman with so much to give I was once that before all this and now it's time I get my life in order.

.....

Sophie

I had a talk with brother and it was decided Zobuhle needs to go home where her mother was born and where her people are. This meant her father breaking the news to her and he

needed to do it soon before something bad befalls Zobuhle again.

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26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">I reached for my phone calling him he picked up on third ring.

"Mbatha" I said.

"What do you want" he asked.

"Is that a way to talk to aunt of your kids" I asked.

"I have a long day ahead of me so pleasst get the point" he said.

"It's about Zobuhle she needs to come home" I said.

"Which home because as far as I know she is home" he said.

"Stop being fighting this and stop being stubborn we both know Zobuhle doesnty belong to the Mbatha's" I told him.

"I don't carr what legend or the prophecy says shw is my brother's child and she's a half bread not full royalty" he shouted.

"We both know that doesn't matter she is Nandi's child and was chosen to lead her people" I shouted back.

"You want to get my daughter killed Sophie we all know Royalty is a dirty game" he said.

"If you don't tell her truth then we will all lose her and it would be on your head" I said.

"She's not a Queen she knows nothing about her mother's past" he said.

"You chose to keep that away from her if you had brought my sister's kids home none of this would have happened to her none" I said.

"I promised my brother that I would never tell them" he said.

"And you think the Nxumalo ancestors cared about your promise,Zobuy meeting Sbani wasn't by chance they showed her to them" I said.

"Tell them the truth Mbatha or I will" I said.

"I will come down there as soon as I can" he said.

"Very well the sooner the better" I said ending the call.

"And what did he say" My husband asked.

"It took a while but he agreed to come" I said.

"Great hopefully that young girl will get to know peace after this" he said.

"I hope so too" I said settling next to him.

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ZOBUHLE

I had the most bizarre phone call with my father, he said I should expect him any day from today we need to talk about something relating to my parents. Truth be told I never made peace with their deaths it was sudden and it left a huge hole in my heart and so many questions that are not answered. I looked at the bouquet next to me they were Zenkosi's favourite I haven't seen her since she gave birth and I think it was best that way till I dealt with this. Zibulo walked in and found me standing by the kitchen counter.

"Hey" he said.

"Hi" I said.

"How are you feeling" he asked.

"I am getting there and you" I asked..

"We have our hands full with the new addition your family" he said smiling.

I nodded my head knowing what I know and being alone with him in the same room felt like I was betraying Zenkosi and Qhawe. At first I thought I was seeing things and that I was

going crazy but Nkanyezi confirmed that I wasn't and that scared me.

"You know don't you" he said looking at me.

I nodded me head.

"Look I don't want things between us to change and I know I haven't been married but I know what stress,lack of communication and neglecting your partner unknowingly does" I said.

"I know what I feel Zobuhle I am not a child" He said.

"Still I love Qhawe and it probably won't make to you but he is the only man I will ever love no one else" I told him.

"I rdsoet Zenkosi and I would never do anything to hurt her just like you love Qhawe and Zen and would never hurt them" I said.

He nodded his head.

"You and I can never be" I told him.

"I would hurt Zen or Mkhulu like that" he said breathing heavily.

"I got you this" I said giving him a full body massage voucher and the flowers.

"You thought of everything didn't you" he said chuckling.

"Being a mother, wife and business woman is a lot. I believe she will appreciate being pampered in the comfort of her own house while you look after the kids" I said.

"Show her that you are still the Zibulo she fell in love with" I said.

"I now know why my brother loves you this much" he said.

I cleared my throat and smiled.

"Thank you" he said.

I nodded my head and walked him to the door. It would hurt so many people if Zibulo were to break Zen's heart I really hope he forgets about what he thinks he feels for me.

I looked at my ring and sighed loving someone isn't easy as we think in fact love alone isn't enough.

Whoever said imfundo kayigugelwa lied to us well that's how it feels right now. Like promised Qhawe helped me enrol and everything went smooth registered for the second semester I couldn't wait in fact didn't want to waste more time by staying at home doing nothing. My mind feels messed up I can't seem to understand the new meterial and then my brain feels a bit rusty but all is not bad or lost see Qhawe had been helping me alot with assignments and everything. I still can't believe he moved out and kept to his word,he does come around though in the mornings and afternoons just to see if I am okay and the house is packed with bulky men and women as security. And the best thing is that although I fell apart these past weeks and days trying to wrap my head around the idea of this baby growing inside me I won't lie I have bee doing okay and on days when I am not coping Qhawe is the first person I call followed by my therapist. I am still attending my classes and Qhawe takes me there and to all the other places like school and to the doctor's. I am lucky to have him and lately we have been spending more time together I visit the loft and leave when it starts gettinhy dark. I cook and we do all the things we used to do I won't lie beingt apart even though it's only been a month has been hard. Having to constantly wake up to an empty bed having no one to hold me at night hurts. I know I said I needed space but I have also realised that I need him more now more

than ever. He is still excited and over the moon about the baby I have decided to let him be, at first I truly wanted something bad to happen to this baby and not have to live with the burden of knowing that I did something but then I thought and realised that it wouldn't be fair on him to lose yet another child.

Therapy has been great and God knows that I have cried and cussed till I was all out and finally faced my fears and took myself there and watched everything and felt everything done to me. I was angry but then I thought about Qhawe and asked myself for how long will I be angry? When he is love and peace in my eyes I can't carry this hatred and anger and still love Qhawe it wouldn't make sense. But God know that when it comes to this child I can't bring myself to feel anything for it I don't want to I really don't want to.

"You are not listening" he says tapping the pen on the notebook.

I look at him and smile today I wanted to see him so bad I drove here at about 5am and let myself in just to cuddle with him.

"Okay what's wrong" he asks.

"Nothing I am just tired" I say.

"Okay let me give you a fully body massage" he says giving me a side smile.

"I would love that" I say.



He starts rubbing my feet and the feeling is out of this world. His hands knead my feet and heels in way that I just want to drift away.

"Don't slepp Zobuhle" he says.

"But this is so good I can't keep my eyes open" I tell.

He laughs and stops looking at me.

"Zo" he says.

"Qhawe don't stop you promised me a full massage" I tell him.

"Zo look at me" he says.

I open my eyes and find him starring.

"I want to come" he says.

The Lord has heard my plea see good things happening.

"When" I ask.

"When you are ready I miss you and I miss our bed" he says.

"I miss you too so much" I say.

"Can we wait till baba leaves then you can come home" I tell him.

He stands and up and starts dancing reaching for my hand.

"Buya la" he says.

I shake my head giving him my hand.

"Dance with me" he says wrapping his arms around my waist.

The baby bump causes a barrier but that doesn't matter because this man of mine decides to stand behind me and hold my belly while kissing my neck.

"Qhawe" I say.

"What I miss you" he whispers.

"Sthandwa" I say closing my eyes.

"Mama" he says inhaling my scent.

I laugh because he has never said that before.

"I love you" I tell him.

"Mina ke ngiyakuthanda" he says.

I turn and slide my hand inside his pants touching his already hard cock.

His eyes widen and a smile spreads across his lip, he moves his hands down my waist to and grabs my arse.

"I miss you" I tell him nodding my head but it takes long for him to understand and grasp the full meaning of me missing him.

I take my hand out and bite my lip dropping my dress to the floor then helping him to take off his clothes.

He stops me just as hands reach for his belt.

"We don't have to rush" he says shutting his eyes.

I know he is tired of cold showers and watching me naked but can't be inside me.

"I want you to make love to me like all the other times you have held me" I say.

He swoops me up and places me on the bed taking off his pants leaving him stark naked. I missed this the sight of his stallion standing hard and ready and take me.

His eyes dance with mischief when he places his hand on my nookie and smiles.

He pulls down my thong trust me when I say I don't know I ended up wearing it.

He pulls it down and sniffs tit with his eyes closed.

"You dirty man" I say.

He parts my legs and starts kissing my inner thighs till he reaches my temple.

He settles there for a while and chuckles.

"Dammit woman learn how to shave" he says kissing me nevertheless.

"Don't.. don't do that I want to see all of you" he says parting my legs and using his thumb and index finger to separate my folds and uses his tongue to lick me.

I gasp feeling the wetness and warmth of his tongue it's been too long.

He pulls away and removes my hands from my face.

"What did say about hiding" he says finger tucking me out of the blue.

My hips go up but he slowly puts me down and uses his thumb to rub my bean till I lose all control.

"Tell me to stop" he says giving that side smile.

I shake my head parting my thighs even more.

"Dammit Zobu you're creaming" he says pulling out coming to kiss me.

The kiss drives me crazy while his gentle caress on my boobs wants me to confess my love. The feel of his cock against my thighs and it slightly touching my entrance makes me want to scream.

He gently pushes himself in and with each push my blood rush my heart and brain the feeling is just out of this world unexplainable.

"Are you okay" he asks.

I nod my head and pull him close.

"Careful" he says kissing my neck while he does me slowly, his lips move from my neck and his hands grab on my thighs. I slow and sweet pace makes me want to cry and confess all my sin.

He pulls away and uses the tip of his cock to rub on my clit and slowly pushes himself inside only to pull out again.

I hold on to the pillow and gasp this feeling is sweet I don't want this moment to stop.

"Don't stop Nyambose don't stop oh oh" He starts deep stoking and thrusting making me dig my nails on his arms.

"I love you" he says doing me slow I move my hips to the side and bite my lip with him starring down on me.

"Yes yes oh Qhawe" His groan feel the room and my screams follow.

He ups his pace and fucks me then give it to me slow. I missed this feeling all of him inside me.

"I can't hold it" he says really holding my waist and thrusting inside me till we both cum undone. He pulls out and collapses next to me catching his breathe having me rest my head on his chest.

"I am spending the night" I say.

"Are you sure" he asks.

I nod my head placing my hand on his chest.

He kisses my forehead then my lips smiling.

"Zobuhle" he says.

"Mhmm" I say.

"Why me" he asks..

I look up and smile.

26, 26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"Why not you" I tell him.

"I love you Qhawe so much that without you I am incomplete. You are my heart the one thing that makes me crazy and sane at the same time. I feel lost without you and I can't really say why I love you this much but you are amazing and you love me effortlessly. You haven't tried to change not even once, you have never tried to fix but you have carried and loved me regardless of the baggage" I say.

"I know I said I want to be better for me but truth is I am doing it for us, I don't want you to regret us" I say.

"I would never regret us, us is the best thing that has ever happened to me I would give up all these worldly possession

for you to have a forever with you. And now I haven't tried to fix you or change you because you are perfect with imperfections and you are not broken just bruised and bruises heal" he says.

"I want to marry you Nyambose and be the wife that you deserve and more" I say.

"And I want to be the husband you love, desire and deserve" he says.

I look at him and smile this man's love nothing I have ever seen before.

I spent the night Qhawe's place and we talked all night and I laughed like never before. He held me and kisses in all the parts of my body and finally he just looked at me and admired me. He dropped me off at home and said he would pass by later to bring me my muffins. I walked inside the house and found Sophie with her husband sitting with my dad and Nqaba. One of the reasons I have been spending more time with Qhawe is that my father came to visit with Nqaba of all people. My father never travels with this one we all know he's a headache and half. Their stay was supposed to be short lived but he kept telling there were things he was fixing.

I greeted and settled down next to Nqaba.

"What did you do" I asked.

"Nothing this woman showed up and things got tense" Nqaba said shrugging his shoulders.

"Baba what's going on" I asked.

I could tell something was off and that they knew each other.

He said nothing and looked at Sophie.

"Sophie is there something wrong is it work" I asked.

she shook her head.

"Okay then someone has to say something because something is going on" I said.

"I want you two to listen and understand" Baba said.

"This woman is your aunt she's your mother's sister" he said looking at us.

"Our mother doesn't have a family" I said.

"She does and that's is why I am here to tell you the truth"  
Sophie said.

"Baba" I said looking at him.

"Listen Zobuhle please" he said.



"Your father is telling the truth I am your mother's sister, Nandi was my younger sister she was a princess from the Mphemba village" she said.

I looked at my father hoping he would stop Sophie because this wasn't making sense but he wasn't stopping her.

"Your mother had royal blood running through veins, she was beautiful and smart and she was chosen from birth to lead our father's people she was supposed to lead her people and be their Queen but when it was time for her to get married she refused because she had fallen in love with your father. Your mother left everything and ran away with your father, she gave up her family and the throne for us all of it just for love" she said looking at us.

"Zo is thos true mama was Queen you didn't tell me this" Nqaba said.

I looked at my father and tears welled up this wasn't true if it was Baba was going to tell us.

"Your mother getting sick wasn't natural it wasn't western, she needed to come back home and take her place amongst her people but she didn't listen the ancestors only wanted her to come home but she didn't listen. I tried looking for her bitw she didn't want to to be found I really tried and failed" she said wiping her tears.

"Baba" I said looking at him.

"I made a promise to your parents that I would never tell you, that I would never allow you to carry this burden" He said.

"A promise baba you said you knew nothing about mama family but you lied" I said standing up.

"Zobuhle please now is not the time to be angry sisi just try to understand wherever everyone is coming from" she said.

"You came into my life under false pretence and pretended to be something you are not and you baba you lied to us your children you lied" I said heading for the door.

"Your ancestors not mine killed my mother as some sort punishment, I am not a Ntuli uyangizwa I am a Mbatha and I am no one's Queen" I said.

"Zo you are not in a state to drive" Baba said.

I turned and looked at him.

"You knew all along and said nothing and that hurts more, Thank you for telling us the truth Mamkhulu we are your sister's children and you are our aunt great" I said walking out.

Tears fell the moment I slammed the car door the closest I have to my mother is in that house, I knew the connection we had was strong but this I didn't expect I am both shocked and disappointed at my dad.

.....

QHAWE

Sophie sat opposite me in my office with a picture on the table. I was still stunned taken aback by the picture in question it was Zobu and I holding hands but in a different time or live the past.

I looked at her and she started narrating a who Zobuhle was and who her mother was, I know the Ntuli's and they are wealthy and well respected people.

I shook my head still looking at the picture it could be photoshopped or something.

"Those are my grandparents it was said their love would come back to life in another world through a young couple" she said looking at me.

"And what does that have to do with me" I asked.

"Look at the picture see the resemblance between you and Zo" said.

"The love you share is not of this world and only you two know the depths of it, it might not make sense but you two were

destined for each other. You were destined for great things destined to hold Zobuhle's hand and lead her people together" she said.

I shook my head and gave her the picture back.

"Look this sounds like some ancient legend and you have the wrong man, I am glad you have found Zobuhle but I want nothing to do with all this" I said.

"Qhawe listen to me you need to convince Zobu to come home and take her rightful place if not all this pain, suffering and despair will be never end" she said.

"If anything happens to Zobuhle or my child I swear I will come down on you like a ton of bricks" I told her.

"I would never hurt Zobuhle" she said looking at me.

"Please leave" I said walking her to the door.

I drove to the house and she wasn't at the house, I made my way to the loft and she was sitting in the dark I puy on the lights and noticed that her eyes were swollen and that she had been crying. I sat next to her and held her hands pulling her to my chest.

"I met my aunt today" she said smiling.

"That's good is she a good person" I asked.

She nodded her head and sniffed.

"My father killed himself because he couldn't live without my mother,he couldn't live with the grief and so he ended his life. My brother doesn't even remember my mother because he was young when she died. And the worse part if that her ancestors put her through that pain and agony because she chose love she chose my dad and paid for it" she said shaking her head.

"I am sorry" I said.

"It's okay I have you" she said holding my hand.

I stood up and kissed her cheek.

"Want some food" I asked.

She now nodded.

"Zo" I said getting her some ice cream and cheese.

"I see you" I said.

"I see you" she said.

I was proud of her she was handle this better than I expected but I couldn't stop thinking about Sophie and if there's anything truth to what she was saying and what it meant for us.

## ZONDI

With everything that has taken place I still couldn't believe that I was home, I remember how things were back in the day having a young prince meant my father having enemies which gunned for my life. The royal counsel then made a decision to have me live with one of my father's brothers he never really cared about the throne and so he raised me well. I consider him as my father than the king to me that man only contributed his semen and that's all, I looked out the window truth be told so much had changed I had changed and after witnessing Mhlaba turn into a vile animal because of the throne I was not sure I wanted it anymore. I came into Mhlaba and Sbani's lives as a distant cousin and later on became Mhlaba's right hand man as old as I am I took the position with hopes of changing him into a better man. I lost because with each attempt our father further poisoned his mind and fed him lies about what it meant to be a man. I stood aside and watched while my brother turned into an evil person and did nothing, how could I act when I was nothing in his eyes and his word was final and my father made him fed him that although he knew it wasn't always the truth. Sbani was to be king he was different from us but greed got to Mhlaba and he killed him he killed our brother

to get to the throne funny how he ended up in that bed miserable. I remembered telling Qhawe the truth and he promised to teach him a lesson but spare his life, He had turned into a vegetable couldn't walk that is what the doctors said that his condition was permanent, days after he had woken up he grew more darker and stone hearted he couldn't take not having his legs. I saw how it broke and shattered my mother when she learned the truth about Sbani's death her own son had killed her other son.

\*Flash back\*

I sat next to him and looked at him being in this bed was getting to him.

"Zwide" he said blinking.

"Mhlaba" I said clearing my throat.

"I have to avenge myself" he said.

I shook my head even though he was laying in this bed he still wasn't a changed a man in fact he was worse.

I remembered my promise to Qhawe that Mhlaba wouldn't get a chance to avenge himself.

"You messed with the wrong people and after what you did you deserve all this" I told him.

"I am your brother you are supposed to be on my side" He said getting angry.

"A brother you knew for long but only recognise now" I said.

"We all didn't know the truth baba never told us" He said.

"That Mthethwa messed with the wrong person and I will kill him" he said.

"Do you know how Sbani met Zobu" I asked.

"Yes they met while she was on her way back from school" he said.

I kaughed and shook my head my mind racing back to the first time we met Zobuhle she was in the river with her friend Philile, the most beautiful girl I had ever seen and that was Zobuhle she was shirtless and they were taking a bath. I made a mistake by looking at Sbani and saw his eyes I knew then that not only had she captured my heart but Sbani had fallen for her. I made a decision to then step aside and allow him to explore this which he did and he was the happiest soul ever till Mhlaba took it all away.

"You have always been selfish Mhlaba that has always been your problem blind to your faults" I said standing.

"If you won't help him then our father will and Zobuhle will pay along with her man" He said.



I nodded my head and looked at him for a moment I was going to go back out on my word and spare his life.

"Do you know why Qhawe spared you" I asked.

"He wasn't man enough to finish the job" he said confident in his speech.

"That's where you are wrong" I said pulling out the knife Qhawe gave me.

"Kill your own brother for what a stranger" he said looking at the door probably hoping someone was going to come to his aid.

"This is for my mother and Zobuhle" I said taking the pillow and smothering him till he was close to taking his last breath.

I removed the pillow and just as he was about to draw in his breath I placed my hand over his mouth tears welled up in his eyes and nothing in me moved.

I took the knife and placed it on his throat.

"I hope you burn in hell" I said slitting his throat.

I reached for my phone and and called Qhawe.

"Mthethwa" I said looking at Mhlaba take his last breath.

"Zwide" he said.

I could hear Zobuhle calling out his name and she sounded okay hope filled my heart that she was going to be fine.

"Its done" I said breathing out.

"Good till we meet again" He said.

.....

My mother brought me back when she placed her hand on my shoulder.

"Something bothering you" she asked.

I shook my head and she smiled.

"You miss her" I shook my head Zobuhle being away from this place was best for everyone more especially her.

"Your father refuses to let Mhlaba's death go" she said.

My father believes Qhawe sent people to kill his son.

"If he doesn't let this go or hurtd Zobuhle and her family in any way I will leave and nevet come back" I said.

"You can't leave the throne needs you I need you" she said softly.

"There will be no kindom once I am done with baba should he carry on with this silly idea of revenge" I said standing up.

"He failed all of us matter of fact he doesn't deserve to be king"  
I said walking away.

"He knows Zobuhle is pregnant and wants the child taken away  
from her"she said.

I turned and looked at her.

"And who said the child is a Nxumalo" I asked.

She looked at me and sighed.

"Ma tell that man to stay from Zobuhle or I swear I won't be  
responsible for I do to him why won't he let go" I shouted.

I was fed up with my mother standing by my father

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MR MBATHA

I sat with Qhawe's father talking about the kids and what lay  
ahead for them since the truth came out and with Zobuhle still  
at Qhawe's place we couldn't really talk things through. I tried  
calling her but she wasn't picking up she is probably still  
processing the news and getting used to the idea of not just  
being my baby girl but a whole Queen expected to rule and

lead people she knew nothing about. I shook my head and rubbed my eyes shaking my head.

"When kids are involved we sometimes do things we think are best for them" Mthethwa said looking my way.

I chuckled and nodded.

"For the longest time I thought I was protectinhg her from having to live her life thinking she's carrying the weight of the world" I said.

"At first I think that is what I believed but later on I kept the truth away for my own selfish reasons, I didn't want her being taken away from me or her going away to a whole new place without me my wife begged me to let their mothers side of the family to get to know them but my pride and fear wouldn't let" I said.

"I understand being a parent is not always easy" he said.

I nodded.

"Now the truth is out she doesn't want to hear me out" I said.

"If you are worried about her please don't be my son is with her and she is well taken care off" he said.

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26, 0.301961); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"I know and hopefully he convinces her to make the right choice and takes this path with her" I said.

"I still can't believe my son caught the eyes of a princess" He said laughing.

"He is one lucky man to have captured my daughter's heart" I said.

"We should get the lobola negotiations in way these kids have been through enough and deserve some peace and light in their lives" he said.

I nodded my head and gulped down my drink.

"To being family" I said.

"To family" he said nodding his head.

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QHAWE

I woke up to some noise in the house and quickly grabbed my gun and rushed to the kitchen, I stopped on my tracks and shook my head placing my gun on table Zobuhle had turned the

whole house upside down, I stood and watched her clean and scrub which breathing heavily she was sweating and it looked like she was trying to take her mind off of something.

"Sthandwa sam" I said.

She glanced at me and if looks could kill I would be dead.

I looked at the time and cleared my throat.

"Say what you want Qhawe and leave me alone" she said through gritted teeth.

"Its 2am in the morning and you are cleaning" I said.

"So what is it to you am I using your hands to clean" she asked moving around the kitchen making her way to lounge.

" Zo did I do something" I asked.

" We Qhawe phuma kimi" she said moving the couches around.

She tried lifting one of the couches and that made her scream.

"Baby" I said helping her up.

She shook her head hollowing her breath I was starting to get worried. "Talk to me" I said. "It's too soon" She said screaming.

"Ahhhhhh this can't be happening" she said holding her belly.

Seconds after that her water broke and all hell broke loose.

"Qhawe its too soon" She screamed hoding on to me.

This wasn't happening she is not supposed to give birth now this baby won't make it.

"Okay let get the keys to car" I say leaving her.

I got back and she was on the floor painfully screaming.

"Ma" she screamed.

"Its too painful I can't stand up" she said breathing in and out.

I looked at her not knowing what to do what does one do in such situations. "Nyambose call the ambulance" she shouted.

I nodded my head calling.

"Sthandwa sam breathe" I said holding her hand.

"The baby is on the way this baby is coming" she said.

I looked where she sat and she was bleeding seeing her like this was breakijg my heart.

I took her phone and called my mother placing her on speaker.

"Zobu" my mother said.

"Ma she's in labour and I don't know what to do" I said.

"What do you mean she's in labour Zobuhle is not due anytime soon" she said. "Ma"Zobuhle screamed even louder.

"Zobuhle sisi how far are your contractions" Ma asked.

"I don't know ma but it hurts this baby wants to kill me" she said. "Qhawe did you call the ambulance" she asked.

"Yes but Ma she's bleeding now" I said.

"Okay get some towels warm water and string" She said.

"String" I asked.

"For the cord try getting her to relax and breathing I am on my way there" she said.

I got all the things my mother said I should and held her hand but she wasn't having it.

"This baby is trying to kill me Qhawe this baby wants to kill me" she cried.

"Tell me what do and I will do it" I said"

"Take it out of me" she said pushing.

She was pushing the baby out and I had to take charge and deliver my baby.

She parted her legs and started pushing real hard.

"I think that's the head" I said holding it.

"Ahhhhhh ma" she said giving up.

"Sthandwa sam I can see her please keep pushing" I begged she was giving up and that meant putting the baby at more risk.



"I can't its too sore"she said.

"One more push and we are done I promise" I told her.

She took one last push and screamed, I tied the string around the umbilical and held the baby. She was still and small her tiny fists closed and eyes tightly shut I couldn't tell if she was breathing or not,I heard the door and my mother walked in then we heard the ambulance serin.

"Ma I don't think she's breathing" I said.

I looked at zobuhle and her eyes were shutting she was weak.

Ma took the baby and genlty held her feet up in the air and her tiny screams filled the entire lounge.

I found myself breathing holding my tears my baby girl was breathing.

"She's breathing on her own it's a miracle" Ma said looking at me.

The medics walked in as I was holdind Zobuhle immediatly took the baby then her.

## QHAWE

I stood over the baby and looked at her sleeping the doctor walked in and stood beside me, I looked at him and he smiled he is the one who helped Zobuhle and the baby when we got here. So much had happened in the last few hours but looking at the baby made everything worth it seeing her made me so happy I could shout to the whole world.

“Not every man comes back after seeing what you have seen” the doctor said.

I looked at him and nodded my head seeing Zobuhle in that state shook me and seeing the baby come out was even worse so much goes into bringing a baby into this world. The energy and the strength to scream and push out a whole human being is really hard and truth be told women deserve everything and so much more.

“You know it is a miracle to have her here and finally breathing on her own” he said looking at me.

I smiled thinking of this man came through for us when we got to the hospital the baby started having troubles breathing luckily the doctors got to her just in time. I don't think I would have been able to survive had anything happened to Zobuhle or the baby.

"I have seen miracles you know far more complicated and unexplainable than this, I have seen premature baby's fight till they win and I have witnessed women scheduled for surgery to remove one dead foetus cry tears of joy and give thanks to god because when their dates come suddenly the baby's heart is back" he said shaking his head.

"I don't know what to say I might be a man of medicine, but your ancestors really came through for you and your wife" he said.

"I think God intervened" I said looking at my baby.

"She's beautifl just like her mother" I said smiling.

“I should get back to my patients” he said walking out.

I looked at the nurse.

“Its okay sir I will take her to the mother for feeding” the nurse said.

I nodded my head and walked out with the doctor to make a few calls outside, it took a while but I was done and noticed how the nurse came out of Zobuhle’s room to talk to the doctor. I made my way to them and followed the nurse back t Zobu’s ward she was facing the other side her back against he nurse.

“What’s going on” I asked looking at the nurse holding the baby.

The nurse looked at me then at Zobu.

“I will take the baby please excuse us” I said clearing my throat.

I walked up to Zobuhle and sat next to her still holding the baby I wasn't going to let my baby starve because of her selfishness.

“Mambatha” I said in my most calm and collected voice.

She still didn't face me.

“Zobuhle Mbatha ngikhuluma nawe” I said.

“I know you are not sleeping and I know you hate this child but this isn't about you right now” I said.

She turned and faced me her lips quivering it broke my heart seeing her like that she couldn't even look at her.

“You can't even look at her” I said.

“What do you want me to do Qhawe” she asked.

“Just because she’s here doesn’t mean my feeling or how I feel inside will change” she said.

“I am not asking for too much all I am asking for is for you to nurse her that’s all till we get home and I will put her on formula or something” I said.

“Not asking for too much that’s easy for you t say Qhawe that baby you are holding is a reminder of what that animal did to me repeatedly and you were not there” she said.

I tightened my face and sighed.

“I am sorry that I wasn’t there, I am sorry that you had to go through that and I am sorry that she is a reminder but please I am begging you she’s just child and she needs you” I said.

“Ngiyakucela Mambatha mncelise nje” I said.

She shook her head and took the baby and started feeding her turning the other way.

I watched how beautiful this moment was my baby was getting her food and she was in her mothers arms her tiny hand on her mothers breast.

“I think she’s full now “ she said.

I looked at her and she was falling asleep I guess that’s what babies do eat and sleep, I picked her up smiled.

“We need to name her” I said looking at Zobuhle.

She seemed different more conflicted than anything and for the first ever I realised that this time I can’t help her I couldn’t reach out to her not unless she wanted me too, and right now she was pushing me away harder than before she was angry hurt and I understood that.

“ I don’t have any names” she said.

I looked at her and nodded.

“Daddy’s princess the apple of my eyes” I said breathing heavily.

“I think Ayola Zimephi Mthethwa is perfect fit for a princess” I said.

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“That’s right you are our gift from God my happiness Ayola” I said putting her down.

I moved closer to Zobuhle’s bed and sat next to her holding her hand, I wanted to say so much I needed her to share my joy but looking at her none of that would be possible.



“I know and I understand but Ayola is the greatest gift you have given me, I will love her for the both of us till you can love and her with your own heart just don’t take too long” I said kissing her hand.

“I love you” I told her.

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ZOBHLE

Days have gone by and I have been stuck in this hospital bed feeding Ayola for a girl she has quite an appetite, I still can't believe that Qhawe helped bring her into this world and is still able to look at me the way he looks at me. I know I shouldn't be saying this or even thinking about it but when Qhawe held her and she didn't cry I held my breath thinking she was still born but I

was wrong. Ma held her up and her tiny voice screeched and the whole became still and I was left with my thoughts. I was conflicted angry for even thinking the worst but a part of me didn't want her to breath it just didn't her to be alive but she was alive and kicking and probably stronger.

I got out of bed and went to hers taking a peak she was asleep and by some miracle breathing on her own her lungs proved to be much stronger and she proved to be resilient , I couldn't bring myself to look at her at first but with Qhawe constantly nagging me to feed her I didn't have a choice. I didn't want to see Mhlaba but the more I look at her I see her father and the anguish inside me grows.

"I wish you were not his child" I said breathing out heavily.

"How I wish you were Nyambose's daughter that you had his blood running through your veins but you don't instead you are that filthy and heartless man 's child and I fear hating you each day that passes by, I fear you having the same heart as your father. I lost my son only to have to grow in my womb and take his place I wish I didn't feel like this but I can't love you" I said.

I stood up and turned only to find Qhawe standing by the door looking at me his face tightened.

He closed the door and thank God Ayola was sleeping if it wasn't for her he would have slammed that door.

He made his way to the baby and smiled looking at her. He then looked at me and sat down not taking his eyes from.

“I know you can't bring yourself to love her or hold her without being asked to hold to and that she probably reminds you of Mhlaba but she's just a child one that is a part of you, one that has found a place in my heart and yes I love her more than anything. I didn't know it was possible to love someone like this but I can't help it she has crept her way into my hear and what I won't allow is you saying all these things to her. If you are angry and hurt that's is fine you don't want her that is understandable I won't force you to do anything you don't want I am enough for her” he said.

“I am sorry” I said.

“Don’t be I am just glad that you guys are okay” he said.

“Woza la” he said smiling.

I slowly got closer and he wrapped his arms around waist and rested his head on my stomach.

“One day you will see how beautiful and how much inlove you are with her” he said.

I placed my hands on his head and kissed him.

“I love Zobuhle” he said.

“I love you baba ka Ayola” I found myself saying.

He chuckled and tightened his hold.

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## KING NXUMALO

I walked around the royal garden thinking about my two sons in all my years of being king and a father all I ever wanted was to protect them all three of them, I guess I lost my way along the line and fed them everything a kings shouldn't do. I planted the seed of entitlement, greed, power and selfishness in their hearts and minds. Mhlaba absorbed all of it and turned into a man of his own he let power and money get to him and then that girl Zobuhle came along and ruined both my sons she pretended to love Sbani and then lured Mhlaba into her in world only to pit then against each other. My sons wouldn't have turned on each other if it wasn't for her my sons would still be alive if it wasn't for her but her, she killed my sons and lead them to their doom and she needs to pay one way or the other.

Zibi one of my trusted guard walked in and closed the door behind him

“Nkosi yam” he said bowing his head.

“Zibi” I said standing up taking pictures of Zobuhle.

“I want you to take care of this Zibi once and for all” I said.

He looked at me and his eyes widened.

“But this is Zobuhle and Zondi said one is touch her or family “  
he said questioning me.

“Who is your king Zibi “ I asked.

“You, you are my king” he said.

“Very well and I your king am ordering you to take of this and  
bring my that child she has given birth to” I said.

“Your wish is my command” he said taking the pictures walking away I called him out before he could reach the door.

“I will tell you when the time is right” I said looking at him.

“And Zibi if my son hears about this then I will cut your tongue out and feed you to my dogs” I said.

“I would never betray you my king” he said closing the door behind him.

I sat down and sighed things were never supposed to get like this she was supposed to be married into this family and give my son kids but she wasn't disciplined and she questioned everything. I never thought I would resort to killing her but I have no any other way but to do this for my boys and I would never let that boy raise my grandchild over my dead body.

## ZOBUHLE

I didn't know I missed home this much till I was discharged and sent home without Ayola of course the doctors said she still needed to be kept in the hospital, leaving her there felt weird not having her latching on breast felt different. I don't know if it makes sense or not but I felt naked like something was missing. See it took me a few weeks to adjust to feeding her and bathing her expecting Nyambose, his mother or the nurses to bath was not right knowing she has a mother who is alive and kicking. I was more ashamed and embarrassed than anything else and already talks were doing the runs about me in the hospital, one the staff would gossip and call me spoiled for having Qhawe do all the work at some point I wanted to set the straight and tell them where to shove their unwanted opinions but I held my tongue. God knows I did and no it wasn't for me but for Qhawe doctors in that hospital respect him and I didn't want to put him in bad light or have people think he can't handle his house thing with Qhawe is that he can handle me and he best does that in the bedroom. I shook my head and closed my books when I heard Ayola crying, I waited for a while thinking she would hush down or go back to sleep but her cry persisted till I walked out the bedroom.



“Its okay I will check on her” Qhawe said coming out his bedroom.

He wanted separate bedrooms after I had fallen sleep and placed my arm ontop of the baby Ayola cried herself to hiccups,I have tried telling that it was an honest mistake that I would never let her cry and just stand there watching. I wasn't supposed to but I took two allegex and Sinutab to numb my the aching for from sinuses but the pills combined with lack of sleep they knocked me out.

“Its fine go rest I will see to her” I said.

He looked at me and chuckled walking past,I followed him to the Ayola's room and stood by the door looking at him picking her up, he's a natural when it comes to Ayola he loves her more than anything spends most of his days in the nursery in that rocking chair placing her on his chest.

“Daddy's here everything is fine now” he said putting her back to sleep.

He stayed a while and before coming out and I followed him to his bedroom my arms folded.

“Qhawe I am sorry” I said.

He turned and looked at me.

“It could have been worse Zobu she could have burned her vocal cords or worse you could have turned and suffocated her” he shouted.

“I didn’t mean too Qhawe it was all a mistake I shouldn’t have taken those pills but I would never hurt her” I said.

“Really Zobu okay tell me didn’t you ever think of hurting her” he asked.

I looked at him and his eyes were welling up.

“Ma was right I think Ayola should go live with them till you are okay” he said.

“What are you saying Qhawe” I asked.

“I could ask things about her and you wouldn’t be able to answer me because you don’t want her and she can sense that ever wonder what she screams that much when you hold her because she knows you don’t want her” he said.

“I don’t want her growing up thinking her mother hates her, I don’t want her knowing how she came into this world I have been trying Zobuhle but you don’t want to try with me” he said sounding defeated.

“You want to take my daughter and give up on us” I asked him.

“I would never give up on you but I am doing what is best for my child” he said.

“Ngiyazama Qhawe but its not easy” I said.

He nodded his head and sat on the bed running his hands over his head.

“I miss you Zobuhle God knows I miss you so much more than you will know” he said raising his head.

I missed him too but between school, Ayola and her crying plus work I was pushing him away and it showed he was starting to get tired by all this and I was tired too. I moved closer and moved to where he was seated and went on my knees and placed my hands on his face.

“Tell me what to do” I asked.

“Come back to me to us” he said.

I pulled him close and kissed him, he wasn't responding he only did when I stood and sat ontop of him grinding on him.

“I don’t want you doing you feel pressured” he said pulling away.

“I want this” I said taking off his t-shirt.

He stood up with my legs wrapped around his waist holding my butt taking charge of my lips he took off my dress and looked at me before taking off his pants, the moment was heated I needed him and seeing him naked made me want to feel him inside of him I needed to feel all of him stretch me and not make love to me but to fuck me back to my senses. I stood up from the bed and went down on my keens and took all of him inside my mouth till was close and couldn’t stop cussing, the strain in his voice drove me crazy and made me stand he lifted me up and looked at me before kissing me.

“I missed you” I confessed.

He slammed me against the wall and his fingers slide inside my silky and wet pussy, I held on to his neck and bite my lower lip his fingers were doing me good but I needed him more, I wanted his hard cock thrusting deep inside me till I couldn’t

remember my name. he looked at me and gave that famous smirk of his and without warning he thrust inside and started deep stroking. I could feel all the emotions and sensuality and intimacy being one of them take over. He was losing himself inside me I could barely talk all I could was scream his name and shout to the heaven thanking them for his cock. he wasn't holding back and I didn't want him to stop he placed me on the bed and had my legs up in his shoulder close to clasp his neck in. I think I lost count of that sweat tear nearing feeling taking over and leaving me weak and worn out, he pulled and just when I was enjoying the feel of the tip of his cock rubbing on me he pushed himself inside and of him till making me lose myself. If ever there was a moment I didn't want to stop was this one he gently turned me and placed on a pillow under me, I felt his lips and tongue kiss my neck and run down my bare back to my rear making me whimper this right here was both sweet and taunting, I couldn't take it he had to be inside me and he knew that.

"Nyambose" I found myself raising my arse in the air moving my hand to play with myself he loves that seeing me come but today was different he hit my hands and placed his sliding it in.

"Is that what you want" he asked spanking me.

I loved it and I wanted more.

“I’ve missed this view” he said rubbing my buttocks and blowing air on my pussy rubbing his cock.

I held on to the covers when he slammed inside me and cried out.

“Oh fuck Zobuhle “ he cussed spanking my arse while going deep stroking till my knees lost the will to hold me, I collapsed on the bed and that gave him a chance to deep stroke real good he wanted to feel all of him and I was. His hands cupped my breast and his teeth grazed at my shoulders till we both came crushing down and the whole room filled with cries we. He pulled out and drew me closer to him kissing my forehead.

I looked at him and realised in my journey of healing I had left him behind I had left my love behind and that child deserves better even if I can’t given her my whole but she needs a part of me.

We heard some voices and a knock on the door, I quickly grabbed the fleece that was on the floor and covered the both of us before responding to the door. The door opened and his mother walked in carrying Ayola she looked at us and smiled.

“Nisize nigcoke because we are waiting for you” she said winking at me.

I looked at Qhawe and I know we still have along way to go.

“It may seem like I don’t care but I know what makes her tick, I know what she likes and I know she doesn’t sleep without you singing to her, she claps to your finger whenever you hold her and she smiles whenever she sees you face to her you are her world” he wiped my tears and smiled.

“You are one of a kind man Nyambose and an amazing father” I said smiling.



“Don’t force this Zobuhle I know you love Ayola just give it time” he said perking my lips

We both cleaned up and got into our clothes heading down stairs, everyone was in the garden the

table already set up and the kids running around. I looked at Qhawe and he shrugged his shoulders

just like me he was in the dark about this whole thing Ma having the key to the house is proving to

be a problem. We joined everyone and I couldn’t help feel all eyes were onus more especially me if

I didn’t know better I would say Ma told them, I joined Nkanyezi and Zenkosi her baby is cute one

Could eat him up I picked him up and kissed his chubby cheeks.

“I could smell the sex all way from here” Nkanyezi said laughing.

I looked her at and shook my head smiling.

“So how are things between the two of you” Zenkosi asked.

“We are trying and I guess we will get there” I said giving her the baby back.

“So long as you don’t rush yourself” Nkanyezi said standing up to take Ayola I could feel my heart beat and my palms sweat.

“She is so beautiful just like her mommy” she said looking at me, I don’t see it what they see me in her I just don’t.

“I think she looks like Mh..” I held my tongue and shook my head forcing a smile.

“This child looks nothing like Mhlaba you just don’t see it because that’s what you have telling yourself that she looks like him” Zenkosi said.

“if I didn’t know better I would say she is Qhawe’s the way he looks at her is the way Ngwane looks at Busisiwe “ Nkanyezi said laughing.

Ayola started crying and I looked at Qhawe I thought of taking her and quickly remembered how she screams for her life when she feels my hands except for when she feeds.

Qhawe came to my rescue and took her from Nkanyezi right in that moment I felt like a failure both as a woman and mother.

“Look at me for instance I fell inlove with Qiniso the moment I laid eyes on him give yourself time don’t be hard on yourself” I nodded my head something had to change with me.

The following day I called Sophie and asked f we could meet up for breakfast seeing that Qhawe was working from home, I wanted to take Ayola with but he refused and I understood where he was coming from to him right now I would do anything to hurt the baby understandable so considering how distant I have been towards him and the baby. I stood up the moment Sophie walked in and gave her a hug she held on a bit longer and eventually pulled away settling down, she came a few time in the hospital to check up one me which made me think she cares.

“I didn’t think you would want anything to do with me” she said.

“If I can forgive my father for keeping the truth then it wouldn’t be fair if I pushed you away and pretended like you don’t exist” I said.

“I understand and thank you” she said.

I nodded and smiled.

“ I want you to have this” she said giving me a picture of her and her” I held it and looked at her they looked so much alike.

“How was she my mother” I asked.

A smile grew on her beautiful face and she shook her head reminiscing.

“She was stubborn, strong willed and very much beautiful, humble and kind she never looked down on people and I think that is what made her special” she said smiling.

“You said if go home with you then everything would make sense” I said.

“Yes everything will make sense for you setting foot where your mother was born would change everything” she said.

“Fine I will come” I said.

“Qhawe has to come too for you to find yourself again he needs to be there and hold your hand” she said.

“I will talk to him” I said.

“How is the baby doing” she asked .

“She,s doing fine thank you for asking” I said.

“I can’t wait to see her” she said.

“I doubt Qhawe will want her travelling far” I said.

“Zobuhle you have to remember that Ayola is yours as much as Qhawe is holding the fort they both need you I know its hard to accept but the situation is what it is and even if you try to ignore it all you want it wont change. Even if try to sweep it under the carpet it won’t change the fact that she’s here and needs you as her mother. Don’t lose out on the most beautiful and wonderful moment there are in a child’s life don’t lose out on creating memories be there be present and I promise you will want to kick yourself for even having wasting time “ she said.

“I think I needed to hear that” I said.

“We all stumble but what is important is how we pick ourselves up and move on forgive yourself and show her that you love her we both know you do” she said smiling.

I reached for her hand and smiled.

“Thank you” I said.

## ZOBUHLE

I don't know what happened but Qhawe woke up early in the morning and had to rush out well the office called him and he had no choice but to leave, he left Ayola with me and for the life of me since he walked out that door I haven't been okay. I have been pacing up and down since morning praying she doesn't scream because I know I won't be able to put her down, I tried calling Nkanyezi but she said its time I took charge of my life and grew a back bone. I am most afraid of rejection what she rejects me like I did her honestly I don't think I can handle that, what if this persists for the longest time and she never wants me then I will forever hate myself for pushing her away. I prepared her bath water and placed her duck inside the water like Qhawe does and breathed as I was about to take her. I took a peak on her cot before attempting to take her but stopped when her eyes widened and she just looked at me. How can I be so stupid and selfish as to hate her for something she knows nothing about tears welled when it hit me, I missed out of her very first gummy smile. I looked at her and she had my big eyes expect hers are black and shinny.

“I wish I could turn back time and hold you from first time” I said.

She kept her hands inside her mouth suckling on them.

“I am so sorry mommy is so sorry for everything” I said smiling.

I braced myself and picked her up I could feel it coming the famous screams but I sat down and took out my breast feeding her, she held the breast and fed like her it was her last I took the time to really look at her and tears welled up. I was getting emotional.

“Ayola ka mamakhe oh my baby your’re so beautiful” I said still holding her.

I tried holding the tears but it was already too late.

“I love you Zimephi ka babakhe” I said wiping my tears.

I thought I was okay but the tiny droplets of tears turned into an unexpected sob that had Ayola frightened and crying, I reached for my phone and called Qhawe.

“Sthandwa sam “ I said the minute he answered the phone.

“Zobu what’s going on why is Ayola crying” he asked.

“I have been a fool Nyambose please forgive me for not being present, I love you both you and Ayola ngiyanihanda” I said.

“Usayangithusa manje” he said sounding panicked.

“I love her Nyaambose she’s my baby girl” I said.

He ended the call and I hushed the baby down joy had suddenly filled my heart and I couldn’t help it.

“I am your mother and I love you” I said kissing her cheeks.



My behaviour was scaring her poor thing probably thinking this woman is crazy I heard the nurse door burst open and that made Ayola cry even more, I guess Qhawe was already on his way when I called him he stood there and looked at me confused seeking answers .

“I love you so much” I said.

He looked at me slowly making his way to us, he stood in front of me and smiled kissing my forehead .

“I am so proud of you” he said bringing me into hug.

“How can I be such a fool and deny myself to love and be loved” I asked.

He cupped my face and shook his head.

“You are not a fool Zobu okay never were even, you are the mother of my daughter the most beautiful and breath taking woman I have ever laid eyes on” he said kissing me.

“She won’t hate me right “ I asked .

He chuckled and took Ayola.

“She won’t even remember this” he said pulling to him.

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QHAWE

For a while I thought I was dreaming that yesterday I was called to the office that I didn’t leave my girls alone without me to

play referee. A part of me didn't want to leave Zobuhle alone with the baby because everything that had happened truth is I was scared she wouldnt cope scared that she would snap and hurt the child that's anxious and agitated I was. I had to call my mother and she was the one to tell to give Zo time with the baby hoping they would bond, but I guess it went deeper than that although its still a long way to go I know she's not the type to give up not in this life time. I had to pinch myself just to remind myself that it wasn't a dream that Zobuhle was holding the baby throughout the day feeding her and staying with her at nursery. I don't know what happened but she took Ayola and brought her to our bedroom and placed her between us, I think having us near is the magic trick because not once did she cry except for early in the morning when she needed changing. I looked at them sleeping peacefully and smiled silently taking pictures of them in their sleep for the first time I was going to post my girls and introduce her to the world. I took a few and selected the ones I loved most and posted them then turned my phone off and just starred at them next time they mention lucky men I should be on that list.

Ayola started her usual and before I could get her Zo was already on it giving her daily breast.

“Morning” I said.

She looked at me and smiled.

“Morning Nyambose” she said smiling.

“Uyazi kodwa ukuthi umuhle” she laughed and shook her head.

“Awungishade phela” I said smiling at her.

“Let’s get this thing with meeting my mother’s family out of the way and get married” she said.

“I am tired of waiting Zobuhle I want Ayola to know that her parents are married not doing some vat n sat” I said.

“I promise once all of this is over I will fully be mrs Mthethwa legally” she said.

I smiled and played with Ayola's feet.

"I think we should have another one of these running around the house" I said raising both her feet and listened to her giggle.

"We can have as many as we want soon as miss here is old enough" she said nodding her head.

I gave her a smile if Ayola wasn't here then she would be screaming my name and begging me not to stop as usual.

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ZOBUHLE

Have you ever woken up one morning and released just how lucky and fortunate you have been all along but you were too

hurt and angry to see it, Qhawe suggested that we go out for breakfast and just show off the baby, truth is ever since I found I was pregnant and that Ayola came into the picture I have been copped up at home. Qhawe hardly left the house a part of him was afraid I would hurt myself but therapy helped. Thoughts of hurting myself or wanting it to end were no longer there and I owed it all to Qhawe.

“You know that picture you posted caused quite a stir” I told him .

As it is people were looking at us and some were discreetly taking pictures

“I just couldn’t help it you were everything in that moment” he said. I looked at him tilting my head what does he mean in that moment.

“And what about now sir” I asked smiling.

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He bite his lower lip and shook his head.

“You were everything to me then,now and forever” he said leaning over for a kiss.

I felt the heat rush to my cheeks.

“If it isn’t the Queen herself” Nontle said making her to us.

I saw Qhawe changing.

“Walk away” Qhawe said giving me the baby.

“Sthandwa sam leave her alone she just wants a reaction from you” I said taking Ayola.

She looked at Qhawe and sniggered clearly she came here to disturb our peace.

“You know had you not gone after peoples wives we could have been something great, could have had something great but I guess she couldn’t keep her legs closed and stay faithful to her husband and she finally got what she deserved” she said giving me a dirty look.

“I am warning you Nontle” Qhawe said getting losing his cool.

“What are you afraid that the whole world will know that this is not your child because you were not man enough” she said.

Qhawe stood up and held her by her throat and slapped the bitchness out of her

I gasped putting a hand over my mouth this wasn’t happening all eyes were on us.

“Say that one more time and I will bury you and your family will never know what happened to you uyangizwa Nontle” he said letting go.



“Asambe Mambatha” he said taking Ayola.

I looked around and people were already whispering, I turned and she was smiling at us clearly happy with what she had done.

We went past a few shops to get a few things for the baby then drove back to the house and right as he parked in the drive way a police van parked at the gate two police officers walked up to us and asked for him. He handed me Ayola and was escorted to the police van. I called Nkanyezi and gave her address asking her to meet me there, I wasn't going to let Nontle mess with me not this time not when things are looking up.

“You must be kidding me she did what” Nkanyezi asked.

“Qhawe lost it and choked her then slapped her” I said getting Ayola in the backseat with her carseat.

“I thought you were long past this jealous ex of his” she said getting her bat.

“I also thought so but I think that picture Qhawe posted made her realise that it was over for her” I said.

“This one needs to be taught a lesson” she said leading the way.

She paid the security guy and he let us through no hassles, we walked up to her flat and politely Knocked she got the door and tried closing it on our faces but Nkanyezi had her foot on the door. She pushed the door and Nontle fell on her arse making it easy for us to walk inside and close the door behind us.

“Are you crazy do anything to me and I will call the police on you” she said getting up.

“Like you did on my fiancé” I said placing Yola down, I placed those noise blocking headphones on over her ears and kissed her cheek.

“Lalela lana keh you will go down to that police station and retract your statement uyangizwa” I said.

“And why would I do that huh” she asked giving me attitude.

“You don’t know me do you why do you I am still with Qhawe? Do you think its because of my pretty face? I asked.

I looked at Nkanyezi and she trashed the place using the bat.

“She once lost her balance and hit a woman over her head don’t try anything it might get messy” I said when Nontle reached for her phone.

“Even if you trash the whole place it won’t change the fact that I got him arrested and just like me you will sleep alone in a cold bed” she said.

“Awungazi wena” I said punching her in the face she stumbled back and I threw in another punch, if felt good taking my anger on someone or rather something.

“Please don’t hurt me” she said.

“Will you drop the charges” I asked.

She looked at me and said nothing.

“Take her to the water hole” Nkanyezi said laughing in that moment I realised why Ngwane loves her this much.

I dragged her by her hair all the way to her toilet she tried fighting me but I guess being thick does help I pushed her head down the toilet and flushed.

“I know you were working with Mhlaba, I know you were trying to seduce Qhawe and that fake pregnancy you messed with the wrong women and then you had the nerve to say Qhawe is not man enough then you went for my daughter now that was a mistake” I said pushing her head inside.

She broke some of her nails trying to get herself out but I wasn't letting go I wanted to teach her a lesson.

"Lets try again will you drop the charges yes or no" I asked.

"Fine I will" she said coughing out some of the water.

I brought her face to mine and titled my head.

"I am warning you next time you mess with me I will kill you, the difference between Qhawe and I is that I don't mind killing women and I wouldn't mind if I added you to the list" I said letting her go.

She looked spooked and the fear in her eyes but then again staring death in the eyes does that to you.

"Come for me that is fine but come for my family then we have a problem" I said dragging her back to the living room

“I want my husband back home or I will come back” I said.

“And if you know what’s good for you, you won’t mention this to anyone or I will tell Nyambose about all your meeting with Mhlaba and there’s no telling what he will do” I said taking Ayola, this baby is hardcore she saw me and smiled. I thanked Nkanyezi for helping me out and drove home Ayola was already getting restless and I didn’t want to disrupt much of her routine.

I looked at the time and started getting worried he should be home by now and he wasn’t, I thought about calling Nkanyezi but decided against it and took Ayola to our bedroom. Tonight was going to be a long night without Qhawe.

“Mommy kicked some arse today” I said laughing.

“And you were amazing just don’t tell day I took you okay” I said.

“If it isn’t my super woman” Qhawe said frightening me.

I jumped up and gave him a hug seeing him meant my scare tactic worked , I pulled away and kissed him smiling.

“No one messes with my man” I said.

He lifted me up and had me wrap my legs around his waist our kiss got heated but Ayola wasn't having it. He groaned in frustration and placed me down kissing my forehead attending to Ayola I looked at the two of them smiled this meant no sex not unless she falls asleep.

## ZOBUHLE

These past few months have nothing short of amazing and bliss, having a man who loves me and would do anything to see me happy to an extent of going to therapy with me well that was my last session and he was there holding my hand. I stood by the balcony and watched the sky my people were sleeping peaceful the air hit my skin making me close my eyes taking it all in, one wouldn't say I was down and out emotionally broken and had no hope of ever being the same. I shut out and pushed away all the people who care about me. I blamed and hated myself for what Mhlaba put me through while he was the one at fault while he was the sick one all along. I smiled when I thought about the day he proposed and decided he wanted me to be a part of his life we were standing at the roof top and he released those lights into the sky and asked the universe to heal me and in those moments he wanted nothing but to take away pain and make it his. He was ready to carry it all just to see me whole again and Lord knows this man has endured so much all in the name of loving me, I shook my head when I thought about the times we passed how he fell in love with my ankles and how he taunted me with his look before I was ever his I chuckled at the thought of how crazy I went and fought with



my feelings for him. How I first saw him in that jeep and how tall I thought he was and all that hair on him and him alone how handsome he is, I laughed thinking of the time he took me to the auction and I was angry girl stormed out of that place and thought I could walk by foot home, but then it rained and I found myself on top of him falling deep in love with him strongly and steady he was mine and I was his we both knew it.

“Wena owaseMambathaeni “ he said kissing my neck.

I wanted to turn but the way he called me turned me on I closed my eye and arched my arse.

“Dingiswayo” I found myself saying.

He ran his hands down my body seething and inhaling me.

“Qhawe” I said looking around the house has security and we might be seen.

“What we are in the comfort of our home and I am enjoying myself with my future wife” he said kissing my neck his tongue leaving traces down to my shoulder.

He slowly lifted up my silky night gown and ran his hands up my breast cupping them and playing with my nipples the air hitting against them made them more harder, we were doing it and I was ready to hold on to this rail and scream his name as he gave it all to me.

“The baby’ I said closing my eyes.

“She’s fast asleep” he said moving his hand to butt squeezing it then he move his hand to my pussy and played with me using his fingers, with each moan released he grew even harder poking me from behind. I turned and looked at him his black eyes glimmering with desire and lust I snuck my hands inside his pants and played with him watching him close his eyes and tighten his face because of the pleasure. I didn’t want him lifting me up I wanted him to take me from behind I needed this so much feeling him grow in my hand made me stop to give him a kiss.

“I want to drown in you Zobuhle” he said.

I helped him out of his pants and his cock was hard and dripping and I was already wet and creaming from all the work he had done there.

“I want to drown you too Nyambose and never be found” I said turning and bending just a bit.

He spanked me so hard I felt my cheeks burning he then did it again and I felt my myself burning, the cold air was making all this worth it and more erotic my heart pumping I jumped up when I felt his tongue run down my butt cheeks and him putting his finger inside me drove me insane.

“Your’re so wet and ready for me” he said.

He stood up and thrust inside me and the most amazing feeling took over me his lips on my shoulder and neck made it all worth it, I could feel all of him stretch me sex with this man has been dull even after I went through sex with him felt like

coming home after a long time. He started deep stroking and thrusting inside me with his hand on my neck gently squeezing my wind pipe I held on to rail and screaming his name under the full moon and stars. He pulled out and had me on that thin rail and stoked me till I lost it. He upped his pace till he came groaning and moaning holding me tight to a point I thought my rib cage would be crushed, I held on to him and kissed him sweating and all laughing.

“I love you” he said kissing my forehead.

I looked down and only then did I see the possibility of falling talk about being brave.

“Let’s get married a small ceremony just me you and our families” I said.

He looked shocked and believe when I say it went straight to his cock and charged him up again.

“Are you sure” he asked.

“Yes I want to marry you now even” I said nodding my head.

He smiled and started moving inside him staring me in the eye.

“Qhawe” I said gasping.

“I can’t help it” he said holding my butt.

“You know she’s going to wake up anytime right” I said.

“Then we better get to It mrs me” he said walking to the bathroom with me giggling.

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KING NXUMALO

I had waited long for this and finally the time had come for me to end things for Zobuhle for good, I called Zibi in and he sat down . I hired someone to follow and look into Zobuhle's life and the results were nothing short of amazing she was doing well very well and that boy was treating her well and apparently she was doing well in school. I shook my head and gave Zibi all the necessary information he would need when going to her house the security details and how to gain access to the house. I smiled when I thought of the pain that boy would feel when I take away the one he cares about the most Zobuhle and the child on the biggest day of their lives, by the look of things he loved the child and I would be the one take it all away from him, I am coming for him and he won't see me coming just like he took away my son. I looked at this one picture and it showed them on an outing with his brother and best friend Ngwane, I felt satisfied with myself knowing I wouldn't break just one brother but two the thought of seeing them weak and broken due to losing then losing Zonuhle had me thrilled.

"The time has come Zibi" I said.

“How should I do it” he asked.

“I want it to be slow so strangle her till you feel her take her last breath” I said smiling.

“And the child” he asked standing up.

“Bring her home” I said nodding my head.

“Consider it done nkosi yam” he said walking out.

I smiled knowing how busy weddings get Zibi would get in unnoticed and by the time they check on the bride it would be all over.

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## ZOBUHLE

The day was finally here and with each stop I knew we were getting closer to the Ntuli kingdom, I wasn't sure if we were doing the right thing because I had been postponing till Qhawe convinced me that it was best we get everything out of the way. We were following Sophie's car with my parents riding behind us with Nqaba that one was happy to know he has royal blood running in his veins. Qhawe held my hand when we reached the royal gates and the guards started opening them. I looked around and no lie just like Mahlabathini this place looked amazing the river took me to when Qhawe made love to me with mother nature baring witness to it all. We drove people were gathered here I spotted the king immediately and my heart started beating fast he had some resemblance to my mother and aunt and I wondered if he would ever give up the throne. We stepped out of the car and then singing and praising started people had their eyes on us, I wanted to hide but for a woman like me it would be stupid and senseless. The king made his way to us and shared a hug with Sophie then handshake my father, I stood next to Qhawe with Nqaba next to, Mam had Ayola in her arms.



“Ndlovukazi” the king said bowing his head.

I looked at Qhawe and he nodded his head.

“My king” I said.

He laughed and shook his head.

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“I am your uncle” he said smiling bringing me to hug.

I’ve never had an uncle before and this was overwhelming.

He looked at Nqaba and also gave him hug.

“Welcome home” he said more louder for his people to hear.

He turned to his people and looked at them holding my hand.

“The rightful heir to throne has returned” he said.

There was more cheer and dancing.

“Ndlovukazi” he said proudly

“Ndlovukazi” his people hailed.

We were led inside and I was holding on to Qhawe for dear life.

“Relax everything is going to be okay I am right here “ he said kissing my hand.

Nqaba and I were introduced to everyone in the house and to so many family member we knew nothing about, the day went well my uncle and his people celebrated and had feast but I couldn't shake off the feeling of carrying a heavy heart. An old woman approached my uncle and the whole family was called inside the royal house.

“Even her husband should be present” the old woman said.

I don't know what came over me but I felt emotional tears started streaming down my face,

“What the hell did you do to her” Qhawe said when he walked in.

“Kahle Qhawe no one did anything” Sophie said.

He sat next to me and held me close and soon after Ayola was also crying.

“Let it all out” the old women said.

With those words sobs built up and I felt lighter with each breath I took, I held my daughter close and held Qhawe's hand.

“You shouldn’t be worried about anything she has come it expected that she would feel this way” the old woman said nodding her head.

“She felt her mother’s presence and it was too much and heavy for her” she continued.

I looked at my father and he smiled

“You have been through so much but you have also been blessed” he said looking at Qhawe then Ayola.

“The child” she said smiling shaking her head.

“What is wrong” I asked.

She looked at Qhawe and laughed the took Ayola and gave her to him.

“What do you feel” she asked Qhawe.

I looked at him and tears welled up in his eyes.

“That she is my everything the apple of my eye, I would kill and die for her. I feel that she is mine my heart refuses to think otherwise” he said smiling.

“And are right to think all of that” she said looking at him.

“I know what happened but the ancestors have a way too” she said.

“That child is yours nkosi yam” he said to Qhawe.

I saw my father nodding his head well we all knew that Qhawe loves Ayola more than anything, he my father once said the child is Qhawe and Bab’ Mthethwa senior also mentioned it a while back.

“That child was a twin a fraternal one and when the Zwide wanted blood for blood they only took one because they saw one the boy” she said.

I blinked and looked at Ayola it was impossible.

“I don’t understand “ I said shaking my head nothing was making sense.

“That child is not a Nxumalo she is a Mthethwa in all her being, the doctors could not explain how she survived on her own, how she made it at only five months right” she said,

“They said it was a miracle” Qhawe said.

“A miracle that she survived the sacrifice yes but she came in time which was nine full months” she said.

“But the doctors said the pregnancy resulted from the assault” I said.

“Like I said the ancestors have their way welcome Zobuhle” she said bowing her head then looked at my uncle.

“Nkos’ yam my work is done here” she said looking at my uncle.

“When the time comes you will know “ with said she left.

“She only come when she bares news” my uncle said.

“I think we should leave them for now” he said to the family.

“She’s mine she’s really mine Zobu Ayola is my daughter” he said letting his tears fall.

“I knew it deep inside me I knew it” he said.

He looked at me and I wiped his tears.

“She’s your baby yours” I said nodding through the tears.

The biggest gift ever was this one finding out that Ayola was indeed Qhawe’s child freed me, I couldn’t face the fact that one day I would have to sit her down and tell her who her father was.

“Everything is going to be okay” I said holding him.

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## QHAWE

In all my life all I thought about was money, power and being feared throughout the world. I wanted my name to be known and spoken off by all men who walked this earth I wanted my name to be feared by all who crossed paths with me. I had been buried alive and that never changed me, I lost a woman I thought I loved and wanted to spend the rest of my days with but still that never changed me. Instead I became this cold hearted selfish man who didn't care , I never thought a woman would change me I never saw myself wanting to change for a woman I never saw myself wanting to be a family man ever but then came along and it happened. I thought I was sick for even wanting to try, but I thought she was more crazy for looking my way and staying even though it was hard. I fell in love with her in her sleep and when her eyes looked at me my soul became one with her and I knew I was doomed. She doesn't know this but was is my first in everything, letting her in came natural she resides me like I reside in her, I can never explain my love for her to anyone else because even I don't understand this feeling. We got back from her people who welcomed us with open arms and revealed the unknown to us, the first thing we did getting home was do a DNA test and I am Ayola's father

somehow everything fell into place and the doctors confirmed what was told to us. I am her father and she will know no one else beside me and that is a promise I made to her and her mother. The door opened and my father walked in holding Ayola he is proud and I can tell damn everyone can tell. He stood by the window and turned to look at me with Ayola raising her arms for me to take her.

“Qhawe” he said.

“Baba” I said.

“I never thought would see this day where you take such a huge a step in life and be a man” he said nodding his head.

“I am not a man of many words but I am proud of you, I am proud of the man you have become how you have stood beside Zobuhle and supported her through everything and not once did you stray or seek comfort else where now that takes a man to uphold. I have always thought you would spend the rest of days chasing women trying to fill that void and it worried me seeing you lose yourself and turn into someone I didn't know I

hated seeing you unhappy seeing lost . I am your father and I love you and today is the happiest I have ever ben seeing you love that girl has made me proud and respect you even more” he said looking at Ayola.

“Even when you thought she wasn’t yours you loved her like any father would their child, you are a great man Qhawe and now I see that mine and your mother’s teachings haven’t fallen on deaf ears. I love her and now I will join my forefathers knowing I have seen her with my own eyes he said looking at Ayola.

“I love you son” he said.

“I love you baba” I said.

“Treat her right love her and never raise your hand at her always respect her and she shal love you all the days of her life trust me I know what I am talking about” he said giving me hug.

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## ZOBUHLE

I looked at myself in the mirror I could reminisce all I want and it wouldn't change anything but bring tears to my eyes, today is a huge day for me I am getting ready to be Mrs Mthethwa in all ways that one can imagine, I am ready to take this step and hold his hand forever I am ready to love him with all my heart and be his wife before God and our family. I remember how I met this tall man of mine I was running I had spend my life running from a heartless man. A part of me thought it knew what love was but truth is I didn't till I met this man then my eyes were open then I found love, lived in it and basked in it and finally found a home in this man. I was afraid to love him yet at the same time I was afraid to be without him so many emotions had consumed me at once and it was all because of him. I looked at the pregnancy test and smiled today I am going to tell him that he's going to be a father once again and knowing him he will be overjoyed but something tells me that one can ever take Yola's place not even me. My mother held my hand while my aunt and Qhawe's mother sat beside me Nkanyezi and Zen had glasses of champagne in hand toasting to the day.

“My beautiful daughter today you become someone’s wife today you take Qhawe’s surname and become a part of his family. I raised you well Zobu and I am proud that god gave me a chance to be your mother, having you in my life has been nothing but amazing you will always be my baby girl no matter what

you will always have a home to come back to no matter what because asikuxoshile we love you and I know speak for your father too. That boy love you treat with all the love and respect he deserves lead him and stay true to each other and God shall bless your union” she said wiping her tears.

“Ma thank for loving me and never ever giving up on me” I said.

“I love you Ntombizobuhle” she said giving me a hug.

“Enough with the tears today we celebrate my son and Zobu for loving each other in the most beautiful way” his mother said.

“I knew you were the one first time I laid eyes on you he loved you at first sight and I welcome to our family and I will never mistreat you in me you have found another mother who will

love and support you all the time. Times might get hard and but never walk away or give without trying first okay” she said smiling.

“Zo the young girl I met at a restaurant you are beautiful and more never let this journey you are about to take dim your light, you were destined for greater things and we are here if ever you need anything I have seen the way he looks to you and that is love. You have found your forever” Sophie said smiling.

I looked at the girls and Zen raised her glass.

“These Mthethwa brothers are headache no offense ma but Zo they are worth it congratulations and I am happy for you” she said.

Nkanyezi stood up and started singing my crazy half

“Mina angazi ngayigcina nin indoda inqunu

Akeningiyeke kengibonise abuntu mhlampe bona  
bayangithanda

Bambani amadodenu konakela ake ningiyeke kengibonise  
abantu mhlampe bona bayangithanda” she said laughing

“I don’t know what to say beside that you are amazing one of a  
kind and strong too” she said shaking her head.

“That song is for you, you will never miss dick anymore because  
its now yours girl you will never go hungry because it yours so  
right now say goodbye to cold nights and say hello bliss” she  
said laughing making us laugh.

“You have come a long way Zo and I am proud of you for  
bouncing back and taking your life back, not many can do that  
trust me I know but you have done. I won’t lie marriage is  
amazing its beautiful but when you are with the right person,  
when you love that person, when you want to grow old with  
them and see no other life beside a life with them and when  
you put in the work. Fights are going to be there the arguments  
and the falling out of love feeling yet your hearts still beats for

them only them its going to happen but remember why you fell  
In love in the first place. I know you will be happy and I love  
you” she said raising her glass.

“Thank you all of you for being here” I said.

“Lets pray” My mother said starting us with prayer.

The door opened when she was done and my father walked in.

“Its time” he said.

I fixed my make up one more time before I took my father’s  
hand.

“You love him” he asked.

“kakhulu baba” I said.



“Are you sure about this” he asked.

I nodded my head and smiled.

“Then I am happy and you look beautiful ngane yam” he said kissing my cheek.

We walked outside to the garden the whole place was transformed into a whimsical white theme tiffany chair and white lanterns right at the alter with white lilies and crystals to finish the look, I looked at Qhawe and he was holding our baby girl and out song was playing I smiled thinking how he proposed to this very song.

“When the rain is blowing in your face

And the world is in your case

I could offer you a warm embrace

To make you feel my love

When the evening shadows and stars appear

And there is one there to dry your tears

I could hold you for a million years

To make you feel my love

I know you haven't made your mind up yet

But I would never do you wrong

I've known it from the moment that we met

No doubt in my mind where you belong

I'd go hungry I'd go black and blue

I'd go crawling down the avenue

No there's nothing that I wouldn't do

To make you feel my love

The storms are raging on the rolling sea

And on the highway of regret though winds of change are  
throwing wild and free

You ain't seen nothing like me yet

I could make you happy

Make your dreams come true

Nothing that I wouldn't do go to the ends for you

To make you feel my love “

I stopped when I realised I left the test on the dressing table the plan is get him tears now today of our family.

“Are running away” my father asked.

I shook my head looking at Qhawe.

“I love you” I mouthed the words.

“Baba I forgot something I need to get it no” I said running back to my bedroom.

I found the test and got the shock of my life when the door closed, I turned a man was standing in the room holding a rope wearing black glove in his hand.

“Who are you” I asked looking at him pulling the rope making his way to me.

I looked over my shoulder and wanted to grab the pair of scissors but he took out a gun and showed to me.

“Don’t even try it” he said.

I stepped backwards with him taking a step towards me and fell on back, he got ontop and tried using the rope to strangle me but I used my fingers and poked him in the eyes reaching for the gun, he held also held the gun and I screamed for Qhawe right the gun went off . The man stepped away and tried rushing out but he was too late he bumped into Qhawe and Ngwane then Zibulo, I looked at my dress and it was stained I

was bleeding Qhawe held me before I could hit the floor, the man also went down when Ngwane snapped his neck just like that and held back Zibulo from coming to me.

“No no Mkhulu call an ambulance” he shouted.

I had trouble breathing the pain was getting to me. He removed his jacket and put pressure on the wound holding to close.

“I am sorry” I said moving my eyes to the pregnancy test.

He shook his head and stopped me from talking.

“I am pregnant” I said putting my hand on his jaw.

“Zo don’t speak please don’t say anything” he said.

“I love you Nyambose” I said.

“No no Zobuhle don’t do this to me don’t fucken do this to us” he shouted but I couldn’t hold on my body ached and I was getting cold. I was everything my life flash before my eyes I saw it all my kids and my family the life I lived I saw it all before me. And then his image stuck with me his eyes looked at me. I saw my mother standing before the throne and there I was seated next to Qhawe holding his hand, I looked at him now and he was begging me to come back I saw mother again and walked up to her.

“Listen to hear him hear is cries” she said.

I looked at Qhawe and he wasn't letting go of my body.

"Uthi angiyenzi lengane ngedwa" he cried still holding me close to his chest.

I held my heart and I could feel his pain and despair I looked at my mother and smiled.

"If you walk away now you will always hear his cries and feel his pain even in the afterlife" she said.

"Please come back I am begging you" he pleaded.

I stood over my and the thought of him being alone and raising Ayola alone broke my heart, we made a promise forever him and where he goes I follow and where I go I follow, when the time is right you will know and I knew this wasn't the time it wasn't my time. I wasn't going to take my last breath in the arms of the men that I couldn't hurt him like this I looked at him and he was breaking down without a care in the world.

"I see you" he said kissing my forehead.

"I will always be with you" my mother said putting me to sleep.

I drifted back to consciousness and Qhawe was still holding me his love hadn't given up on me and I wasn't going to allow mine to give up on us. "I see you" I said

He looked at me and broke down even more this was it coming back to him because his love saved me his love was told through my eyes and anyone who looked at me saw his love.

.....**The End**.....

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